

# HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

## Mission Statement

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

TERHAD

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For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.

Romans 5:6-7



When the Spirit moves a community

■ P5



St Anthony's parish holds Jericho Walk for renewal

■ P7



When love becomes light

■ P11

# Pope Leo's

**M**ADRID: In a stirring encounter that combined prayer, testimony, silence and mission, Pope Leo XIV challenged more than half a million young people gathered in the heart of Madrid to become “the sparks of a new humanity” and to change history through love.

The youth prayer vigil at Plaza de Lima marked the climax of the first day of the Pope's week-long visit to Spain. Long before his arrival, Madrid's broad avenues and surrounding streets had been transformed into a sea of pilgrims waving flags, singing, praying and waiting expectantly for a glimpse of the Holy Father. Organisers estimated that more than 500,000 young people attended what became one of the largest gatherings of Pope Leo's pontificate so far.

As the popemobile slowly made its way through the crowds, the Pope repeatedly stopped to greet pilgrims, embrace worshippers and bless babies. Apartment balconies overlooking the route were packed with onlookers eager to witness the historic occasion.

Yet it was not the size of the crowd that defined the evening, but the message entrusted to them.

“The mission I entrust to you is precisely this: that you be human,” Pope Leo told the young people. “Be human as Christ is.”

The vigil unfolded as an open dialogue between the Pope and youth representatives who posed questions on faith, vocation and the challenges of modern life. In an atmosphere more reminiscent of a family conversation than a formal papal event, Pope Leo offered deeply personal reflections drawn from his own spiritual journey and years of missionary service in Peru.

Asked which saints had shaped his faith, he pointed to St John Chrysostom, admired for his courage in proclaiming truth; St Thomas of Villanova, whose charity inspired him during difficult moments; and St Turibius of Mogrovejo, the missionary bishop who defended justice while evangelising Peru. Reflecting on his missionary experiences, Pope Leo said that while he proclaimed the Gospel, he too was transformed by it, witnessing how faith could bring reconciliation, peace and hope even in situations of hardship.

One of the strongest themes of the evening was the need for silence in an increasingly noisy world.

Amid constant distractions, consumerism and competing voices, the Pope urged

young people to rediscover silence as the place where God speaks and where truth can be discerned.

“It is in silence,” he explained, “that we come to understand that ideologies pass away, while truth remains.”

That invitation took on special significance as hundreds of thousands of young people later entered into Eucharistic adoration. In a remarkable scene, a square filled moments earlier with music and applause fell into complete silence as young pilgrims knelt in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

Pope Leo also encouraged young people not to fear God's call, whether to priesthood, religious life, marriage or family life. Both marriage and consecrated life, he reminded them, are authentic paths of vocation and service.

Turning his attention to the wider world, the Pope challenged young Catholics to become missionaries not only in their communities but also in the digital environment. Christians, he said, must be fully engaged in society without becoming prisoners of passing ideologies or trends.

“Be the salt of the earth and the light of the world,” he urged.

His final appeal was both simple and demanding.

In a world marked by war, violence, indifference and falsehood, young people must become trustworthy faces, witnesses of truth and builders of peace. They are called not merely to profess faith but to live it through charity.

“Faith is life fulfilled through love,” Pope Leo reminded them.

Then, issuing a challenge that resonated across the packed square, he concluded: “You can change history. Do it through love.” **Agencies**

# challenge to youth



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As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly transforms our world, Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, arrives at a timely and significant moment. From classrooms and hospitals to workplaces and homes, technology is increasingly shaping how we learn, communicate and make decisions.

Against this backdrop, the Holy Father asks a profound question: What does it mean to remain human in a digital age?

The sub-title, *On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*, clearly sets the objective of this encyclical.

One of the central messages is that technology is never neutral. The tools we create inevitably shape the way we think, relate to one another and understand ourselves. Social media, coupled with AI, influences our behaviour and relationships and affects how we think, learn and make decisions.

Pope Leo does not reject technology per se; he acknowledges the many benefits that scientific and technological advances bring to society. Yet he reminds us that technology alone cannot answer the deeper questions of meaning, morality and human dignity.

Pope Leo further draws an important distinction between AI and the human person. AI can process vast amounts of information, generate convincing videos and even imitate certain human behaviours. However, it cannot possess a conscience, experience compassion, or enter into a relationship of love.

The greater danger, the Pope suggests, is not that machines become more human, but that human beings begin to think and act more like machines — efficient but detached, knowledgeable but lacking wisdom, connected but unable to forge deep relationships.

The encyclical also challenges the belief that intelligence and technological progress alone can guarantee a better future. History reminds us that scientific advancement does not automatically produce a more humane society. Without moral guidance, progress can easily become disconnected from the common good.



## Magnifica Humanitas: A call to remain human

Pope Leo then went on to defend those whom modern society often overlooks. In a culture that highly values productivity, efficiency and independence, older persons, the sick and the vulnerable can sometimes be viewed as burdens. Yet the Holy Father insists that every human life possesses an inherent dignity that does not depend on usefulness or economic value.

Drawing on the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, Pope Leo warns against the temptation to place unlimited trust in human might and technological achievement. The challenge facing humanity today is not whether we can develop more powerful technologies, but whether we possess the wisdom to use them wisely and responsibly.

The Holy Father also raises important questions about justice and accountability. Who controls the technologies that increasingly shape our lives? Who benefits from them?

Who may be excluded? These are not merely technical questions but moral ones that concern the common good.

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of the encyclical is its concern for the human interior life. In a world filled with constant noise, many people struggle to find silence, reflection and prayer. Yet it is within this inner space that we encounter God, form our conscience and discover our true identity.

Ultimately, *Magnifica Humanitas* is a call to preserve what is uniquely human: conscience, love, compassion, wisdom and our capacity for relationship with God and one another.

The Holy Father's message is both simple and urgent: amid the promises of efficiency and convenience, do not lose sight of what makes us truly human. **Emeritus Professor Christopher Kwan Hoong Ng**

See also page 9

## Sent out in love

The readings today reveal a God who does not stand at a distance from His people but continually draws near, calls, heals and sends. From Mount Sinai to Calvary, and from the dusty villages of Galilee to our own homes and communities, we encounter a God whose love seeks a response.

In the first reading from Exodus, God reminds the Israelites of what He has done for them: "I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself." Before He gives them any commandment, before He asks anything of them, God first reminds them of His love and faithfulness. He rescued them from slavery, protected them through the wilderness, and chose them to be His own people.

This is a fundamental spiritual truth. God's relationship with us is not based on what we have achieved or how worthy we are. It begins with His initiative. He calls us not because we are perfect but because we are loved. Just as Israel was invited to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," every Christian is called to reflect God's presence in the world. Our vocation is not merely personal salvation but participation in God's mission.

The second reading deepens this understanding. St Paul writes that "while we were still weak, Christ died for the ungodly." God did not wait for humanity to become holy before loving us. Christ entered our brokenness, took upon Himself our sins, and reconciled us to the Father.

This passage challenges a common temptation: the belief that we must somehow

earn God's love. The Gospel tells us otherwise. God loves first. He reaches out first. He saves first.

Many people carry hidden burdens of guilt, regret or inadequacy. They feel unworthy of God's mercy. Yet the Cross stands as the ultimate proof that God's love is not conditional. Christ did not die for a perfect humanity but for a wounded one. If God loved us at our worst, how much more does He desire to draw us closer now?

This brings us to the Gospel, where Jesus looks upon the crowds and is "moved with pity for them, because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd."

The phrase "moved with pity" is much stronger than simple sympathy. It describes a deep compassion that arises from the very depths of one's being. Jesus does not merely observe human suffering; He allows it to touch His heart.

What does Jesus see when He looks at the crowd? He sees people searching for meaning, burdened by suffering, confused, lonely and spiritually hungry. The reality has not changed much today. Behind smiling faces are people carrying anxieties, grief, disappointments and fears. Many are searching for hope in a world that often leaves them feeling lost.

Jesus' response is striking. He does not simply perform miracles Himself. Instead, He calls the Twelve and sends them out. They are instructed to proclaim the Kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons.

The mission of Christ immediately

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with the Editor

### 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: Exodus 19: 2-6;

Romans 5: 6-11;

Gospel: Matthew 9: 36 - 10:8

becomes the mission of His disciples.

The same is true for us. We often pray that God will do something about the suffering in the world. Yet very often God answers by sending His people. He sends ordinary men and women to bring encouragement, reconciliation, healing and hope.

Not everyone is called to preach from a pulpit or travel as a missionary. But every Christian is called to be a sign of God's compassion. A listening ear, a word of encouragement, a visit to the lonely, an act of forgiveness, a gesture of kindness — these can become channels through which Christ continues His ministry.

The harvest remains abundant. There are countless people longing for hope, meaning and love. The question is not whether God is calling workers into His harvest. The question is whether we are willing to respond.

Having received God's love freely, may we freely share it. Having been gathered by the Good Shepherd, may we become instruments through whom others encounter His compassion. For the world does not merely need more information about God; it needs living witnesses who reveal His heart.



**DIocese OF PENANG**

PKK/BDN/2026/06/234

**And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.'**

1 Corinthians 11:24

**1. Ad Limina Apostolorum Visit 2026**

I thank each one of you for your prayers, solidarity and unity with me and all the members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei during our recent visit to the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul and the offices of the Holy See. With blessings to you, I share the events of each day and a short interview which was conducted in Rome: <https://acesse.one/ouegj6a>

**2. Feast of St Anne is an intangible cultural heritage of Penang**

On January 22, the Penang State Government officially gazetted the Feast of St Anne, celebrated at the Minor Basilica of St Anne in Bukit Mertajam, as an intangible cultural heritage under the Penang State Heritage Enactment 2011. The formal presentation was held on May 9, where Deacon Lazarus Jonathan and Sr Mercie Lai, FMDM representing Cardinal Sebastian Francis, received the Certificate and Plaque from the Chief Minister of Penang, YAB Chow Kon Yeow. Both the Certificate and Plaque are

now displayed at the Minor Basilica of St Anne. <https://sl1nk.com/5lnha24>

**3. Presentation on the life of Sybil Kathigasu and 78th Anniversary Memorial Mass**

A special presentation on the life, legacy, and mission of Malayan heroine Sybil Kathigasu nee Daly by Brigadier General Dato' Fitzgerald Augustin (Retired), followed by her 78th Anniversary Memorial Mass, took place on Saturday, June 6 at the Church of St Michael, Ipoh. All are invited to join in remembering her life as the Church creates awareness and gathers information for her Cause of Canonisation.

Let us come together to discern her legacy and continue to pray for her canonisation. <https://acesse.one/ai8u9rl>

**4. First encyclical of Pope Leo XIV, Magnifica Humanitas**

Published on May 25, the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, has promulgated his first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, on safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence. This document was signed on the anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, issued by Pope Leo XIII on May 15, 1891. I encourage all the faithful to read and reflect upon this timely teaching as we navigate these new societal shifts. <https://11nk.dev/xdr7f8j>

# Notifications and Updates

**5. Heartfelt thanks to Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia, Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski**

We bid a fond farewell and express our heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski, the Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia. After faithfully serving our region since 2020, the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, has recently appointed him as the new Apostolic Nuncio to Malta and Libya. We deeply appreciate Archbishop Zaluski's guidance, solidarity, and dedicated service to the Malaysian Catholic Church during his tenure. As he departs for his new diplomatic mission, let us keep him in our prayers for a safe travel and abundant grace for his new appointment.

**6. Ozanam Taiping: Retiring with grace**

The Society of St Vincent de Paul invites all who are enjoying the gift of retirement to embrace this blessed season of life with joy and purpose. Through engaging activities, you are warmly welcome to build meaningful connections, renew your spirit, and enjoy the gift of community. <https://11nk.dev/fw257as>

**7. The sacred journey of life, a reflection on the journey of life**

I wish to share with you a short reflection on the sanctity of our journey of life. This reflection was also shared during the homily

at the Requiem Mass of Fr Anthony Pillai. <https://11nk.dev/8t15c71>

**8. FJM Southeast Asia Wellness Centre in the Diocese of Penang**

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Titular Roman Catholic Bishop of Penang and the Catholic Diocese of Hualien, Taiwan for the promotion of the Fr Josef's Method (FJM) of Holistic Reflexology on May 13. In addition to serving others through charitable outreach, both parties shall actively use FJM as an instrument of evangelisation for Southeast Asia. <https://acesse.one/ulyypj03>

**9. Completion and ongoing studies of Fr Andrew Khoo**

While his doctoral studies are ongoing, we congratulate Fr Andrew Khoo on having completed his Licentiate studies in Philosophy at the Angelicum University in Rome. <https://11nk.dev/1k6ubrp>

In view of the application to Rome for the Canonisation of Sybil Medan Daly Kathigasu, he continues to stay on to take up the Course for the Studium at the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, which is obligatory for those who are to engage in the work of Postulators for the Causes of Beatification and Canonisation.

*Sebastian Francis*

Cardinal Sebastian Francis

**KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow**

**June**

- 16 Clergy Monthly Recollection
- 19 Mass – College General Penang Feast Day
- 20 IHD Regional Formation Session
- 20 Feast – Church of St Aloysius, Mantin
- 21 Confirmation – Church of Christ the Light, Kepong

**PENANG DIOCESE**

**Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis**

**June**

- 13- Annual General Meeting
- 20 – Commission for Social Communication, St Francis Xavier Retreat Centre, Singapore

**MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul**

**June**

- 16-17 Clergy Month Recollection – Good Shepherd Seminary, Melaka
- 18 MJD Young Peoples' Network – Good Shepherd Seminary, Melaka
- 20 Caritas MJD Board Meeting followed by AGM – Pusat Kasih Caritas, JB
- 21-28 Canossian Sisters Retreat – Kluang



## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #275



**Welcome dear friends**

With Trinity Sunday, the big seasons are over. The Ordinary Times are back. What's ahead?, MJD readies *parishes* to become synodal, *pastoral services* to become evangelising ministries, and *pastoral councils* to become communal discernment experiences.

**Local takes! Like our Malaysian weather. Election frenzy again.** Speculations are rife. Johor readying for the polls. Speculating on Dissolution of Parliament. A new political party, Bersama, enters the ring. Mergers and leap frogging yet to be seen.

**Workfront:** 24-hr Socso protection is next, with the raising of salary deductions. In April, 7,000 workers were laid off.

Talents heading south remains unstoppable.

**Messy!** KL LRT derailment. Fiasco at the immigration counters. A non-Muslim PR collects her ID with uncorrected religious status.

Malaysia's Navy Littoral Combat Ships of the future with no missiles.

**Reading the Signs: Being Purpose-driven**

The Pope to the Italian bishops: "God does not ask us to *measure the fruitfulness of the Church* according to numbers, visibility, or influence. *On what is essential.* The focus should be on an ongoing initiation and formation in Christian life, welcoming and missionary parishes where families can gather, and listening to young people without limiting their questions, among others.

**Remembering, interpreting, orienting, celebrating.** These are the *four key stages* accompanying local Churches, Bishops' Conferences, and continental groupings towards the *Ecclesial Assembly 2028.*

**A Thought for the Week: The Stupid Boy.**

A young boy enters a barber shop and the barber whispers to his customer. "This is the dumbest kid in the world. Just watch!" The barber puts a five-rupee coin in one hand and two one-rupee coins (1+1=2) in the other, then calls the boy over and asks, "Which do you want, son?" The boy takes the two one-rupee coins and leaves. "What did I tell you?" said the barber. "That kid never learns!" Later, when the customer leaves, he sees the same young boy coming out of the ice cream store. "Hey, son! May I ask you a question? Why did you take two one-rupee coins instead of five-rupee coin?" The boy licked his cone and replied, "BECAUSE THE DAY I TAKE THE FIVE RUPEE COIN, THE GAME IS OVER." **The lesson from the barbershop:** Never presume! Never underestimate! Never judge!

**QnQ? Q asks? How do we understand silence and the silent ones in our midst?**

You will never understand someone's silence or quiet until life gives you the same pain or wound that stole their words. Many quickly judge what they do not understand. We see someone withdraw, and we call it pride. We see someone stop explaining, and we call it attitude. We see someone change, and we call it weakness. But sometimes, silence is not arrogance. Sometimes, *silence is pain trying to survive without making noise.*

Battling, wounded and disappointed *people have stopped talking* not because they hate anyone, but because life taught them that not everyone listens with compassion.

