

VATICAN: “Families are the cradle of the future of humanity,” proclaimed Pope Leo to a joyful crowd of over 70,000 pilgrims from 131 nations, gathered in St Peter’s Square for the Jubilee of Families on June 1.

The Pope’s message focused on unity, love, and the irreplaceable role of the family in handing on faith, generation after generation.

Reflecting on the Gospel passage from John 17:20–26, Pope Leo emphasised the significance of Jesus’ prayer at the Last Supper: “That they may all be one.” He reminded the crowd that, even at the end of His earthly life, Jesus was thinking of humanity — His brothers and sisters — and praying for their unity in love.

“This is the greatest good that we can desire,” the Pope said. “For this universal union brings about among God’s creatures the eternal communion of love that is God himself.”

He continued, “Jesus is telling us that God loves us as He loves Himself — with an infinite love. In His mercy, God has always desired to draw all people to Himself. It is His life, bestowed upon us in Christ, that makes us one, uniting us with one another.”

The Pope’s words resonated with the families, children, and elderly gathered in the square and with the millions watching across the globe. “That is the message we want to proclaim to the world,” he said. “We are here in order to be ‘one,’ as the Lord wants us to be — in our families and in the places where we live, work, and study. Different, yet one; many, yet one; always, at every stage of life.”

Throughout the homily, Pope Leo spoke directly to various members of the family. To married couples, he offered a strong affirmation: “Marriage is not an ideal but the measure of true love between a man and a woman — a love that is total, faithful, and fruitful. This love makes you one flesh and enables you, in the image of God, to bestow the gift of life.”

He encouraged couples to lead by example, “educating your children in freedom through obedience, always seeing the good in them and finding ways to nurture it.”

To the many children present, easily spotted in their colourful caps, he said: “Show gratitude to your parents. To say ‘thank you’ each day for the gift of life is the first way to honour your father and your mother.”

To the elderly and grandparents, he gave a heartfelt exhortation: “Watch over your loved ones with wisdom and compassion, and with the humility and patience that come with age.” He reminded all present that faith, like food at the table, is shared naturally in families — “where it is passed on together with life, generation after generation.”

He noted the Church’s growing recognition of the sanctity of family life through the beatification and canonisation of married couples — including Sts Louis and Zélie Martin, the parents of St Thérèse of Lisieux, and the Ulma family from Poland, martyred for sheltering Jews during World War II. “By pointing to them as exemplary witnesses of married life, the Church tells us that today’s world needs the marriage covenant in order to know and accept God’s love,” he said.

The celebration also marked World Communications Day, and Pope Leo took a moment to thank “media workers who, by taking care of the ethical quality of messages, help families in their role as educators.” He urged all communicators to promote unity, kindness, and truth.

The day, while spiritual in nature, was also filled with moments of joy and humanity. Before the liturgy began, Pope Leo departed from his usual blessing of infants to lean

Families: where the future begins



“We are here in order to be ‘one,’ as the Lord wants us to be in our families and in the places where we live, work, and study.”



from the popemobile and give a “low five” to a young boy in the crowd, prompting cheers and laughter from nearby children.

In his closing prayer, Pope Leo invoked the intercession of the Virgin Mary to “bless families and support them in their difficulties,” especially those suffering from war and displacement — in the Middle East, Ukraine, and elsewhere.

Quoting St Augustine, he concluded, “The prayer of the Son of God gives us hope on our journey. One day, we will all be *uno unum* — one in the One Saviour — embraced by the eternal love of God.”

As the bells of St Peter’s Basilica rang out, families of all generations stood together — united not only by faith, but by the Pope’s timeless reminder that in family, we find the heart of God’s love for the world. **Agencies**

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. *Rom. 5:1-2*



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EDITOR
Patricia Pereira
editor1@herald.com.my



ASSISTANT EDITOR
Sandra Ann Inbaraj
sandra@herald.com.my



GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Amanda Mah
amanda@herald.com.my



SOCIAL MEDIA
Kevin Francis
kevin@herald.com.my



BAHASA MALAYSIA
Melania Liza Magnus
liza@herald.com.my



MANDARIN
Adelina Wong
yin4482@gmail.com



ADMIN ASSISTANT
Rachael Sharma
admin@herald.com.my

ADVERTISEMENT/SUBSCRIPTION
advertisement@herald.com.my

MEMORIAM
memoriam@herald.com.my

LETTERS
letterseditor@herald.com.my

Social Media

www.heraldmalaysia.com

[@heraldmalaysia](https://x.com/heraldmalaysia)

[heraldmalaysia](https://www.facebook.com/heraldmalaysia)
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MY VIEW

In Malaysia today, rising costs are squeezing families tighter than ever. For many in the B40 income group, daily life has become a struggle. Food prices, rent, transportation, and other basic needs continue to rise while wages often remain stagnant. Behind these numbers are real people: parents skipping meals so children can eat, young adults unable to find decent jobs, and seniors dipping into meagre savings just to survive.