**The truth is,** many people are smiling in public while bleeding in private. Some are fighting family problems.

Some are drowning in financial pressure.

Some are carrying betrayal, rejection, loneliness, grief, depression, fear, or spiritual exhaustion. Some are tired from being strong for too long, yet the world still expects them to act normal.

Before you judge someone's silence, *ask yourself:* What pain changed them? Before you criticise someone's distance, ask yourself: What did they survive that they never spoke about?

**Life has a way of humbling everyone.** The person who once laughed at another person's tears may one day cry in silence. The person who once said, "If it were me, I would never act like that," may one day face a pain that leaves them speechless. Pain teaches lessons that opinions never can.

That is why *kindness is wisdom.* Empathy is strength. Compassion is maturity. Do not wait until suffering visits your own house before you learn to be gentle with others. Speak with care. Judge slowly. Love deeply. Respect the battles you cannot see and the stories you do not know.

*May God give us hearts that understand before judging, hands that comfort before condemning, and words that heal instead of wounding.*

**The Spirit @ Work:** "Love always involves responsibility, and love always involves sacrifice. And we do not really love Christ unless we are prepared to face His task and to take up His Cross." **William Barclay**

**Something to tickle you:** "The civilisation of love will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanisation." (par. 213) **Pope Leo**

*Bernard Paul*

Bishop Bernard Paul

# Visitation parish marks patronal feast

Sabrina Smith

SEREMBAN: The feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary was celebrated from May 27 to 31 at the Church of the Visitation under the theme *Blessed Among Women* (Luke 1:45). The five-day celebration brought together parishioners and devotees in prayer, reflection and fellowship as they honoured the Mother of God and marked the parish's patronal feast. Through daily Eucharistic celebrations and inspiring homilies preached by the invited clergy, the faithful were encouraged to deepen their devotion to Mary and strengthen their relationship with Christ.

The feast began on May 27 with Fr Philip Asirwalam as the principal celebrant, followed by Fr Leonard Lexson on the second

day, Fr Aloysius Tan on the third day, and Fr Gnana Selvam on the fourth. Through their homilies, each priest reflected on the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Church, encouraging the faithful to emulate her faith, humility, obedience and unwavering trust in God's providence.

The celebration reached its culmination on May 31, the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with Fr James Gabriel presiding as the main celebrant. In his homily, Fr James reminded the faithful that authentic discipleship is expressed not only through faith but also through service. Reflecting on the Gospel account of Mary's visitation to Elizabeth, he noted that Mary, having received the gift of Christ, did not keep Him to herself

but hastened to share His presence with another. Her journey, he said, is a powerful witness to a faith that moves beyond personal devotion and finds expression in loving action.

Fr James highlighted Mary's humility, generosity and readiness to serve as hallmarks of true discipleship, while Elizabeth's joyful recognition of the Lord's presence serves as a reminder to remain attentive to God's work in everyday life. Just as the unborn John the Baptist leapt for joy at the arrival of Jesus, Christians today are called to bring that same joy, hope and encouragement to others. The Feast of the Visitation, he said, challenges every believer to become a bearer of Christ, making God's love visible through acts of compassion, service and humility.



Fr James Gabriel incensing the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Approximately 1,500 parishioners and devotees from across the region attended the closing celebration. Concelebrating the Mass were parish priest Fr Xavier Andrew, assistant parish priest Fr Kenneth Gopal, OCD, Fr Philip Tay, OCD, Fr Nicholas Hoh, OCD, Fr Christopher Soosaipillai and Fr Edwin Peter.

Following the Eucharistic celebration, parishioners gathered for

a fellowship meal, fostering unity and strengthening bonds within the faith community. The five-day feast concluded on a joyful and prayerful note, leaving participants spiritually renewed and inspired to imitate the virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was a fitting celebration of faith, devotion and community, reflecting the parish's deep love for Our Blessed Mother.

The bishops of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei undertook their *ad limina apostolorum* pilgrimage to Rome from May 18 to 23, 2026. Returning renewed in faith and strengthened in communion with the Holy Father and the universal Church, several prelates shared with *HERALD* their reflections on this grace-filled journey and the insights they hope to bring back to the faithful.

...See also pg 5, 6 & 7

## Walking together with the Universal Church

For me, the visit was more than a series of meetings and official engagements. It was a profound spiritual reminder of the vocation entrusted to every bishop as a Successor of the Apostles.

The encounter in Rome reminded me once again of the important role, duty, and responsibility of a bishop in shepherding the local Church entrusted to his care. A bishop is called to continue the apostolic mission of Christ, guiding God's people in faith, hope, and charity.

As I prayed at the tombs of Sts Peter and Paul and visited the heart of the Catholic Church, I carried the Diocese of Sibiu close to my heart.

While I was in Rome, the centre of our Catholic faith, I constantly prayed as a Pilgrim of Hope for all our faithful, priests, religious, and families. I brought before the Lord the joys, hopes, challenges, and aspirations of our local Church.

Together with my fellow bishops, we visited numerous dicasteries of the Holy See. What touched me deeply was the spirit that animated these Vatican offices. Every dicastery conveyed a clear and beautiful message: they are there to serve and not to be served. Their mission is to accompany and support the local Churches throughout the world in carrying out the mission of Christ.

The visit also reinforced the vision of a Synodal Church — a Church that walks together in communion, participation, and mission.

We are united with the Universal Church in carrying out the mission entrusted by our Lord Jesus Christ — to proclaim the Gospel to all humanity and, indeed, to all creation. Although we belong to different dioceses and nations, we share one faith, one mission, and one Lord. The Diocese of Sibiu is not isolated from this universal mission but actively participates in it.

We are a local Church, but we are also part



of the larger Body of Christ. The mission of the Church is our mission. The joys and concerns of the Universal Church are also ours.

One of the greatest blessings of the pilgrimage was the opportunity to deepen fraternity with the bishops of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei. I feel truly blessed to have spent this time with my brother bishops. Their simplicity, humility, fraternity, and love for the Church were deeply inspiring. We prayed together, shared meals together, travelled together, and supported one another as brothers.

I hope that this spirit of fraternity will become a model for all dioceses in the re-

gion. The joy of being together as brothers in Christ should inspire all our dioceses to walk together more closely, strengthening bonds of communion and collaboration for the good of the Church in our region.

My audience with Pope Leo XIV reinforced for me the importance of remaining united with the Holy Father and faithful to the teachings of the Church.

Reflecting on my audience with Pope Leo XIV, it is the importance of unity with the Holy Father and fidelity to the teachings of the Church. Just as the bishops renewed their loyalty and respect for the Vicar of Christ, Pope Leo XIV, I encourage all the faithful to remain united with the Holy Father, faithful to the Magisterium, and obedient to the teachings of the Universal Church. Through this communion, we remain firmly rooted in the faith handed down by the Apostles.

I invite the faithful of the Diocese of Sibiu to continue praying for the Church and her mission. May we journey together as Pilgrims of Hope, united with the Universal Church, strengthened by our faith, and committed to bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

The Church is strongest when she walks together — united in communion, participating in mission, and centred on Christ. **Bishop Joseph Hii, Diocese of Sibiu**



## A genuinely warm, humble and lovable Pope

The highlight for me was celebrating Mass at the tombs of St Paul and St Peter, followed by the meeting with the Holy Father. Visiting the tombs of these two foremost apostles underscores the apostolic succession of the bishops with the twelve apostles.

After Mass at the tomb of St Peter, we met the living successor of St Peter in a 90-minute audience. The Holy Father is a good listener. Each bishop spoke and shared about the life of the local Church in Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. The Pope listened carefully before expressing his views.

Pope Leo came across as a genuinely warm, humble and lovable person. He listens well and maintains eye contact. He speaks naturally from his heart with words that are concise and easy to understand. It is refreshing to hear a Pope speaking perfect English without the need for a translator.

He advised the bishops and their flock to pray always and be concrete witnesses of the living Gospel of Jesus Christ in our part of the world. **Bishop Richard Ng, Diocese of Miri**



Walking the streets to the Apostolic Palace, May 22, 2026

# When the Spirit moves a community

Joel Ho Han Tzen

PENANG: As the joy of Easter gradually gave way to Ordinary Time, the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit was anything but ordinary. Far from settling into a quieter rhythm, the parish remained alive with anticipation. Much like the disciples gathered in the Upper Room, waiting in hope and expectation, the community stood poised to welcome anew the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost, the “birthday” of the Catholic Church, holds special significance for the cathedral community as it is also the parish feast. This year’s celebration, themed *Peace and Fire in the Spirit*, invited the faithful to reflect on the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in their personal lives, families and community, and on the Spirit’s role in uniting believers in communion and mission.

The festivities began with a nine-day Novena to the Holy Spirit from Ascension Thursday to Pentecost Sunday, accompanied by daily Masses celebrated by a total of 14 priests. The atmosphere of prayer and expectation steadily grew, culminating in the Pentecost Triduum, the solemn Vigil and Pentecost Sunday. Through the liturgies, homilies and communal prayers, parishioners were reminded that the same Spirit who descended upon the Apostles continues to guide, strengthen and animate the



Fr Raymond Raj and Fr James Tan journeying with the parish in prayer throughout the procession.

Church today.

A strong emphasis was placed on building community throughout the celebrations. Each Triduum Mass was organised by a different parish cluster, bringing together members from various ministries in service and worship. This collaborative effort fostered greater interaction among parishioners and highlighted the importance of shared responsibility in building a vibrant faith community.

A particularly inspiring display of unity was seen among the cantors from the English, Chinese and Tamil Apostolates, who led the congregation in hymns across different lan-

guages, reflecting the richness of the Church’s diversity. Their willingness to learn and sing in one another’s languages served as a beautiful witness to the spirit of Pentecost, where many tongues proclaimed one faith.

The Pentecost Vigil featured a Rosary procession to the Holy Spirit in multiple languages, followed by Eucharistic Benediction. The evening concluded with a “Night of Prayer”, organised across the parish’s language groups. As the faithful gathered in prayer, awaiting the Spirit’s outpouring, a deep sense of peace filled both the church and the hearts of those present.

Pentecost Sunday brought the celebrations

to a joyful climax. In his homily, Fr Bernard Hyacinth Arputhasamy, SJ, reflected on how the Holy Spirit does not erase diversity but transforms differences into communion, enabling people of varied backgrounds and gifts to become one body in Christ. His message echoed Cathedral rector Fr Raymond Raj’s Pentecost Vigil reflection on the Spirit’s power to transform even the weakest person into an instrument of God’s Kingdom.

At the conclusion of Mass, Parish Pastoral Council chairperson Adrian Oyog delivered a heartfelt address, inviting the community to pray for one another and continue living as Spirit-filled disciples. A fellowship lunch followed, with food, performances and joyful interaction strengthening bonds among parishioners.

Looking back on the weeks of preparation and celebration, it was evident that Pentecost was far more than a series of events. It was an experience of grace, renewal and communion. Through every prayer, liturgy and act of fellowship, the presence of the Holy Spirit was felt among the faithful, renewing hearts and strengthening the community in faith and mission. The celebration served as a reminder that Pentecost is not merely an event remembered each year, but a living reality that continues to inspire, unite and send forth the People of God to be witnesses of Christ in the world.

## A thousand Hail Marys, one heart in prayer

KLANG: On May 30, the Legion of Mary of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes gathered the faithful for a beautiful and grace-filled devotion of 1,000 Hail Marys. Members of the Legion of Mary praesidia, Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), and parishioners from across the Klang district came together as one family of faith, united in their love for the Blessed Virgin Mary and their desire to draw closer to her Son, Jesus Christ.

More than the recitation of prayers, the devotion was a profound act of trust and surrender. With each Hail Mary, participants placed before Our Lady their hopes, struggles, families, parish community, and the needs of a world longing for peace. The gathering echoed the Holy Father’s invitation

to Catholics everywhere to pray the Rosary for peace, reminding the faithful that prayer has the power to unite hearts across nations and bring hope to a troubled world.

As the voices of the faithful rose in prayer, a spirit of peace, devotion, and unity filled the church. The Rosary became a sacred journey, leading participants to reflect more deeply on the life of Christ through the loving gaze of His Mother.

The day concluded with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, where silence replaced words and hearts rested in the presence of the Lord. In that sacred stillness, many experienced a renewed sense of God’s love and a deeper awareness of His presence. It was a moment of grace, allowing the fruits of prayer to take root and flourish within.



This spiritual initiative beautifully reflected the Legion of Mary’s mission of evangelisation, discipleship, and Marian devotion. It also served as a reminder that Mary continually leads her children to Christ, encouraging them to trust more fully in God’s mercy and providence.

Many departed with hearts renewed, spirits uplifted, and a stronger desire to walk faithfully with the Lord. May the fruits of this devotion continue to inspire the parish community to persevere in prayer, grow in holiness, and journey ever closer to Christ, hand in hand with His Blessed Mother.

The most meaningful moment of the *ad limina* visit for me was the celebration of Holy Mass at the tombs of Sts Peter and Paul, followed by an audience with Pope Leo XIV, the successor of St Peter. Standing at the heart of Apostolic tradition, I experienced a profound sense of communion with the living history of the Church. It was a powerful reminder of the unbroken line of faith, leadership and witness that stretches from the Apostles to the present day through the ministry of the Bishop of Rome.

Praying and celebrating the Eucharist at the tomb of St Peter was particularly moving. As the rock upon which Christ built His Church, Peter remains a symbol of unity, continuity and fidelity through his successors. St Paul, the great missionary apostle, reminds us of the Church’s mission to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Together, these two apostles embody both the foundation and the mission of the Church — One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

Meeting Pope Leo XIV was a moment of grace and deep significance. Having previously met Pope Francis during the consistory at which he created me a cardinal, I was struck by the continuity between these two pontiffs. While each possesses a distinct personality and style of leadership, both are united in the same mission of serving the Universal Church and proclaiming the

## At the heart of Apostolic tradition



Cardinal Sebastian Francis presiding over the Mass at the tomb of St Peter with Archbishop Emeritus John Ha concelebrating.

Gospel. The encounter reinforced for me the importance of communion with the Holy Father and fidelity to the Church’s teachings. It also highlighted the reality that attempts to divide the Church along personal or ideological lines fail to grasp the deeper truth of the papacy: that each successor of Peter serves the same Church, guided by the same Spirit and entrusted with the same mission

handed down by Christ.

Our meetings with the Vatican dicasteries revealed their role: they exist first to serve the Holy Father and, through him, the Universal Church. Their professionalism, discipline, pastoral sensitivity, and spiritual depth reassured me that the Church is under the strong and faithful leadership of Pope Leo XIV. Their guidance was not abstract but deeply

connected to the realities and challenges we face in our region, offering encouragement and direction for our local mission.

The Church in Malaysia and people of all faiths are invited to go beyond the rhetoric of politics, race, religion, and nationality. I felt strongly in my *ad limina* visit that unity, diversity and equality are an asset if we are able to go beyond the rhetoric. By transcending the rhetoric of politics, race, religion, and nationality, we embody a Catholic truth based on the Trinity.

The Church of Malaysia is in a region which is vibrant and multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-lingual. But enough of thinking of them only as challenges! We should think of them firstly as assets: diversity and unity in diversity, are assets. Diversity is not a threat, and within diversity, we must discover equality. With these three fundamental things — unity, diversity and equality — it’s really about the Trinity and it is about us. That is very exciting, and with the right orientation, we can face the challenges together.

Returning from Rome, rested and renewed in spirit, I wish to share a message of confidence and hope: the Catholic Church is moving forward with strength and unity. Let us rest in the assurance that the Holy Spirit continues to guide and lead us. **Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Diocese of Penang**

# EMHCs deepen Eucharistic mission at SFA recollection

Charlene Angela

CHERAS: Reflecting on their call to serve at the Lord's table, the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) of the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) participated in a recollection themed *Sent to Serve — Living the Eucharistic Mission*, conducted by Fr Simon Labrooy on May 30.

The day began with the celebration of Holy Mass at 8.00am in the Chapel of Portiuncula, SFA, presided over by Fr Paul Cheong OFM Cap, parish priest of SFA. In his homily, Fr Paul reminded the congregation of the importance of living a faith that is expressed through action, a fitting introduction to the EMHC Recollection that followed after breakfast.

The recollection commenced with a session titled *Gift Before Duty*. Fr Simon reflected on the encounter between Melchizedek and Abram, noting how Melchizedek's blessing and offering preceded Abram's gift of a tenth of all he possessed. This, he explained, foreshadowed the Eucharist, where God first nourishes His people with grace before sending them forth in service.

Drawing parallels with the gift of manna in the desert, Fr Simon emphasised that God provides



generously and without prejudice. Through His sacrifice on the Cross, Christ gave Himself completely for all humanity. In response to this gift, EMHCs are called to offer themselves generously in service to others.

"The Eucharist is bread for tired Christians," Fr Simon remarked. He reminded participants that the Eucharist is God's free gift, satisfying the deepest hunger of the human heart. Human restlessness, he said, finds its true rest in God. The Eucharist is not merely a symbol but the real presence of Christ, made present through the consecration of bread and wine. As the source and summit of Christian life, it is from the Eucharist that all ministry draws its strength and meaning.

Participants then entered into a session of Conversation in the Spirit, marked by prayerful silence, attentive listening and heartfelt sharing. They reflected on moments when the Eucharist became personally meaningful in their lives and identified areas where they felt called to grow. Participants also shared what had touched them in the stories of others, discovering insights and encouragement through one another's experiences.

This exercise echoed a challenge posed by Fr Simon at the beginning of the recollection: everyone has a story they long to tell, but are we willing to truly listen?

The second major session focused on mission. Fr Simon reminded participants that the Eucharist builds

the Church and sends believers forth into the world. Reflecting on the Parable of the Lost Sheep, he noted that the shepherd left the ninety-nine to search for the one who was lost because the flock was incomplete without it. In the same way, Christ takes the first initiative, and His disciples are called to seek out those who have drifted away, bringing them God's mercy and love.

He described the mission of an EMHC as carrying Christ with reverence, upholding the dignity of others with discretion, and bringing hope to God's people through compassionate and attentive service. Ultimately, EMHCs are called to become what they receive.

"Listening to the experiences of others reminded me that the minis-

try of bringing the Body of Christ is not merely a duty, but a sacred privilege," shared Theresa Savarimuthu. "The fellowship, sincerity and enthusiasm shown during the sharing session made the formation even more meaningful and enriching."

Anthony Chau reflected on the importance of approaching the ministry with renewed reverence. "We should never treat our responsibility of distributing Holy Communion during Mass, especially to the homebound, as routine. Fr Simon recalled a parishioner who was moved to tears while receiving Holy Communion. Their eagerness to receive our Lord revealed a profound love for God, deep faith and a heartfelt longing for His presence."

For Philomina Arulnathan, the recollection was both inspiring and enriching. "The formation was a wonderful experience of fellowship, learning and faith. Sharing how this ministry has deepened my relationship with God was a blessing. Serving the Lord through the Holy Eucharist has been a humble and life-transforming journey that continues to nourish my soul and strengthen my faith."

As the recollection drew to a close, participants left with a renewed understanding of the sacred responsibility entrusted to them.

## Hope, communion and mission

The *ad limina* visit was filled with many moments of grace, but the most moving for me was kneeling at the tomb of St Paul in the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls. In that sacred place, I felt a deep spiritual closeness to the great apostle who gave his life for the Risen Lord. I prayed for a share in his zeal, courage and passion for proclaiming the Gospel, that I too might dedicate my life more fully to making Christ known and serving His mission.

Praying at the tomb of St Peter

likewise deepened my appreciation of the Catholic Church as the truly apostolic Church. Standing at the place associated with the Apostle Peter, I was filled with gratitude for the gift of faith and for having been baptised into this Church as a 16-year-old student. I was humbled by the realisation that I am now privileged to serve the same Church founded upon Peter's confession of faith.

These moments also brought back cherished memories of June 29, 2017, when I received the Pallium from Pope Francis on the Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul. We were told that the pallia for the newly appointed archbishops had been placed at the tomb of St Peter the night before and then presented to us during the liturgy. That symbolic gesture highlighted the bond between the ministry of bishops and the apostolic foundation of the Church, reminding us of our communion with the Pope, the successor of St Peter.

The visit also gave me time for prayer, reflection and renewal. As a pilgrim in Rome, I examined my heart and received the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Renewed in spirit, I returned to the archdiocese with a deeper desire to serve the Lord's flock. We all have our weaknesses and limitations, but we sincerely seek to work for the good of the Church and God's people. I ask

for your continued prayers for your shepherds and for me.

At the beginning of our audience with Pope Leo XIV, the Holy Father personally greeted each of us. We presented gifts from our people and local Churches. I offered him a Gen Z Bible, *Identity: Identified*, inspired by the 2018 Synod on Youth and aimed at addressing the challenges faced by young people today.

As the newly appointed bishop-chairman of the FABC Office of Evangelisation, and having previously served in the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, I found the discussions with the dicasteries for Interreligious Dialogue, Promoting Christian Unity and Evangelisation especially significant.

In my presentations, I shared how the Church in Malaysia and throughout Asia has contributed to interreligious dialogue by learning to live alongside neighbours of different faiths, cultures and traditions. Within the FABC, we increasingly speak of "neighbour religions", recognising that friendship, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence are essential in our societies.

Asia has also shaped a distinctive approach to evangelisation. We often speak of "whispering the Gospel" and "telling the story of Jesus in Asia" through witness, relationships and everyday encounters. This reflects the reality that Christians are often a minority, yet are called



Archbishop Simon Poh presenting the Gen Z Bible, "Identity: Identified" to Pope Leo XIV.

to proclaim Christ in ways that are respectful, authentic and rooted in local cultures.

I was encouraged that these perspectives resonated strongly with the dicasteries. The discussions revealed a genuine appreciation for the Asian experience and opened the way for closer collaboration in interreligious dialogue, ecumenical engagement and evangelisation.

The *ad limina* visit concluded with our departure from Rome on Pentecost Sunday. As we reflected on the week, we realised that our pilgrimage had taken place while our parishes were praying the Novena to the Holy Spirit. Though we were not physically present with

our people on Pentecost, I came to see this as synodality in action. While the bishops gathered in Rome in communion with the Holy Father, our priests, religious and lay faithful continued the prayer and mission of the Church at home.

Having experienced deep communion with the successor of St Peter, we returned inspired by the Holy Spirit and renewed in our mission. Like the Apostles sent forth at Pentecost, we too were sent back to proclaim anew the hope, peace and joy of the Risen Lord, confident that the Spirit continues to guide and strengthen the Church in every age. **Archbishop Simon Poh, Archdiocese of Kuching**



Archbishop Simon Poh presenting a memento to Cardinal Luis Tagle from the *The Great Pilgrimage of Hope* conference held in Penang on November 27-30, 2025 on behalf of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) Office of Evangelisation (OE).

# St Anthony's parish holds Jericho Walk for renewal

PENANG: The Triumph Heart of Mary (THM) community organised a solemn Jericho Walk at the Church of St Anthony, Nibong Tebal on May 27, drawing about 120 parishioners in a spirit of prayer, faith and unity.

Held in preparation for the parish feast in June, the Jericho Walk was inspired by God's battle plan in the Book of Joshua and served as a spiritual exercise seeking God's blessings, protection and renewal for the parish community. The programme began with the celebration of Mass at 7.00am, presided over by parish priest Msgr Henry Rajoo, followed by an opening prayer at 8.00am before parishioners and THM members gathered for fellowship.

Msgr Henry had encouraged the parish to undertake the Jericho Walk as part of a wider effort to foster spiritual renewal and revitalisation with-

in St Anthony's parish community.

Inspired by the Old Testament account in the Book of Joshua, the Jericho Walk recounts how the Israelites, through faith and obedience, circled the walls of Jericho for seven days until the walls crumbled down. Similarly, this walk served as a prayerful act of intercession, to tear down all obstacles, whether human or spiritual, that might hinder the spiritual transformation of the parishioners.

The group, led by Msgr Henry and Agnes Lim, the formator of THM, with members of the THM community and parishioners from the Church of St Anthony, completed seven rounds of the designated route while praying the Rosary.

The event embodied the spirit of synodality in listening, participation, dialogue, discernment and walking

together — as participants reflected on the promptings of the Holy Spirit and shared insights that deepened their faith and unity.

We were blessed with good weather throughout the walk under a clear blue sky, and the prayers of many were answered. The walk lasted for two and a half hours and concluded with a time of joyful praise and worship in English, Bahasa, Mandarin and Tamil, echoing the biblical moment when the Israelites ended their march with loud praise and music.

The Jericho Walk at the Church of St Anthony was a time of spiritual declaration of faith and unity, drawing all who participated into repentance, while strengthening and deepening their trust in God's love. Just as the walls of Jericho once fell, the faithful believe that every obstacle to the parish had crumbled before the



Msgr Henry Rajoo leading his parishioners on seven rounds of the designated route while praying the Rosary.

power of His grace.

THM is a community of Intercessors-In-Formation endorsed by the Rt Rev Bernard Paul, Bishop of Malacca Johore Diocese since it was formed in 2019. This ministry was initiated by the late Fr Benedict Yee Yat Chong, for members to nurture a deep, personal and contemplative relationship with the Blessed Trinity through prayer, discernment and on-going formation.

THM Penang was incepted in December 2020, endorsed by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang Diocese. The ministry

is guided by its Spiritual Advisor, Msgr Henry Rajoo and members are formed under the direction of certified formator Agnes Lim, ensuring doctrinal soundness and integrity. Members in THM undergo a structured four-module spiritual formation programme.

Catholics who are interested to learn more about this programme may register for the *Into the Deep Retreat* organised by THM Penang, which will be held from Sept 4 to 6, at Stella Maris Retreat Centre Penang, via <https://forms.gle/KQb-PYCTCabU3M5Bs5> or WhatsApp 6012-4285033.

## G.E.M.A. highlights power of faith-filled communication

KUALA LUMPUR: Communicators, creatives, media practitioners, and parish ministry members from across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur gathered at the Church of St Anthony for the annual G.E.M.A. Mass and fellowship in celebration of the 60th World Day of Social Communications.

G.E.M.A., which stands for *Gathering of Everyone in Media and Communications Apostolate*, takes its name from the Bahasa Malaysia word *gema* (echo), reflecting the call to echo Christ's message of faith, hope, and love through communications.

The day began with Mass presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow, followed by fellowship and networking. In



Communicators and media practitioners praying during Mass.

a special video message, Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Archdiocese Social

Communications Ministry, who was away in Sandakan, encouraged communicators to use their gifts to

foster encounter, build community, and communicate hope in today's digital world.

Archbishop Julian highlighted the importance of truth, integrity, and responsibility in communication. He reminded participants that while technology and artificial intelligence continue to transform the media landscape, authentic human voices and relationships must remain at the heart of every message.

The gathering also showcased several initiatives of the Archdiocese Social Communications Ministry, including the ongoing *Faces of Love* campaign, which honours individuals who have touched lives and strengthened the Church through personal stories and testimonies.

An upcoming photography forma-

tion session was also announced as part of the ministry's commitment to nurturing communication talents within the Archdiocese.

Participants were also introduced to the upcoming *#MyChurch competition*, inviting parishioners across the archdiocese to creatively share stories of faith, traditions, and parish life through digital media, with prizes of up to RM1,000 to be won.

More than a celebration, G.E.M.A. affirmed the vital role communicators play in the Church's mission, recognising the contributions of writers, photographers, videographers, designers, social media teams, and communications professionals in spreading the Gospel through modern means. **Shivonne Prevena**

A particularly meaningful experience during the *ad limina* visit was the audience with Pope Leo XIV. Being able to converse with him directly, without the need for a translator, made the encounter especially significant. He listened attentively to our concerns and responded with understanding, wisdom and compassion.

His constant appeal for peace and his call for all Christians to become builders of peace in today's troubled world reminded us that the Church's mission extends beyond proclaiming the Gospel to also fostering reconciliation, dialogue and harmony among peoples.

The meetings with the various Vatican dicasteries were equally enriching. At the Dicastery for Communication, we were reminded of our responsibility to communicate truthfully and responsibly in an age marked by misinformation and fake news. We were encouraged to reflect carefully before communicating, ensuring that our words contribute positively to society and make a genuine difference. The dicastery also challenged us not to be afraid to raise important questions and to promote a more humane and

## A listening Pope, a listening Church

compassionate world.

Our visit to the Dicastery for Divine Worship reaffirmed the importance of remaining faithful to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and to the liturgical life of the Church. Fidelity to the Church's teaching and tradition remains essential in preserving ecclesial communion and unity.

The meeting with the Secretariat of the Synod highlighted the importance of forming missionary disciples who are capable of participation, collaboration and co-responsibility within the Church. We were reminded of the need to listen to all people, including those whose views may differ from our own. Such formation helps cultivate communities that are active, accountable, collaborative and non-judgemental, qualities that are essential if the Church is to move forward faithfully and effectively in today's world.

One of the unique contributions that the Church in Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei can offer to the universal Church is our lived experience of harmony within



Pope Leo XIV greeting Fr Robert Leong.

multicultural and multireligious societies. In our region, people of different faiths, cultures and ethnic backgrounds have learned to live alongside one another with mutual respect and understanding. Rather than focusing on differences, we seek to recognise and celebrate the goodness present in one another's traditions, cultures and religious festivals. This spirit of openness and respect offers a valuable witness to peaceful coexistence in an

increasingly divided world.

Throughout the *ad limina* pilgrimage, the bishops spent much time praying, walking and journeying together. These shared experiences underscored the importance of fraternity among bishops. Such fraternity strengthens relationships, fosters mutual support and reminds us that bishops, too, need friendship, encouragement and companionship in their ministry. In today's pastoral landscape, where challenges can be

complex and demanding, this sense of brotherhood enables us to serve the People of God with greater unity and effectiveness.

Returning from Rome renewed in spirit, I am encouraged by the knowledge that the Church is truly a universal family. Sharing our hopes, concerns and challenges with the Holy Father and the wider Church deepens our understanding of one another and strengthens the bonds of communion that unite us. We experienced firsthand the Holy Father's attentiveness, compassion and willingness to listen, reminding us that we are never far from the heart of the Church.

My message to the faithful is one of hope and confidence. Wherever we may be, we belong to a welcoming family of faith. The Church is our home, and we journey together as one community united in Christ. Let us continue to trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, knowing that the Lord continues to accompany His Church with love, grace and hope. **Fr Robert Leong, Apostolic Vicariate of Brunei Darussalam**

# Peace, AI and synod top agenda at June consistory

VATICAN: Global conflicts, Pope Leo XIV's encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, and the ongoing implementation of the Synod on Synodality will be the main topics of discussion during the Consistory convened by the Pope from June 26 to 29.

Among those expected to attend are Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, Malaysia, and Cardinal William Goh, Archbishop of Singapore, who will join fellow cardinals from around the world in reflecting on key issues facing the Church and the wider global community.

The agenda was outlined by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, Dean of the College of Cardinals, in a letter sent to participating cardinals on June 3.

According to Cardinal Re, Pope Leo intends the gathering to be a time of mutual listening, discern-



**Pope Leo XIV shares a light moment with cardinals, during a consistory at the Vatican Jan 7-8, 2026. (OSV News/Vatican Media/Simone Risoluti)**

ment and shared reflection on issues affecting the life and mission of the Church.

The first session will focus on the international situation and the realities facing local Churches around

the world. Cardinals will be invited to share the challenges, tensions and sufferings experienced by the faithful in their regions, while also highlighting signs of hope, reconciliation and fidelity to the Gospel.

The second and third sessions will examine key themes from *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo's first encyclical, published on May 25.

Particular attention will be given to Chapter Five, "The Culture of Power and the Civilisation of Love," which addresses the growing threats posed by conflict, violence and social polarisation. Cardinals from war-affected regions will share their experiences, while participants will reflect on the Church's role in promoting peace and reconciliation.

Discussions will also explore the Pope's call to reject the misuse of the "just war" theory and identify practical ways for Christian communities to become builders of peace.

A further session will focus on the encyclical's theme of "building in goodness," examining how the Gospel can guide humanity

amid rapid social and technological change and foster authentic human development.

The final session will include an update on the implementation of the Synod on Synodality, particularly in light of the recent Vatican document outlining preparations for the Synodal Assemblies of 2027 and 2028.

The gathering will conclude with an open dialogue between the cardinals and Pope Leo, with individual interventions limited to three minutes.

The Consistory sessions on June 26 and 27 will be held in the Paul VI Hall and the Synod Hall. The meeting will conclude on June 29 with the Mass for the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul in St Peter's Basilica, during which Pope Leo will bless and impose the pallia on newly appointed metropolitan archbishops.

**Vatican News**

## Village-to-village Rosary mission gathers Bangladesh's faithful

BANGLADESH: A month-long Rosary prayer programme that brought Catholics together across villages concluded on May 31 at Our Lady of Protection Parish in Nobai Bottola, a Marian pilgrimage centre in the Diocese of Rajshahi, northwestern Bangladesh.

Held throughout May, traditionally observed by Catholics worldwide as the Month of Mary, the programme centred on the theme: *Come, let us follow in Mother Mary's footsteps and journey toward Heaven*. About 370 faithful from different villages of the parish participated in the concluding celebration.

Nobai Bottola is known for its vibrant Catholic communities, many of whom belong to Indigenous ethnic groups. The parish is widely recognised as a Marian pilgrimage shrine that attracts thousands of devotees from across the country each year.

Throughout the month, parishioners gathered daily to pray the Rosary in homes and village communities. The prayer initiative moved from house to house, block to block, and village to village, continuing a long-standing tradition that encourages families to deepen their devo-

tion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and strengthen their faith through communal prayer.

Parish Priest Fr Swapan Martin Purification said the closing celebration coincided with the Church's Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity.

"Although today the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, we gave due importance to that feast while also marking the conclusion of the Month of Mary through a Marian procession," he said.

The concluding programme featured the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, a Marian procession, communal recitation of the Rosary, and five Scripture readings from the Bible corresponding to the Rosary's mysteries. Members of the Mother Mary Association also presented devotional offerings at the feet of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Our Lady of Protection Parish holds a special place in the Catholic Church in Bangladesh. As one of the country's important Marian pilgrimage sites, it welcomes thousands of pilgrims annually who come to offer thanksgiving, fulfil vows, and present their prayers and petitions to the Blessed Virgin Mary. **RVA**



**Catholics gather for the closing celebration of a month-long Rosary prayer programme at Our Lady of Protection Parish in Nobai Bottola, Diocese of Rajshahi, Bangladesh, on May 31, 2026. (RVA photo)**

BANGKOK: In the semicircular Chapel of the Holy Spirit at St Louis Hospital in central Bangkok, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity unfolded not through the thunder of an organ or the resonance of spoken text, but through the profound, expressive syntax of motion.

Dozens of Deaf faithful gathered on Sunday, May 31, choosing to celebrate this major feast day together despite a five-day nationwide holiday weekend.

The chapel's distinctive semicircular seating arrangement appears ideally suited to the needs of Deaf worshippers. With pews arranged in a gentle curve, every participant enjoys a clear, unobstructed view of the altar, the celebrant, interpreters, and fellow worshippers, an essential element of visual communication.

The Mass was celebrated by Fr Peter Bhuravaj Searaariyah, a diocesan priest from the Diocese of Chanthaburi who commutes four hours to Bangkok to serve the community.

Appointed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand as national coordinator for Deaf Ministry a decade ago, Fr Bhuravaj remains the only priest in the kingdom fluent in Thai Sign Language (TSL), a skill that enables him to celebrate the liturgy directly in the language of the Deaf community without relying solely on interpreters.

For the underserved Deaf and hard-of-hearing Catholics from across Bangkok and neighbouring provinces who journey here each week, the Sunday Mass represents a vital sanctuary of accessibility, inclusion, and specialised pastoral care.

Every aspect of the liturgy, from the prayers and Scripture readings to hymns of praise, is expressed through Thai Sign Language, supported by trained interpreters and

## Deaf Catholics celebrate Trinity Sunday Mass



**In the semicircular Chapel of the Holy Spirit at St Louis Hospital in central Bangkok, Deaf Catholics participate in the Trinity Sunday Mass through Thai Sign Language on May 31, 2026. (LiCAS News)**

led by Fr Bhuravaj himself.

To accommodate hearing attendees, a trained interpreter spoke into a microphone during the pre-Mass announcements and the liturgy, translating the signed words aloud.

"Sign language for church and religious terminology is incredibly challenging," Fr Bhuravaj explained.

"It often relies on deep theological metaphors and abstract concepts that do not always have direct equivalents in everyday sign language. To bridge this gap, we are likely the only country that has developed a specialised, visual 'picture language' version of the Bible."

The mystery of the Trinity, traditionally one of the most abstract doctrines in Christian theology, found a vivid, material expression during the service.

To signify the Triune God, the priest and the congregation signed the Holy Trinity by showing three

distinct fingers shifting seamlessly into a single, unified handshape. Through this fluid motion, the theological concept of "Three Persons, One God" became immediately visible.

This deep theological precision was mirrored during the Gloria and the Creed. The congregation moved in striking unison, their hands deliberately shaping their shared belief in creation (the Father), salvation (the Son), and the ongoing life of the Church (the Holy Spirit).

As the Mass concluded and worshippers exchanged greetings through smiling faces and animated signs, the gathering offered a powerful reminder that faith transcends spoken language. In the language of signs, the Gospel continues to be proclaimed, understood and lived, ensuring that every member of the Church can encounter Christ in a way that speaks directly to the heart. **LiCAS News**

# Remaining human in a digital age

Throughout the history of the Catholic Church, encyclicals have marked significant moments of papal teaching. More than official letters, they are among the Church's most important instruments of moral, theological, and social reflection. They often emerge when humanity confronts profound questions and invite Catholics, and often the wider world, to consider those questions in the light of faith.

The word encyclical derives from the Greek *enkyklios*, meaning “circulating” or “general.” Traditionally addressed to bishops and, through them, to the universal Church, encyclicals occupy an important place within the ordinary papal magisterium. While they do not define dogma, they provide authoritative teaching intended to guide conscience, shape pastoral practice, and illuminate the Church's response to contemporary challenges. They are the fruit of deep research, prayer, and reflection.

Many see Pope Leo XIV's *Magnifica Humanitas* as an attempt to do for the digital age what Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) did for the Industrial Age. Confronting the social upheavals of the Industrial Revolution, *Rerum Novarum* re-centred society on the God-given dignity of the worker and the human person. At a time of deep tension between unrestrained capitalism and revolutionary socialism, Pope Leo XIII articulated a distinctly Catholic vision grounded in the dignity of labour, the rights of workers, social solidarity, and the common good. That document became the foundation of modern Catholic social teaching and continues to influence the Church's engagement with public life today. Like *Magnifica Humanitas*, it sought to form and deepen the moral conscience of society.

Any discussion of *Magnifica Humanitas* naturally recalls Pope Francis' landmark encyclical, *Laudato Si'* (2015), which I regard as one of the defining encyclicals of the twenty-first century. Its enduring contribution lies not only in its concern for the environment but also in its profound theological vision of intercon-

***Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical challenges humanity to place human dignity, ethical responsibility and the common good at the heart of technological progress. In these reflections, DATIN DAME SHALINI AMERASINGHE GANENDRA DSG and DR JUDE SELVARAJ explore the significance of Magnifica Humanitas and its relevance in an age increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence.***

nectedness. Francis argued that ecological degradation, poverty, social exclusion, consumerism, and spiritual alienation are not separate crises but dimensions of a single human crisis. Creation, he taught, is neither a commodity nor a possession, but a gift entrusted to humanity for stewardship and gratitude.

For many Catholics, including my own family, *Laudato Si'* transformed ecology from a political discussion into a spiritual discipline. It encouraged us to think differently about daily life: reducing waste, consuming more intentionally, supporting local and indigenous products where possible, cultivating gardens, extending the life of possessions rather than constantly replacing them, and embracing renewable energy as a practical expression of care for creation.

If *Laudato Si'* asked how humanity should relate to creation, *Magnifica Humanitas* asks how humanity should relate to its own creations.

Issued at a time when artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping economies, communication, education, governance, and even personal relationships, Pope Leo's encyclical addresses one of the defining questions of our age: how do we preserve authentic human dignity amid unprecedented technological power?

Importantly, the encyclical is not anti-technology. Pope Leo recognises the immense potential of artificial intelligence to advance knowledge, improve health care, expand educational opportunities, and contribute to human flourishing. Yet he insists that technological progress cannot be evaluated solely by what

is possible. It must also be judged by what is good. Human values, moral responsibility, and concern for the common good must remain central to every technological advance.

His question is not whether machines can become more powerful. It is whether human beings can remain fully human while using them.

Throughout *Magnifica Humanitas*, the Holy Father returns to the conviction that every person possesses an intrinsic dignity that cannot be reduced to productivity, data, economic value, political utility, or algorithmic categorisation. He raises concerns about the concentration of technological power, the future of work, the ethical governance of artificial intelligence, the manipulation of information, and the risk that human relationships may drift away from genuine empathy, compassion, and love.

At its heart, however, this encyclical is not about machines. It is about persons.

The title itself offers an important clue. *Magnifica Humanitas* evokes Mary's *Magnificat*, the hymn of praise recorded in the Gospel of Luke. In choosing this title, Pope Leo suggests that authentic human greatness is not found in domination, efficiency, or technological mastery. Rather, it is found in humility, solidarity, gratitude, relationships, and openness to God.

This vision places the human person at the centre of social, economic, and technological life. It challenges societies to ask whether innovation serves humanity or whether humanity is increasingly being asked to serve innovation.

These questions are particularly relevant for

Malaysia and the wider Asian region. We live in societies marked by rapid technological change, economic dynamism, and growing digital dependence. Artificial intelligence offers remarkable opportunities in education, healthcare, business, and public services. Yet it also raises pressing concerns about employment, misinformation, cyberbullying, online exploitation, privacy, and the ethical use of personal data. As governments and institutions develop policies to address these challenges, Pope Leo's call for human-centred technology becomes increasingly timely.

Every great encyclical begins as a document but becomes influential only when it enters lived reality. *Rerum Novarum* challenged the industrial age. *Laudato Si'* challenged ecological indifference. *Magnifica Humanitas* challenges the digital age to remain genuinely human.

Pope Leo does not offer technical solutions, nor does he seek to slow innovation. Instead, he reminds us of a foundational truth: every technological development must be evaluated according to whether it serves the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God.

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly woven into daily life, Pope Leo reminds us that the ultimate question is not what technology can do, but who we are becoming through its use. The future of AI will be shaped not only by engineers, corporations, and policy-makers, but also by ordinary people who choose to place human dignity, compassion, and the common good at the centre of progress. If we can do that, we will embrace the benefits of innovation without losing sight of what makes us truly human.

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## Have we forgotten to be human?

Pope Leo XIV's recent encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, offers a compelling reflection on the Church's role in the age of artificial intelligence. At a time when human dignity is often overshadowed by self-interest, technological ambition, and economic interests, the encyclical serves as a moral compass and guiding light for those seeking a more humane and ethical path forward.

The Holy Father warns of a “significant spiritual and cultural blindness” that can accompany unchecked technological advancement. Through the lens of Christian humanism and Catholic social teaching, he examines the ethical, social, and spiritual challenges posed by artificial intelligence. In doing so, he highlights growing inequalities, threats to human dignity, and the urgent need for responsible communication, digital literacy, economic justice, and protection from new forms of dependence and exploitation. Above all, he calls for a renewed commitment to creating the social conditions that allow individuals, families, and communities to flourish.

By invoking the biblical images of the Tower of Babel and the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, Pope Leo presents two contrasting visions of human progress. One reflects pride, fragmentation, and self-reliance; the other, restoration, community, and shared purpose. The contrast highlights the choice facing humanity today: whether technology will deepen our divisions or strengthen the bonds that unite us.

### AI governance and ethics

The regulation of artificial intelligence has been under discussion for some time. In 2020, the Vatican released *The Rome Call for AI Ethics*, a document signed by the Pontifical Academy for Life, Microsoft, IBM, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and the Italian Ministry of Innovation. The document promotes an ethical approach to artificial intelligence and seeks to foster shared responsibility among international organisations, governments, institutions, and the private sector so that technological progress continues to place humanity at its centre.

Similarly, *Antiqua et Nova*, a Vatican document published in 2025, examines the relationship between artificial intelligence and human intelligence. It explains that although AI is a powerful computational tool, it does not possess true rationality, consciousness, or personhood. The document emphasises that AI should never replace human judgment but should remain a complementary tool that supports human dignity and advances the common good.

Closer to home, AI governance across Asia remains highly fragmented. Approaches range from voluntary guidelines and industry-led ethical frameworks to comprehensive national legislation. Within this landscape, the *ASEAN Guide on AI Governance and Ethics* serves as an important regional framework promoting the safe, responsible, and ethical use of artificial intelligence throughout Southeast Asia.

In Chapter Four of *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo presents families and young people as the “social conditions for hope.” He warns

against the dangers of the “digital attention economy,” in which platforms and services are designed to capture time and attention by exploiting human vulnerability and eroding inner freedom.

When business models profit from human fragility, people are reduced to means rather than ends. Pope Leo therefore, calls for technologies that safeguard interior freedom through digital sobriety, stronger protections for minors, and resistance to exploitative models that prioritise profit over human well-being.

This message resonates strongly in the Malaysian context. Online harms affecting children — including cyberbullying, grooming, sextortion, and exposure to harmful content — have become pressing concerns. Reports estimate that as many as 100,000 Malaysian children who use the internet may face some form of online sexual exploitation each year. The recent implementation of the Child Protection Code, together with the Risk Mitigation Code under the Online Safety Act 2025 (ONSA), represents an important step towards creating a safer digital environment through stronger safeguards and age-appropriate protections.

These developments echo Pope Leo's call for ethical responsibility and robust safeguards in the digital sphere. The encyclical warns that unregulated platforms can exploit vulnerability, harvest personal data for profiling, and influence behaviour through systems of surveillance and control. It also highlights how digital infrastructures can become linked to labour exploitation, resource extraction, trafficking, and

discrimination — what the Pope describes as modern forms of slavery.

*Magnifica Humanitas* offers much to reflect upon as the Church seeks to navigate the opportunities and challenges of the AI era. As Dr Tod Worner, physician and Editor-in-Chief of *Evangelisation & Culture*, observed: “*Magnifica Humanitas* spends a great deal of time reminding us of who we are and what is at stake in a hyper-technologised society. And it is justified because, somehow, we have forgotten.”

With open-source repositories now hosting more than two million AI models — the engines powering many of today's consumer-facing tools — and that number continuing to grow, the question confronting us becomes increasingly urgent: Have we forgotten to be human?

Artificial intelligence has the potential to transform health care, education, communication, and countless other aspects of society for the better. Yet technological progress alone cannot define human flourishing. As Pope Leo reminds us, the future of technology will ultimately be judged not by its power, but by whether it serves the dignity of the human person.

We should embrace the opportunities these advances offer. But in doing so, we must ensure that innovation never comes at the expense of compassion, conscience, community, and our shared humanity.

**Dr Jude is a physician and bioethicist who serves as an active parishioner at the Church of St Michael, Ipoh.**





In our previous issue, we revisited some of the key highlights of the Third Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention (PMPC III). This week, we turn our attention to the voices of the participants themselves and the final document that emerged from the gathering — a document that sought, not merely to identify challenges, but to chart a practical way forward for the Church in Peninsular Malaysia.

### Richard Chia

#### Reflections from PMPC III

Throughout the convention, delegates repeatedly returned to one central conviction: the future of the Church depends not on creating more structures, but on strengthening communities and encouraging greater participation by all the faithful.

One of the most thought-provoking observations came from Msgr Eugene Vaz of the Archdiocese of Singapore. Having witnessed both PMPC II in MAJODI and PMPC III, as well as serving as a moderator during the Clergy Pre-Convention and PMPC III, he suggested that many parish-level ministries could become less necessary if Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) were truly living out their mission at the grassroots level.

Msgr Eugene Vaz

He envisioned BECs taking greater ownership of the Church's pastoral life, where acts of charity to the poor, homeless and marginalised would naturally flow from the local community. Likewise, he suggested that the sponsorship and animation of liturgical celebrations, as well as programmes for youths and children, could be effectively organised within the BECs themselves. His remarks highlighted the convention's recurring emphasis on empowering small Christian communities as the foundation of a vibrant and missionary Church.

Echoing this call was Cyril Santhanasamy from the Diocese of Penang, who challenged delegates to move beyond merely organising BEC programmes. Catholics, he said, are called to be practitioners of BEC life, actively participating and engaging in their communities rather than simply managing activities.

He also addressed the frequently voiced concern that young people are not given sufficient space within the Church. While acknowledging the challenge, he encouraged youths to take the initiative by participating in BEC gatherings, claiming their rightful place and contributing their gifts to the life of the Church. Other-

wise, he cautioned, the same concerns could very well resurface at a future convention.

Donald Fernandez of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur drew attention to some of the practical obstacles facing the growth of BECs. Among the concerns raised during the convention were the shortage of suitable leaders and the reluctance of many to assume leadership responsibilities.

He also highlighted the lack of succession planning, insufficient ongoing formation in leadership skills, spirituality and team-building, as well as the limited involvement of young people in planning and leadership roles. His observations served as a reminder that while the vision of vibrant BECs is compelling, its success depends on forming and empowering the next generation of leaders.

Tan Sri Lim Leong Seng

#### The convention was not without its moments of candid realism.

As delegates enthusiastically proposed new commissions, surveys and studies to address various pastoral concerns, Tan Sri Lim Leong Seng, the oldest delegate at 90 years of age and a member of the Archdiocesan Finance Committee of Kuala Lumpur, rose to offer a timely reality check. With charac-

teristic wisdom and practicality, he posed a series of questions that quickly captured the attention of the assembly: "Who will finance these commissions? Who will do this work? Will this mean that everyone will increase their Sunday collections in order to fund these?"

His intervention gently reminded delegates that every new initiative requires not only vision and enthusiasm, but also people, resources and long-term commitment. It brought the discussion back to the practical realities of stewardship and sustainability within the life of the Church.

Another memorable contribution came from Fr Michael Chua, who distilled one of the Church's perennial challenges into what he called the "Two A's" — people who are Available and Able. Reflecting on the demands of ministry and service, he observed that those who are available are not always equipped with the necessary skills, while those who are able often find themselves constrained by professional responsibilities, family commitments and other obligations.

His simple yet insightful observation drew knowing smiles from many in the hall, resonating deeply with delegates who recognised the ongoing struggle to identify, form and sustain capable leaders for the Church's mission.

In just a few words, Fr Michael captured a challenge that continues to confront parishes and ministries across the country: finding people who are both willing and equipped to serve.

Fr Michael Chua

## The Final Document

### Not a new direction, but a deeper commitment

One of the notable outcomes of PMPC III was not what was added, but what was deliberately left unchanged.

Unlike the previous two Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Conventions, PMPC III did not introduce a new pastoral priority or related need. After much prayer, reflection and discussion, delegates concluded that the Core Need of building Christ-centred communities, together with the seven related needs identified by earlier conventions, remained both relevant and sufficient for the challenges facing the Church today.

The issue, delegates felt, was not the absence of direction, but the need for greater commitment in putting these priorities into practice. The final document therefore took an honest look at the Church's journey, acknowledging that while much had been achieved, there had also been shortcomings in living out the Basic Option and implementing the pastoral priorities that had been collectively embraced.

Rather than proposing new priorities, PMPC III focused on practical strategies aimed at turning vision into action.

Foremost among these was a call to renew faith through re-evangelisation and social conscientisation. Delegates recognised the need to rekindle the faith of the People

of God, reawaken Catholics to their missionary calling, and nurture a spirituality of communion.

The convention also highlighted the importance of moving beyond fragmented and ad hoc programmes. To address this, the document called for a systematic review of pastoral efforts through integrated planning, evaluation and implementation, ensuring that initiatives are purposeful, coordinated

and effective.

Another key recommendation centred on fostering a culture of dialogue and listening. The document urged the Church to establish mechanisms for consultation and feedback at every level, enabling the faithful to more fully embrace the spirit of *Sentire Cum Ecclesia* — thinking and feeling with the Church as one people journeying together.

Recognising that every pastoral vision

requires capable and committed people, PMPC III also emphasised the need for ongoing training and formation of clergy, religious, lay leaders, catechists, pastoral workers and counsellors.

The document further called for greater pastoral attention to priority groups, including various language communities, indigenous Catholics, migrants, refugees, undocumented persons, persons with disabilities, university and campus students, Catholics from Sabah and Sarawak residing in Peninsular Malaysia, and foreign nationals living in the country.

One of the more significant additions emerged from the voices of the laity. Active Church members expressed a desire for leadership that not only promoted pastoral priorities but embodied them. In response, the final document included a call for the recommitment and support of the clergy, urging bishops and priests to lead by example and walk alongside the faithful in bringing these priorities to life.

Taken together, these strategies reflected a common desire among delegates: not for new priorities, but for a renewed commitment to living the Church's mission with greater purpose, accountability and communion.



# When love becomes light

Christina Lazaroo

In some government and private hospitals across Malaysia, buildings glow green when an organ donation surgery is completed. This green light beautifully symbolises the “gift of life” being passed on from one person to another.

One such gift of life took place in late April 2026 at Sultanah Nur Zahirah Hospital, Terengganu. After a 31-year-old man passed away from heart complications, his family honoured what they knew of his generous character. Though he had not formally pledged, they consented to donate his organs as his “final act of kindness.” His kidneys, liver, bone and skin were retrieved, bringing renewed hope to several patients. The hospital later paid tribute with a ‘Walk of Honour’, and the story moved many Malaysians.

It was not the first time such generosity touched the nation. In 2023, 35-year-old Manisha Jagan Mongan’s sudden passing became another powerful testimony to the impact of organ donation. Her kidneys and liver were transplanted into patients on long waiting lists, while her corneas and bones were preserved for future recipients. Her story sparked a surge in organ donor pledges across Malaysia. According to Sungai Buloh Hospital’s tissue and organ donation unit, many were moved by how one woman’s final act of generosity gave hope not only to 11 recipients directly, but also inspired countless others to pledge their own organs.

Yet these touching stories stand against a sobering national reality. According to Malaysia’s Ministry of Health and the National Transplant Resource Centre (NTRC), more than 10,000 patients remain on the national waiting list for life-saving organ transplants, the vast majority awaiting kidneys.

Although more than 420,000 Malaysians have pledged to donate their organs, only

As thousands of Malaysians wait for life-saving organ transplants, the Church continues to affirm organ donation as a noble act of compassion, solidarity and life-giving love. Amid fears and misconceptions surrounding death and bodily integrity, Catholics are gently invited to see organ donation as a final gift of love that brings healing and renewed life to others, allowing hope to shine even beyond death.



(Derma Organ facebook)

1,084 pledges have resulted in actual posthumous donations. These donations yielded 3,414 organs and tissues for transplantation. Malaysia’s cadaveric donation rate stands at just 1.3 donors per million population, among the lowest in the world.

Several factors continue to contribute to the low donation rate. According to the NTRC, nearly 90 per cent of potential organ donations do not proceed because family members decline consent at the time of death, even when their loved one had previously pledged to donate. Limited public awareness, cultural and religious misconceptions, as well as challenges in identifying suitable donors in intensive care units, also continue to affect donation rates nationwide.

For many Catholics, these realities awaken both compassion and hesitation. Questions surrounding bodily integrity, resurrection, and cultural attitudes toward death continue to create uncertainty. These concerns are not trivial. They arise from a deep reverence for the human body, eternal life, and God’s design for the human person.

Yet the Catholic Church has consistently viewed organ donation positively. The Church teaches that donating organs after death can be a profound act of charity and solidarity. Pope St John Paul II

described organ donation as a “genuine act of love,” while the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* recognises organ donation after death as “noble and meritorious” when freely given.

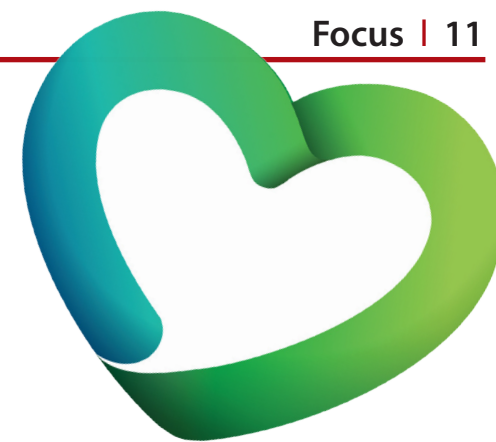
Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, *pic*, moral theologian and Director of the Catholic Research Centre in Kuala Lumpur, explains that the Church encourages organ donation because it allows one person to give life to another. Whether through corneal transplants that restore sight, kidney donations that prolong life, or even the donation of one’s body for medical research, these acts reflect Christian charity and self-giving love.



One of the most common fears among Catholics concerns the resurrection of the body. Fr Clarence notes that many people worry about whether they will still be “whole” if their organs are donated after death. He addresses this concern by pointing out that Christian belief in the resurrection is not dependent on preserving every physical part of the body indefinitely. Even in natural burial, the body eventually returns to dust. Rather, the Church believes that God restores the human person to the fullness of life promised in the resurrection.

This understanding is deeply tied to the Church’s teaching on human dignity. Every person, regardless of age, disability, illness or circumstance, possesses equal

dignity because each person is created in the image of God. Rather than diminishing the dignity of the body after death, organ donation affirms its capacity to continue serving others even beyond one’s lifetime. At the



same time, the Church sets clear ethical boundaries regarding organ donation. Consent must always be free and informed, never pressured or coerced. Organ donation should never become commercialised or exploitative, as this would reduce the human body to a commodity. The Church also teaches that organs may only be retrieved after death has been properly established and never through hastening death itself. Living donations, such as donating a kidney to a family member, are morally acceptable only if they do not seriously endanger the donor’s life or long-term well-being.

Despite these clarifications, many Catholics still admit to feeling uneasy about organ donation. Fears surrounding the body being cut open, organs not being buried together, or disrupting mourning rituals remain emotionally real, particularly within cultures where burial practices hold deep significance.

Fr Clarence acknowledges these fears while gently inviting Catholics to shift their perspective toward the recipient. Through organ donation, one person may gain the chance to see again, while another may receive a second chance at life. Seen through this lens, organ donation becomes a final act of sacrificial love for the good of another.

In Malaysia, building awareness remains essential. Parishes can play an important role through campaigns, talks, catechesis, and partnerships with organisations such as the National Kidney Foundation Malaysia and the National Transplant Resource Centre. Conversations within families, youth groups and parish communities can help transform organ donation from a taboo topic associated with death into one centred on giving life.

Even within *HERALD*, several members of the team, including the writer, have themselves pledged as organ donors, seeing it not merely as a medical decision, but as an act of generosity and hope rooted in the dignity of human life.

## Considering the gift of life

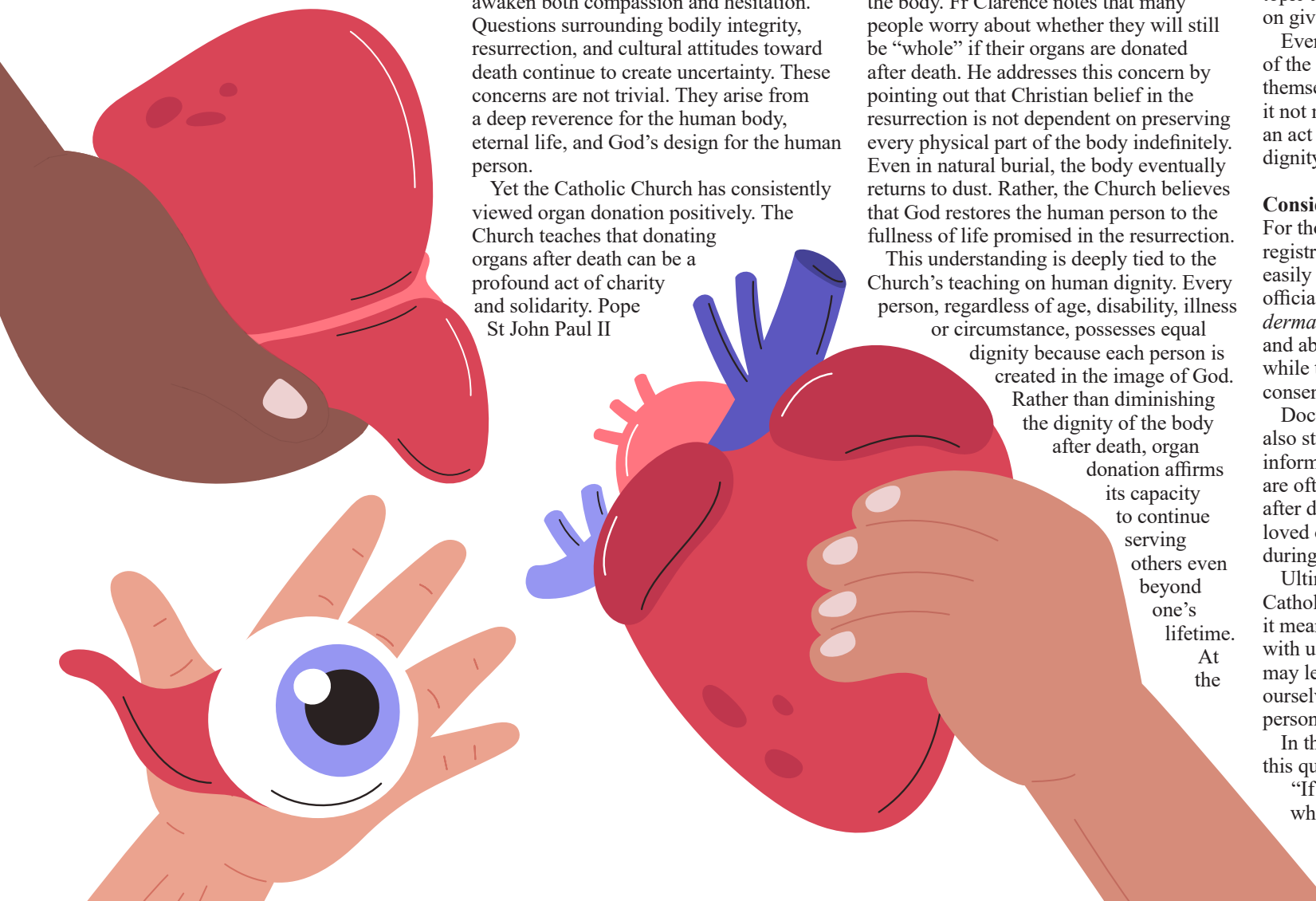
For those considering organ donation, registration in Malaysia can be done easily through the *MySejahtera* app or the official Derma Organ portal (<https://www.dermaorgan.gov.my/>). Malaysians aged 18 and above may register as organ donors, while those below 18 may do so with the consent of a parent or legal guardian.

Doctors and transplant coordinators also stress that the most important step is informing one’s next of kin, since families are often asked to provide final consent after death. Knowing the wishes of their loved one can offer clarity and reassurance during moments of grief.

Ultimately, organ donation invites Catholics into a deeper reflection on what it means to love. We cannot take our organs with us into eternity, but through them, we may leave behind something greater than ourselves: a green light that gives another person the chance to live.

In that spirit, Fr Clarence leaves us with this question:

“If we could give life to someone else, why not?”





Dempsey Fernandez

# A vocation driven in faith and action

through action, that their hope rests in the Lord, and in Him alone. In Perth, Fr Roy is known as someone who shows up — and when he does, help is rarely far behind.

His reach is wide, his response often immediate, and his desire to lift others unmistakable. It speaks volumes of his early formation — a life shaped by the quiet strength of his devoted late parents and the enduring support of siblings who remain close to his mission today.

Malaysian Catholics have every reason to be proud of this son of our soil, who celebrates his silver jubilee of priesthood this year. His celebrations will span the places closest to his heart — beginning in Perth, continuing in Kuala Lumpur, and concluding in Kota Kinabalu.

Born in Muar and later shaped by his years in Sabah, Fr Roy began his formation at College General, Penang, before continuing his studies in the Philippines — the Ateneo de Manila University, University of Santo Tomas, Maryhill School of Theology — and later in Rome.

His journey was not without struggle. There was a difficult chapter in Penang that led to his sudden departure. Discipline and obedience did not always come easily in his younger days. Yet, even then, God was shaping a larger plan. Fr Roy was never meant to take the predictable path. He was called to go where others hesitated.

In time, that call led him to ordination at the Church of the Holy Family in Albany, Australia. Today, he serves as parish priest at Pater Nostra in the Archdiocese of Perth.

His vocation may well have begun in the quiet innocence of an altar boy at the Church of St Andrew in Muar. Those who knew him then point to the influence of humble priests like Fr Matthew Lee and a charismatic Brother Robert. Fr Roy himself acknowledges the guidance of Frs Thomas Green SJ, Reginald Miranda, Anthony Naden, and the late Bishop James Chan.



(Fr Roy Pereira facebook)

When Lucy landed in Perth after a difficult life in Kuala Lumpur, she somehow found her way to Fr Roy. Or perhaps — as some would say — he found his way to her.

Her “passport” to a helping hand was simple — she was Malaysian. Fr Roy rarely turns his back on a Malaysian or Singaporean in need. When Eugene found himself without a place to stay, moving from one temporary shelter to another after being unable to pay rent, it was Fr Roy who stepped in without hesitation. And yes, Eugene too was Malaysian.

Fr Roy Pereira has never forgotten his Asian roots, even as he embraces life fully in the land Down Under. He has his own way of doing things — bold, direct, sometimes disarmingly so. Many have experienced his sharp words when needed, others his quiet, generous hand in moments of despair. Yet, through it all, the small miracles that follow in his wake have become impossible to ignore.

Countless people have encountered both sides of him — a firm correction when they go astray, and a compassionate presence when life falls apart. In their moments of helplessness, Fr Roy does not simply speak about hope; he shows it. He reminds them,

He began as a young boy — unsure, unpolished, perhaps even unlikely. But as Scripture reminds us, God does not always call the qualified; He qualifies the called. The stone once overlooked often finds its place in the foundation.

Fr Roy is not one to sit still. He is constantly on the move — from beaches to city streets, from homes to hospitals — meeting those he has helped and reaching out to those just arriving in search of a new beginning. This restless spirit led him to establish the Malaysian/Singapore Catholic Community of Australia, which has grown into a vibrant network of fraternity and support.

His ministry is marked by presence. He celebrates Mass in colleges, universities, nursing homes, and private homes. He listens. He accompanies. He responds. The homeless and the struggling know him as a friend who goes beyond obligation.

In recent years, his mission has stretched even further — to remote parts of India, Bali, and the Philippines — where he supports orphanages and rural communities. Through tireless fundraising in Perth, he continues

to extend help to those far beyond his immediate parish.

When asked what has sustained him over 25 years of priesthood, his answer came without hesitation: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” He often turns to Scripture — echoing Micah’s call to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with God. For Fr Roy, these are not ideals, but a way of life.

He draws inspiration from his favourite saints — St Peter, the first Pope, and Padre Pio — men who were imperfect, yet deeply faithful. They are, he says, the ones he hopes to meet beyond the Pearly Gates.

To some, Fr Roy Lucius Pereira is a whirlwind — entering a space with urgency, calling for action, unsettling complacency. To others, he is gentle, even tender beneath a firm exterior. And to many, he is simply who he is — a joyful priest, living his vocation fully, in faith and in action.

We wish Fr Roy every blessing as he marks this milestone. May the Malaysian in him continue to shine — a quiet but steady beacon in Perth, and a source of pride in the hearts of those who know him. Godspeed.

In today’s world, medical tests during pregnancy are commonly used to detect possible abnormalities in unborn children. Sadly, some parents choose abortion because they fear the burden of raising a special child. However, every child is a precious gift from God, created with purpose and love.

I would like to share my personal journey as a young mother who was once advised by a doctor to abort my unborn child.

I had suffered from endometriosis since 1996, during my undergraduate years. Before getting married in 2002, I had already undergone two surgeries because of the condition. In September 2002, I experienced severe abdominal pain. After a scan, my gynaecologist discovered multiple cysts, and I immediately underwent surgery.

Following the surgery, I was given morphine for two days due to intense pain, along with a week of antibiotics. The specialist later told me that I would never be able to conceive because both my fallopian tubes were completely blocked, and my ovaries were positioned far from the tubes. According to him, no treatment — not even IVF — would help me become pregnant. As a senior consultant, he spoke with certainty, and I accepted what he said.

Although the doctor mentioned IVF, I was not considering it, as it goes against Catholic teaching and my personal beliefs. I had already

## Trusting God with the unborn child



The writer with her son.

accepted the possibility that I might never have children naturally, and I chose to place my future in God’s hands.

However, a week later, when I lost my appetite and felt unwell, the doctor performed a pregnancy test. To everyone’s surprise, I was pregnant. The doctor apologised because he believed conception was impossible in my condition. Out of concern, he advised me to abort the baby. He feared that the medications, surgery, and my medical condition could cause the child to be physically disabled or mentally impaired.

Although I understood his concerns, I told him firmly that I was a Christian and could not choose abortion. I said that even if my child were born sick or disabled, I would still love and care for him. Strangely, I was not overwhelmed with fear.

Instead, God filled my heart with peace and strength. A month later, another complication appeared. The doctor discovered a large fluid-filled cyst outside my womb, containing nearly one litre of fluid. He admitted that he had never encountered such a case before, nor found any similar case in Malaysia through his research. Because I was pregnant, he decided to drain

the fluid using a needle without anaesthesia. Every two weeks until I was six months pregnant, I endured the painful procedure. Often, the pain was so intense that I fainted during the treatment.

The doctor explained that the cyst was pressing against my womb and possibly affecting the placenta, which could reduce oxygen and nutrients reaching the baby. During the early months of pregnancy, I was also extremely ill. I vomited nearly 20 to 25 times a day, lost a tremendous amount of weight, and was placed on eight months of medical leave.

When I was eight months pregnant, the doctor scanned my baby and finally told me that he did not appear physically deformed. My heart overflowed with gratitude to God.

I eventually delivered my baby through a Caesarean section. The head of the department personally handled the delivery because he was curious about the mysterious cyst throughout my pregnancy. Yet during the surgery, no cyst was found. It had completely disappeared.

Today, I thank God that I chose life for my child. My son, Christman, is now 23 years old and currently completing his final semester at a local university. More than academic success or worldly achievements, my greatest prayer is that he will remain faithful to God and become the person God created him to be.

I understand that accepting the possibility of raising a special child can be frightening. Some may believe abortion is the easier path. But when God entrusts a child to us, He already knows the child’s purpose and our strength to love that child. Every life is sacred, valuable, and worthy of love.

To every parent, especially those facing fear, uncertainty, or difficult medical news during pregnancy: do not lose hope. Doctors can offer medical opinions, but God alone is the Author of life. A child should never be valued based on intelligence, physical perfection, or worldly success. Every child is created in the image of God and carries a dignity that no illness or disability can erase.

Sometimes God does not remove our struggles immediately, but He walks beside us through them. Trust Him even when the future seems frightening. Choose love over fear, faith over despair, and life over convenience. One day, you may look back and realise that the child you once feared to accept became one of God’s greatest blessings in your life. **Ann Gratian**

# God answers my prayers, but skips my script

In my last article (just in case you missed it), I shared that, after viewing spiritual life and growth as something very serious, strenuous, and stressful, I gradually encountered the epiphany of a humorous God.

I also shared that some of my funny moments with God have been in the area of my prayer life and I gave a detailed example of this. Below is yet another example of the humour of God, which I encountered, which is related to prayer.

## Just trust Him, don't tell Him what to do

There was a time when it dawned on me that I do trust in God — but very often, I leave Him instructions as to how He should answer my prayer! I give Him directions and dictate to Him what He should do, how He should do it...and how fast He should do it!

Through His own humorous ways, I discovered that God reserves the right to answer with greater wisdom than my expectations. I learned that I do not tell God how to fix my problems! Indeed! God answers every prayer. The funny part is that He reads our request and skips straight past our instructions. Below is an example!

My father lived to a ripe old age of 90 years! Very unfortunately, he started to become deaf as early as in his 50s. This

became a major cause of concern and worry to all of us in the family, especially when he was still driving in his early 80s.

Being very hard of hearing and a legendary road hog, my father never heard the horns — and even if he had, he would have assumed they were friendly greetings. As frustrated motorists cursed, swore, and shouted while overtaking him, he would simply smile, raise his hand, and give them a cheerful wave.

This soon became a running joke in the prayer group that I belonged to. I remember the then leader of the group, David Teh, would jokingly quip: “When Martin gives a talk, no one prays, but when his father drives, the whole of Ipoh City prays!”

The time eventually came when I knew I had to summon the courage to tell my father that he should stop driving. Needless to say, he was not at all pleased with my advice. He responded with a sigh of such epic disappointment that I briefly wondered whether he was disowning me.

Dad continued driving. I continued praying — as never before! On the quiet, I fervently and ceaselessly begged God to help my father come to his senses and give up driving. I could think of no other solution. Only divine intervention could succeed where human intervention had failed. So, I prayed...and prayed.

## Burning car (vs burning bush?)

Then one day it happened. My youngest brother, Michael, a teacher and Singaporean who loves to visit historical sites in Malaysia, suggested that we visit the museum in Taiping. Since I did not have a car then, we took our dad's car.

As we were leisurely browsing the museum exhibits, a security guard suddenly came sprinting towards us and breathlessly asked, “Is your car AAR 5578?” I answered in the affirmative. He shocked us by declaring: “Your car is on fire!”

All our attempts to put out the fire were in vain. Half of Taiping town was there to witness the “barbecuing” of my dad's car — which had decided to become the museum's hottest attraction. The fire brigade came. The car was towed to a scrap yard. All of us, still in a state of shock, took a bus back to Ipoh.

When we finally reached home, my brother, his wife, and my wife performed a remarkably coordinated disappearing act, vanishing upstairs, leaving me alone with the unenviable task of informing father that his beloved car had ended its motoring career in a blaze of glory.

When the shock of the fiery encounter in Taiping had eventually subsided, another fire was slowly beginning to smoulder within me! Unable to sleep and alone in my

room, I let loose at God: “You are supposed to be a God of love and mercy! How could You allow the poor old man's car to be reduced to a smoking tin can?” I went on and on...

Exhausted by my relentless disappointment and displeasure with God, I eventually ran out of steam. In the silence that followed, I could almost hear God saying: “Well, did you not pray

ceaselessly and bug Me for years that your dad would stop driving! I answered your prayer! So, what's your problem? The only way to stop him from driving was to take away his car!”

This realisation sent me into fits of laughter. Moments earlier, I had been angry with God; now I was laughing at myself and God's humour. The more I thought about it, the funnier it became. When God finally answered that prayer, I complained about the method! I wanted God to follow my script.

As I replayed the conversation in my head and laid awake laughing, I realised something important: God always answers our prayers. He just refuses to become our personal project manager. God had given me His own solution. And apparently, His version came with special effects, smoke, flames, and a punchline! God's so funny!

**Martin describes himself as what many have described him: “An Excellent, Exciting, Enlightening, Engaging, Empowering and Exceptionally-humorous speaker and motivator.”**



## God's So Funny

Martin Jalleh

## God swiped right

It struck me one day to wonder what St Peter's *Bumble* profile would look like.

For those who do not know what *Bumble* is, it is a mobile app that helps people meet new people. Users create a short profile about themselves, upload a few flattering photographs of themselves, and browse the profiles of others. If two people express mutual interest, they can start a conversation and see where it leads, whether to friendship, companionship or romance.

I found myself thinking about Peter on *Bumble* while absent-mindedly scrolling through the app one evening.

I imagined Peter to be weather-beaten and outdoorsy, with the sort of face that had spent more time under the sun.

I've read that up to half of *Bumble* users have asked AI to write their profiles, so I asked ChatGPT what would Peter's profile look like, and it came up with this:

### Peter, 30s

*Early riser. Frequently found near large bodies of water.*

*Loyal to a fault. Will drop everything for the people I love. Not afraid of hard work. Occasionally attempt things beyond my capabilities.*

*Will literally jump out of the boat for the right person. Complicated marital status due to work commitments.*

*Looking for: Someone who values honesty over perfection.*

*Two Truths, One Lie:*

1. I'm a fisherman.
2. I walked on water once.
3. I always think before I speak.



## Getting Sidetracked

Agnes Ong

If I met Peter, I'd probably find him down to earth and plain-spoken. Peter would not waste time on flowery language or refined speeches, and he is most definitely not an intellectual. He says what he thinks, when he thinks it, and occasionally regrets it afterwards.

Peter is also an all-in kind of guy, running on pure emotion and

adrenaline once an idea takes hold. Who else would leave everything behind to follow a total stranger just because the stranger told him to do so (Mt. 4:19-20)? Who else would jump out of a boat into the sea and attempt to walk on water simply because someone told him he could (Mt. 14:28-29)?

Peter was equally capable of incredible courage and failure. He drew his sword to defend Jesus (Jn. 18:10-11), only to deny knowing Him three times a few hours later (Mt. 26:69-75).

And immediately after, regret it so grievously for failing his friend whom he loved dearly that he wept bitterly (Lk. 22: 62).

Peter may not always think things through, but no one can accuse him of ever holding back. He is loyal, emotional, impulsive, and flawed. In short, he's gloriously human.

When I thought more about Peter as a person, rather than as an out-of-reach



saint or the First Vicar of the earthly Church, I realised how much of ourselves we find in him. He is capable of great courage and great failure, often within the span of a few hours.

In Peter, we find both our brightness and our darkness. Unlike St Paul, Peter never had a dramatic Road to Damascus moment that neatly divided his life into a “before” and an “after”. His story was

one of continual growth: getting things right, getting things wrong, and trying again.

The Resurrection did not suddenly turn Peter into a flawless saint. Even as a developing leader of the Church, he buckled under social pressure, distancing himself from Gentile believers when criticism loomed (Gal. 2:11-14). He still missed the point, requiring God to repeat the same lesson three times before it finally registered (Acts 10:16).

That is perhaps what makes Peter so relatable. Most of us are not transformed overnight. We stumble, learn, forget and learn again, just like how a child learns his lessons. No single moment defines us.

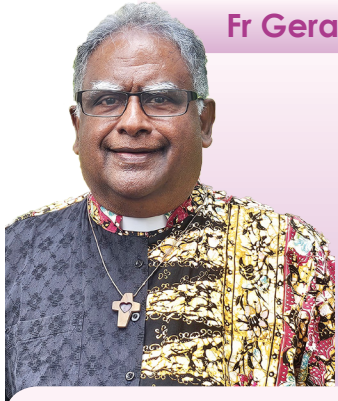
On *Bumble*, Peter comes with more red flags than most of us would tolerate. Truthfully, many of us would have swiped left on Peter.

Fortunately for Peter, God was looking at the long game and swiped right.

Despite Peter's repeated mistakes, God never gave up on him. He saw not only the man Peter was, but the man he could become.

And Peter, for his part, never stopped getting back up.

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



Fr Gerard Theraviam

# Beyond Corpus Christi: The pilgrimage continues....

By the time you read this, the aching legs from the *Corpus Christi* processions would have hopefully been revived but I hope our hearts will still be on fire for the Lord as we look forward also to the Feasts of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as well as the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

This year, our parish liturgical team initially decided on a fairly 'safe' programme for the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ but some brave individuals later insisted that we try to get approval for a procession on the streets around us, since this hadn't been done for several years. I have to admit I was doubtful that we would get the required approvals from officialdom, but I thought that God's will would be manifested if it did indeed come through. Lo and behold! The approvals arrived with less than ten days to mobilise everyone (still a work-in-progress as there is some inertia around – but the train needs to move on!) So it's been a busy time getting it all organised together and I have asked those who cannot walk to pray for good weather – although we have contingency plans for that as well.

Pope Leo XIV in his most recent Wednesday audience has encouraged the faithful "to keep alive this beautiful manifestation of public witness to the faith". Indeed, why do we walk the streets with the Eucharistic Lord? Surely it is not a case of religious triumphalism, given

that we are a minority religious group in our society.

The procession is an outward statement of faith. We are the People of God on our Journey towards the Kingdom being realised in our midst. Our destination is the Heavenly Jerusalem and we journey with the presence of Christ in our midst, leading us onward. As we go along, we invite others to join us. In Pope Francis' words, "The procession with the Blessed Sacrament...reminds us that we are called to go out and bring Jesus to others, to go out with enthusiasm, bringing Christ to those we meet in our daily lives" (Homily, *Corpus Christi* 2021) It is part of our ongoing evangelising mission.

It also visibly testifies that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist – Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. The procession is an extension of the Mass just celebrated. Yet, God is not confined to beautiful religious buildings but is active and alive in the world, in and among the lives of all people. God walks among His people, and we acknowledge and welcome Him into the homes and offices, highways and streets – even the forgotten, ugly nooks along our route. As we process into the streets, we are declaring to the world the Good News of God's presence, power, protection, provision, and peace. Perhaps the processions may pass by areas that may seem incongruous with faith – yet God is present in all situations and persons, even among those who do

not acknowledge Him. I remember us passing a red-light area in a procession in Penang and recognised I was bringing God's presence as I blessed the people in the area with the monstrance. Likewise, as we passed the police station, I thought of the criminals brought there, including some who might be in the lock-up then, praying for God's healing presence.

Among those we encounter on the streets will be those who suffer and yet hope in the Divine. The curious onlooker may be inspired to re-consider their faith in God. There may be some who might have fallen away from the practice of their faith and hopefully are drawn back to God. And there might be some drawn to discover the richness of our faith as a result of being drawn towards the Eucharistic Lord.

The pilgrim walking the route hopefully is also being transformed, recognising that our walk in faith is not done just individually but as a community. We are all members of the one Body. We need community – life isn't meant to be solitary and lonely. Walking along the streets opens our hearts to the suffering of those around us. As we reach out to those who stumble and maybe need some help, we follow the footsteps of Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross with Jesus. We are thus in effect, bread broken for others.

Our walking along the streets reminds us all that we are all on a pilgrimage. We

are the Pilgrim Church, living out life to the fullest and also being led towards eternal life. But what we might forget as we are distracted by all we see and experience along our way is that the Body of Christ we process with is also what we are called to be. We are called to be the Body of Christ, united with all our sisters and brothers, our fellow pilgrims in life. We are being transformed by the Body of Christ consumed as well as brought out for the world to see and adore. Something happens to us – surely, maybe slowly – as we walk. Perhaps it is the spiritual realisations that come to us on our journey – changes that are happening within us that we are not even fully aware of. Pope St John Paul reminded us that we also receive joy: "The devout participation of the faithful in the Eucharistic procession on the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ is a grace from the Lord which yearly brings joy to those who take part in it" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, EE 10). Perhaps we might receive other spiritual gifts – yet, God continues to work in and through us as we walk the journey of life. May we continue to walk with faith, hope and love.

**Fr Gerard** 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.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

## Inviting each other to our better selves

I grew up in a rural area where most everyone was either a first or second-generation immigrant. And most of us were just above the poverty line, struggling economically and struggling to speak English properly. And we were also struggling to access higher education, both because a lot of my peers had to end their schooling after the eighth grade to help support the family and because the idea of university education was not yet part of most families' ethos.

But in our community there was one family for which this wasn't true. They were comfortable economically and a number of them had gone on to higher education and were now professionals in different fields. They were a privileged family.

But they wore it well. There was no snobbishness, flaunting, or superiority complex. The opposite. They used their gifts to try to help the community. One of their sons became a teacher and taught in one of the local schools, and for a number of years the family set up a curling rink every winter for the community. They were both admired and respected.

One day one of their sons was sitting with a group of young men who were sharing a beer, sharing stories, and enjoying some healthy banter, when the son of this much respected family made a blatantly racist

remark. There was an awkward silence. Then one of men, in a gentle voice, said this to him: "You know, it surprises me that you would say something like that. Your family is so classy. We all look up to you. This doesn't sound like you."

The man's reaction was immediate and contrite: "You're right. I'm sorry. I don't know why I say things like that. That was stupid."

I can imagine a very different reaction had he been challenged with hard words like:

"You're a racist! How can you say something like that!"

When we challenge each other in harsh words, the effect often serves to make us more defensive and freeze us in our view. We are being scolded, rebuked, shamed, and that can work just as easily to re-trench as to persuade. It also serves to harden the space between us rather than invite us to what's best and highest in ourselves.

We need to invite and challenge each other to what's best and higher inside us.

And what is best and higher inside us?

Some of our early Christian writers (the Church Fathers) suggested that each of us has a double personality and heart. In each of us, they submit, there is a big, generous, noble, altruistic heart. But, inside each

of us too, there is a wounded, petty, and selfish heart; and at any given time, we can be operating out of one heart or the other. We can be big-hearted and we can be petty, and this can change from one hour to the next depending on what's meeting us in life.

Here's an example: Imagine you wake up some morning feeling altruistic and noble of heart. At that moment, you have the mind and heart of Jesus. In that holy frame of mind, you go to work and there someone is cold and sarcastic with you. In one minute, everything can switch; you no longer have the mind and heart of Jesus, nor the mind and heart of what's best in you. The wounded petty heart in you trumps the big heart, warmth and understanding leave you, and you now feel cold and bitter.

Now imagine this in reverse: You wake up some morning feeling paranoid, misunderstood, and nursing old wounds. At that moment you don't have the mind and heart of Jesus, nor are you attuned to what's better and higher in your own mind and heart. You go to work in that unholy state and there, unexpectedly, some co-worker greets you warmly and shares how much she appreciates your work and your friendship. In one minute, the noble mind in you trumps the petty mind and all

that's best and generous in you rises to the surface and you want to be a better person. You flip from bitterness to graciousness in one minute.

We live in a polarised world today where so many issues bitterly divide us and invite us not to what's noble and best in us, but rather to what's wounded, paranoid, and defensive. We need a new tone in our discourse, one of invitation and respect, one that recognises what's noble and big-hearted in the other and then challenges the other to own what's best in him or her.

Instead of name-calling and assaulting each other with slogans, we need to say to each other: "You know, it surprises me that you would say something like that. You're so classy! We all look up to you. This doesn't sound like you."

That kind of invitation can help thaw some of the coldness that for all kinds of reasons perennially besets the human heart.

**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](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)

# LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER



Dear children,

In today's Gospel, Jesus saw that many people were sad, lost, and needed help. He cared for them deeply, just like a shepherd cares for his sheep. Jesus told His disciples that there were many people who needed to hear about God's love, but there were not enough

helpers. So, Jesus chose twelve apostles, who are like His special helpers and sent them out to teach, heal the sick, and share the Good News that God's kingdom is near.

Jesus reminds us that He wants us to be His helpers today. We can do this by being kind to people around us, caring for those who are sad or lonely and even

using our gifts and talents to do good. Even small acts of goodness can make a big difference in someone's life.

Remember that everyone can help spread God's love. Jesus calls each one of us to care for others with a kind and loving heart.

Love, Aunty C

## CAN YOU SOLVE THIS?

Use the clues given to discover the words.  
Write each answer in the correct boxes.

**HORIZONTAL**

1. Jesus chose twelve \_\_\_\_\_
3. Jesus told the apostles to \_\_\_\_\_ the sick.
4. The crowds were like sheep without a \_\_\_\_\_

**VERTICAL**

2. Jesus had \_\_\_\_\_ for the crowds.
5. Jesus sent the apostles to share the Good \_\_\_\_\_
6. The harvest is plentiful but the \_\_\_\_\_ are few.

Answers: 1. Apostles 2. Compassion 3. Heal 4. Shepherd 5. News 6. Workers

## The Twelve Apostles

### Word Search

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

- ANDREW
- BARTHOLOMEW
- JAMES
- JAMES
- JOHN

- JUDAS
- MATTHEW
- PETER
- PHILIP
- SIMON

- THADDEUS
- THOMAS

**DIRECTIONS:** Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

## OH NO! THE SHEEP IS LOST!

Help the sheep get back to The Shepherd.

## Fill in the blanks

Fill in the words in the correct sentences below.

Twelve

Jesus

Good News

Heal the sick

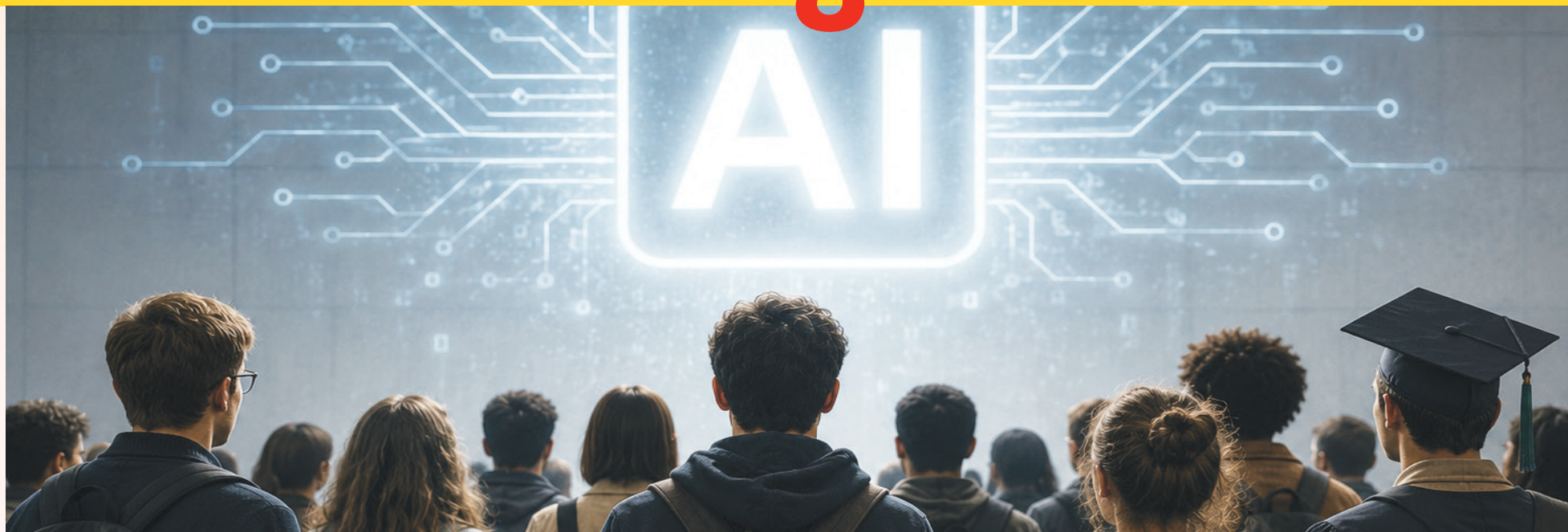
Labourers

Judas

1. Who chose the apostles? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many apostles were chosen? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What were they sent to do? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What news were they sent to share? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who betrayed Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What did Jesus need for the harvest? \_\_\_\_\_

# YOUTH

# Will AI take my job before I get one?



## Young Catholics reflect on work, purpose, and human dignity in the age of artificial intelligence

**I**n the wake of Pope Leo XIV's encyclical on artificial intelligence, a youthful contingent reflects on how machine learning is reshaping employment.

Alexis Powers applied for more than 200 jobs after graduating college.

The 23-year-old South Carolina native had internships, experience in marketing and social media and the kind of résumé counsellors often tell students should lead to opportunities.

She applied through LinkedIn, Indeed and word of mouth, but struggled to gain traction. Some recruiters later told her many companies were using artificial intelligence systems to screen résumés before a human being ever reviewed them.

"If your résumé does not match exactly what the system is looking for, even with strong experience, it can get tossed to the side," she said.

Alexis eventually began working as a social-media marketer and laser technician at her mother's spa. While impressed by the AI-powered technology she now uses at work, she remains concerned about the challenges facing young people entering the workforce.

As AI rapidly reshapes the economy, many members of Gen Z are entering adulthood with uncertainty about work, stability and the future.

The unease comes amid growing concern over the future of entry-level employment. A May 2025 Kickresume report found that roughly 58 per cent of 2024 and 2025 graduates were still searching for their first job, while an April 2026 Oliver Wyman Forum survey found that 43% of CEOs planned to reduce junior-level positions over the next two years in favour of more senior roles.

Will Deatherage, founder and CEO of Catholics for Hire and president of the Washington, DC,

chapter of Young Catholic Professionals, said many young people feel as though "the rug was pulled out from under them" just as they prepare to enter adulthood, particularly amid warnings that AI could eliminate large numbers of entry-level white-collar jobs in the years ahead.

### AI and labour in *Magnifica Humanitas*

Those anxieties have also drawn increasing attention within the Catholic Church.

In his first papal encyclical, titled *Magnifica Humanitas*, released May 25, Pope Leo XIV warned that amid the "fourth industrial revolution," technological innovation is often pursued primarily for "reducing costs and increasing profits," while workers face growing insecurity and inequality.

"The protection of employment opportunities and the irreplaceable role of the individual must remain the general rule," the Pope wrote. "The pursuit of greater profits cannot justify choices that systematically sacrifice jobs, because the human person is an end, not a means."

The encyclical devotes particular attention to young people struggling to build stable lives amid economic uncertainty.

"For young people, job insecurity is particularly devastating," Pope Leo wrote. "Work is not merely a source of income but a crucial sphere in which identity is formed, friendships and relationships are forged, practical responsibilities are learned and one's vocation is discerned."

For many young Catholics, those concerns resonate deeply.

Catherine Halbmaier, a 2026 graduate of Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, said AI transformed life very quickly during her college years, with some professors even returning to handwritten, in-class essays to ensure students were not relying on AI.

At the same time, she observed that personal

relationships continue to matter in an increasingly automated labour market.

"Most of my friends who found jobs did so through personal connections and networking," Catherine said. "It is interesting that even with AI everywhere, what ultimately helps people stand out is a personal connection with an employee."

She also expressed concern about the environmental and social costs associated with the rapid expansion of AI data centres and the impact such technologies may have on human dignity.

### 'How is this oriented towards the good and God?'

Not all young Catholics working in technology, however, view AI with the same level of alarm.

Kieran Devine, a 23-year-old technical solutions engineer for a healthcare software company in Wisconsin, uses AI regularly in his work and believes the technology can provide significant benefits. At the same time, he said concerns about fairness and the distribution of those benefits are legitimate, particularly when productivity gains do not translate into benefits for workers.

Reflecting on the themes raised in *Magnifica Humanitas*, Kieran said the technology ultimately raises a deeper question:

"How is this oriented towards the good and God?"

Paul A., a Virginia-based 2025 graduate working in marketing while also running his own media company, said the rise of increasingly realistic AI-generated content has intensified the need for discernment online.

"There is such an absence of the search for truth," he said, noting that many people accept online information uncritically.

Though he sees AI as a useful tool, he believes people should approach it cautiously and verify information rather than taking it at face value.

### Dignity beyond productivity

At Catholic colleges, educators and career counsellors say students are increasingly seeking guidance about how to navigate an economy being reshaped by AI.

Dennis McCarthy, vice president of finance at Thomas Aquinas College in California, said students regularly ask whether AI will make their degrees obsolete. He expressed hope that Pope Leo's encyclical would encourage a more cautious and human-centred approach to technological change.

According to Anthony Chiappetta, director at the Centre for Academic and Career Success at The Catholic University of America, colleges are helping students learn how to use AI ethically while preserving human creativity and interaction. He added that students entering today's workforce increasingly need strong personal networks alongside technical skills.

Despite widespread concerns surrounding AI, some data suggests Gen Z remains cautiously optimistic. A May 2026 survey by the National Society of High School Scholars of more than 11,000 high-school students found that 94 per cent reported feeling at least somewhat confident about their future after college.

For Will however, the conversations around AI ultimately reveal a broader cultural and spiritual crisis about the meaning of work and dignity.

"Our culture has built up the idea that work determines happiness and success," Will said.

As many young people struggle to find stability in a rapidly changing economy, he said the Church has an opportunity to remind them that their worth does not depend on professional status.

"As they are knocked down," Will said, "the Church has a task to guide them toward true fulfilment, which can only be found in Jesus Christ." NCR



# YOUTH UNITE FOR POWERFUL PENTECOST CONCERT

PAPAR: Mirroring the biblical tongues of fire that descended upon the Apostles, the *Tongues of Fire* Pentecost concert recently ignited the hearts of the local faithful. Jointly organised by the Holy Rosary Parish (HRL) of Limbahau and St Joseph Parish of Papar, the event filled the venue with re-sounding praise, abundant joy, and a deepened sense of unity in Christ.

More than just a musical performance, the concert served as a dynamic intersection of faith and talent, beautifully demonstrating how the Holy Spirit continues to bestow His gifts and awaken a spirit of service among today's Catholic youth.

The inspiration for the event stemmed from the vision of Fr Paul Lo, rector of the

Papar and Limbahau parishes. Fr Paul envisioned the Church as a more vibrant, inclusive, and relevant space — particularly for young people — using the universal power of music to unite hearts and draw souls closer to God.

Centred on the theme *Tongues of Fire*, the concert delivered a powerful message: the same Holy Spirit that animated the early Church on Pentecost continues to actively breathe life into the Church today.

The event drew an enthusiastic crowd of about 500 people spanning all generations. Joining the faithful in attendance were Fr Joshua Liew, Fr Florian Marcus and members of the parish Pastoral Councils from both communities.

Remarkably, the Youth Service Teams from both parishes — under the guidance of programme director and seminarian Bonnyface Stephen — had less than a month to plan, rehearse, and execute the entire production.

“Although the preparation window was incredibly tight, the spirit of cooperation, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment shown by everyone yielded extraordinary results. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the youth successfully delivered a deeply moving and spectacular experience.”

The evening was further enriched by guest performances from other ministries, including: Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) Papar and Kinuta, Holy Trinity Com-

munity (KTM). Together, they elevated the night with segments of praise and worship.

Every performance that graced the stage served as a flame of evangelisation, stirring the hearts of the audience. The evening beautifully proclaimed Christ's love through art and music, reminding everyone that God continues to speak to His people through the unique talents bestowed by the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, the concert proved that the Church is not merely a structural space to celebrate faith, but a fertile field where God's gifts are ignited to illuminate the world. It stood as a living testimony that when talent, creativity, and service unite in Christ, the impossible becomes possible.

As the curtains closed, attendees left with far more than just memories of a joyful night. They carried home a renewed conviction: the fire of Pentecost still burns — uniting, strengthening, and sending the faithful out to be the light of hope in the world. **SOCOM HRL**

## Young indigenous leaders charting a shared future

PHILIPPINES: Indigenous youth leaders from five Indigenous communities across the Philippines have agreed to launch community-led initiatives focused on cultural preservation, environmental stewardship, and educational support, following a leadership convergence under a Catholic-backed accompaniment programme.

The convergence brought together youth representatives from the Ati of Boracay, Aklan; the Subanen of Midsalip, Zamboanga del Sur; the Ayta of Floridablanca, Pampanga; the Dumagat of General Nakar and Polilio, Quezon; and the Umayamnon of Cabanglasan, Bukidnon.

Participants developed a common action plan covering June 2026 to June 2027, centred on three priorities: revitalising Indigenous cultures, caring for the environment, and supporting access to education.

The gathering forms part of the Indigenous Youth Leadership Accompaniment Programme launched in 2023 by the Office for Pastoral Services of the St Vincent School of Theology. The initiative has received support from DKA-Austria and ROOTS Asia.

According to Dr Emil Ibera, a lay theology professor and ROOTS Asia coordinator, the programme emerged from conversations with Indigenous leaders concerned about preparing younger generations to face new challenges confronting their communities.

“There was a thought from the Ayta leaders to help them in building up the leadership capacity of their youth, and so we acted on it. Then, as I moved around and consulted other communities, they had the

same concern,” Ibera said.

“Community leaders want their future leaders to be prepared, especially when they see new challenges that they have to face. So, the whole objective is to accompany the indigenous youth in building up their leadership capacity,” he added.

During the convergence, participants took part in reflections and workshops on Indigenous cultures in a changing world, Catholic social teaching, human rights, and the future of Indigenous communities.

Under the cultural revitalisation component of the action plan, each community will implement cultural education initiatives and take the lead in documenting the struggles and aspirations of Indigenous youth.

Participants will also join monthly online learning sessions that address issues affecting their communities, according to Ibera.

The environmental component includes the development of ecological sanctuaries in each community, alongside workshops and reflections on ecological spirituality and permaculture as pathways toward sustainable living.

To strengthen educational opportunities, Ibera explained, the youth leaders agreed to support students facing financial difficulties and organise tutorial services for Indigenous children in basic education.

Ibera said the convergence demonstrated the willingness of Indigenous youth to engage in community-building efforts when provided with opportunities to participate and lead.



(LiCAS News/Office for Pastoral Services of the St Vincent School of Theology)

“Over-all, I have witnessed their readiness to cooperate in all the activities,” he said.

“It was so encouraging to see that when the indigenous youth are given the right opportunity and freedom to express themselves, they do well,” he added.

The convergence concluded with participating communities committing to carry out their respective initiatives over the next

year while continuing to learn from one another through regular exchanges and formation activities.

ROOTS Asia describes itself as a network of Catholic Indigenous leaders, together with members of other Christian churches and Asian religions, working to support Indigenous spiritualities and advance the protection and promotion of Indigenous Peoples across Asia. **Mark Saludes, LiCAS News**

# Centenarian priest-psychologist dies, donates body to science

KOLKATA: A pioneering priest-psychologist who became the first Indian-born principal of Salesian College Sonada and later advanced psychological training for clergy and laity died May 28 in Kolkata at age 101. His final act of service was donating his body to medical science.

Salesian Father Peter Lourdes' career spanned more than seven decades, marked by groundbreaking leadership in Catholic education and psychology.

As the first Indian-born principal of Salesian College Sonada in Darjeeling, he reshaped the institution's academic and pastoral mission, and later pioneered psychological training for clergy and laity at the National Vocation Service Centre in Pune.

His work consistently challenged convention, blending faith and science in ways that left a lasting imprint on both the church and society.

A solemn requiem Mass was celebrated at Nitika Chapel, where he had lived since 1989, with Fr Sunil Kerketta, Provincial of the Salesian Calcutta Province presiding.

Church leaders and colleagues said his final act of donating his body to medical science reflected a lifetime of breaking conventional boundaries to serve the community.

Fr Lourdes had drafted a will declaring that his body be used for academic study. Immediately after the chapel service, his remains were handed over to Calcutta National Medical College, fulfilling his last wish of selfless service.

As the first Indian-born principal of Salesian College Sonada, Darjeeling (1967-1970), Fr Lourdes strengthened its academic and pastoral mission while rooting it more deeply in the Indian context.

Fr Lourdes later served as programme director and head of psychology at the National Vocation Service Centre in

Pune, pioneering psychological training for clergy and laity. His influential works include *The Human Face of Clergy* (1989), *The Hem of His Garment* (1996), *Wow Jesus* (2014), and *The Clash* (2016).

A COVID-19 survivor at age 94, he became a symbol of resilience when he hoisted the Indian flag on Independence Day, Aug 15, 2020, shortly after recovery.

Born March 19, 1926, Fr Lourdes was among the first batch of Don Bosco School, Liluah, in 1937. He later earned advanced degrees in psychology from Salesian University in Rome.

He did his PhD in Clinical Psychology at Loyola Chicago and Master's in Somatic Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies at San Francisco.

Fr Lourdes completed 82 years as a Salesian and 72 years as a priest. C.M. Paul, **Matters India**



Fr Peter Lourdes with his students during his 100th birthday in 2025.

## MEMORIAM

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Forever in our hearts and dearly missed by children, grandchildren and loved ones.

*And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

Luke 23:43

## World's oldest priest dies at 110

Ordained in 1950, Fr Bruno Kant served the Diocese of Fulda in Germany for decades. After retiring from active ministry, he remained a confidant, pastor, and spiritual guide for many parishioners.

In late February, Pope Leo XIV thanked Fr Bruno Kant of the Diocese of Fulda in Germany for his "many years of faithful and devoted priestly service." Kant, the oldest priest in the world at 110 years of

age, passed away on the night of Friday, May 29. He had been a priest since 1950.

In an article published on his diocese's website, Bishop Michael Gerber of Fulda recalled that "just a few months ago" he had "the privilege of conveying Pope Leo XIV's blessing to Fr Bruno Kant on the occasion of his 110th birthday."

"My encounter with him left a deep impression on me. Even at his advanced

age, he radiated the humility, kindness, and spiritual depth that characterised his entire priestly life. The Diocese of Fulda remembers his work and service with great gratitude," he added.

Fr Guido Pasanow of the parish in Eichenzell-Löschenrod, where Kant lived until his death, said that with the priest's death, the parish "loses a person who was fundamental to it for many years."

"Even after retiring from active ministry, he remained a confidant, pastor, and spiritual guide deeply cherished by many parishioners. We are grateful for all that he contributed to our community," he added.

As reported by the Catholic news outlet *katholisch* in November 2025, Kant, born near Danzig in what is now Poland, had aspired to become a priest since the age of 9. He was able to begin his theological studies, but the Nazi regime thwarted his plans by conscripting him for forced labor and making him a soldier.

Kant spent four years as a prisoner of war in Russia before reuniting with his family, who had fled to the West.

He was finally ordained a priest in 1950. After decades of priestly service, he considerably curtailed his activities. He stopped driving at the age of 102, according to a report published on *katholisch.de* in



(photo/Diocese of Fulda)

November last year.

"Over the last few years, he has refrained from celebrating holy Mass with the congregation on Wednesday evenings. However, he continued visiting the sick for as long as he was able. Now, that is no longer possible for him."

On that occasion, Kant said: "I expect to die every day. I am not far from it." In his final years, he spent his days solving Sudokus, watching television, reading newspapers, and, of course, praying.

"Praying keeps me young," he said. EWTN



Fr Bruno Kant and Bishop Michael Gerber of Fulda, Germany. (CNA Photo courtesy of Leon Weiser/Fuldaer Zeitung)

# Asian Christians cannot afford to be divided

CHIANG MAI, Thailand: Christians across Asia need to deepen their commitment to dialogue, listening, reconciliation, and common witness as they journey together towards the visible unity of all Christians, said retired Indian Archbishop Felix Anthony Machado, *pic*, chairman of the FABC Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

Machado, retired archbishop of Vasai, made the appeal during an ecumenical gathering in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The international consultation titled *Ecumenism in Asia: Emerging Ecclesial and Ecumenical Landscapes* was held at Payap University from May 31 to June 3. The programme was organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), a pan-Asian ecumenical organisation.

Machado delivered the second thematic address on *Synodality and Ecumenism: Ecclesial Unity for Effective Witness in Asia*, emphasising that synodality and ecumenism are inseparable parts of “a shared Christian journey.”

He reflected on the Catholic Church’s Synod on Synodality and its 2024 Final Document.

“The path of synodality is and must be ecumenical, just as the ecumenical path is synodal,” he said.



He highlighted the participation of delegates from different Christian traditions in the Synodal Assembly as a visible sign of growing collaboration, mutual learning, and shared witness among churches.

Machado noted that the Synod’s Final Document affirms Baptism as the common foundation of both synodality and ecumenism.

“Since all Christians share one baptismal identity, the synodal journey naturally directs the Church toward greater Christian unity,”

he said.

He stressed that Synodality is not an end in itself but serves the Church’s mission of proclaiming the Gospel, adding that authentic synodality requires prayerful discernment, mutual listening, humility, and openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Addressing the relationship between synodality and ecumenism, Machado described them as mutually reinforcing journeys rooted in baptismal grace.

Christian unity is strengthened through prayer, dialogue, friendship, service, and common witness, enabling churches to overcome past divisions and work together for the sake of the Gospel, he noted.

Synodality and ecumenism are crucial in the Asian context as ecclesial unity is important for a credible Christian witness.

“We Christians in Asia cannot afford to be divided in the face of the region’s religious and cultural diversity and the pressing need to foster stronger bonds of fraternity among Christians,” he insisted.

He encouraged Christians in Asia to continue witnessing to the Gospel through lives of service, the promotion of human dignity, harmonious coexistence with neighbours, and faithful proclamation of Christ. [ucanews.com](http://ucanews.com)

## Pope appoints first laywoman to lead Vatican Communications Dicastery



VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV has appointed Maria Montserrat Alvarado, President and Chief Operating Officer of *EWTN News*, as the new prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Communication, making her the first laywoman to head a dicastery of the Holy See.

According to *Vatican News*, the appointment will take effect on November 1, 2026, when Alvarado succeeds Paolo Ruffini, who has led the dicastery since 2018 as the first lay prefect in the history of the Roman Curia.

Her appointment marks a significant milestone in the ongoing reform and renewal of the Roman Curia initiated by Pope Francis and continued under Pope Leo XIV, reflecting the growing role of lay faithful, particularly women, in the leadership of the Church.

Born in Mexico City, Alvarado holds degrees from Florida International University and George Washington University in the United States. From 2009 to 2023, she served in various leadership roles at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a Washington-based legal organisation dedicated to defending religious freedom and promoting human dignity.

Since 2023, she has been President and Chief Operating Officer of *EWTN News*, the global news division of the Eternal Word Television Network. In that role, she has overseen international media operations that produce content in seven languages across television, radio, print, digital and social media platforms.

Established by Pope Francis in 2015 as part of a wider restructuring of the Roman Curia, the Dicastery for Communication coordinates and oversees the Holy See’s vast communications network. Its responsibilities include *Vatican News*, *Vatican Radio*, *L’Osservatore Romano*, *Vatican Media*, the Holy See Press Office, the Vatican Publishing House, the Vatican Printing Press and the Vatican Film Library.

Beyond managing the Vatican’s media operations, the dicastery also promotes the theological and pastoral dimensions of the Church’s mission of communication, ensuring that the Gospel is proclaimed effectively in an increasingly digital and interconnected world. **RVA**

## Malaysia launches refugee registration scheme

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has begun registering Rohingya refugees and other asylum seekers for legal employment in a move aimed at addressing labour shortages while improving protections for displaced communities.

However, human rights advocates have cautioned that the initiative will only succeed if it is accompanied by safeguards against detention, deportation and exploitation.

The first operational phase of the Refugee Registration Document programme, known by its Malay acronym DPP, came into effect on June 1 and currently covers refugees and asylum seekers held in immigration detention centres.

According to *AsiaNews*, approximately 4,000 individuals have been registered so far, the majority of them Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar, where the predominantly Muslim ethnic minority continues to face persecution and is denied citizenship.

Malaysian authorities say the programme seeks to regularise the presence of refugees while improving their safety and living

conditions. Eligible refugees aged between 20 and 40 will be allowed to work legally in sectors facing chronic labour shortages, including manufacturing, agriculture, construction and services.

The initiative comes as the government prepares to present a broader refugee management framework to the Cabinet in mid-June. The proposal is expected to address the situation of more than 200,000 refugees and asylum seekers currently residing in Malaysia.

Officials believe that integrating refugees into the formal labour market could benefit both refugees and the national economy. Estimates cited by *AsiaNews* suggest that granting refugees legal access to employment could increase Malaysia’s gross domestic product by approximately US\$750 million (RM3.02 billion) over five years while generating additional tax revenue.

Under the new framework, employers must comply with national labour laws, including the payment of the minimum monthly wage and the provision of suitable accommodation.

The policy has received a mixed response.

Business groups have welcomed the move, saying it could help ease labour shortages and reduce reliance on undocumented workers. Human rights organisations, however, have called for greater transparency and stronger protections to prevent abuse.

Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and has traditionally approached refugee issues through the lens of security and public order. Authorities have emphasised that the DPP does not provide a pathway to permanent residency.

John Quinley, director of Fortify Rights, said the effectiveness of the programme would depend on the protections afforded to refugees throughout the registration process.

“Malaysia must operate this system by ensuring data confidentiality, compliance with legal procedures, cooperation with the UN Refugee Agency, and adequate safeguards against detention, forced repatriation and misuse of personal information,” he said.

Quinley warned that the registration document should not become another tool of immigration enforcement.

“The DPP will only have a real impact if it serves to protect refugees rather than leaving them exposed to arbitrary immigration controls,” he said. “The government should ensure that no refugee or asylum seeker is arrested, detained or deported while awaiting registration.”

While the government has presented the initiative as both an economic and humanitarian measure, refugee advocates maintain that its long-term success will depend on whether legal access to employment is matched by meaningful protection for some of the region’s most vulnerable displaced communities. **LiCAS News**



An entrance to the immigration detention depot housing refugees in Bidor in Malaysia's Perak state on Feb 2, 2024. (File photo: AFP/Mohd Rasfan)