The M40 group, traditionally seen as more stable, is now feeling the squeeze as well. Inflation, stagnant wages, and increasing financial obligations — such as housing loans, education fees, and health care costs — are eroding their sense of security. This growing pressure affects not only individuals but also social cohesion and mental well-being. A just and compassionate society must respond to the needs of all its members, especially those quietly falling through the cracks.

At the same time, automation and artificial intelligence are transforming the economy. While technological progress offers potential benefits, it also threatens livelihoods, especially for workers in low-skilled or repetitive jobs. Factories are replacing workers with machines, and digital systems are streamlining jobs once handled by human hands. This moment calls for a moral response, rooted in the Church's long-standing teaching on work, human dignity, and justice.

In *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Pope Leo XIII wrote that work is not merely about survival but an expression of the human person's participation in God's creative plan: "Work is more than a mere commodity... it is a duty and a right." Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, warned against a "throwaway culture" that discards people when they are no longer seen as useful:

"The excluded are not the 'exploited' but the 'discarded,' rejected as no longer necessary" (LS, 16).

This concern remains central to the vision of Pope Leo XIV, who recently stated: "The Church offers to everyone the treasury of her social teaching in response to another industrial revolution and to developments in the field of artificial intelligence that pose new challenges for the defence of human dignity, justice, and labour."

The Malaysian government has taken some steps. The *Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah* (STR) scheme offers targeted financial assistance. Selangor, Malaysia's most developed state, supports B40 and M40 groups through digital economy initiatives, housing, job fairs, and youth upskilling. Nationally, the AI Office and major state-led projects such as Johor's Special Economic Zone aim to prepare Malaysia for the digital future. Tech giants Microsoft and Google are investing heavily in our digital infrastructure.

While these efforts show promise, they are not enough. Structural inequalities persist, and many families continue to fall through the cracks. Without coordinated support systems, ethical safeguards, and long-term investment in human dignity and resilience, technological advancement risks deepening the divide rather than closing it.

The Church must be part of the solution. Caritas Malaysia continues to support the poor and marginalised through relief and capacity-building. Parishes can expand efforts by hosting digital skills training, forming cooperatives, and strengthening job networks.

Within the Church, we must also care for our priests, religious, and lay workers with fair wages, ongoing formation, and mental

health support. A just Church must also be a just employer.

Lay Catholics, especially those in business, government, education, and media, are called to bring Gospel values into their fields. While Malaysia lacks a Catholic university, Catholic schools and formation centres can shape ethical leaders. Catholic professionals can mentor youth, model integrity, and advocate for policies that place human dignity above profit.

As the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* reminds us: "Work is a fundamental dimension of human existence... through work, men and women express and increase their human dignity" (Compendium, 278). We must resist narratives that view people as disposable. Every person, regardless of income or skill, is a child of God, deserving of dignity and opportunity.

Building a more just and compassionate Malaysia requires each of us to recognise our role, not only as recipients of help but as active participants in fostering solidarity. Communities, businesses, and individuals must embrace social responsibility by supporting fair employment, promoting lifelong learning, and caring for the vulnerable among us.

In times of rapid change, hope and faith guide us. Trusting in God's providence, we are called to work tirelessly toward a society where technology serves the common good, economic progress uplifts all, and every human life is honoured as sacred. Together, let us be instruments of mercy and justice in a world longing for dignity and peace.

Sandra Ann

The Trinity — the heart of our faith

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is one of the most profound teachings of the Christian faith. For many believers, it can feel like an abstract puzzle — difficult to grasp and often left to theologians. Yet the Trinity is not a later invention imposed on Scripture. Rather, it is the Church's faithful attempt to make sense of how God has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The theology of the Trinity did not emerge fully formed; it developed gradually through the Church's reflection on divine revelation, scripture, experience, and worship over centuries.

In the Holy Trinity, we encounter the deepest reality of who God is: a communion of love — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — three distinct persons, yet one God. Each person is fully God, co-equal and co-eternal, sharing the same divine essence. Over time, Church Fathers and theologians clarified this teaching using the terms "economic Trinity" and "immanent Trinity" to help us understand how the one God can be revealed in three Persons.

The concept of the "economic Trinity" was used by the early Church Fathers to describe God's actions in salvation history, what God does. It refers to how God interacts with humanity. Each person of the Trinity has a distinct role in the economy of salvation: God the Father initiates creation and the plan of salvation by sending the Son, and then together with the Son, sending forth the Holy Spirit. God the Son becomes incarnate and redeems humanity through His death and resurrection. God the Holy Spirit applies Christ's work to believers—indwelling, empowering, and sanctifying the Church.

The "immanent Trinity" refers to God's inner life, who God is in Himself. It focuses on the eternal relationships among the three persons, apart from creation. God the Father

is unbegotten and the eternal source. God the Son is eternally begotten of the Father—not made, but generated within the divine being. God the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. The three Persons share one divine essence, they are not three gods, but one God. There is no division in nature, power, or will. What one Person does, the others are involved in, because the divine essence is indivisible.

St. Augustine echoes this understanding of the Trinity, one God in three Persons, united in perfect love. He shows that the inner life of God is eternal love, which is revealed in God's love for humanity. Jesus also reveals this love to His disciples: "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23). Augustine describes the Trinity as the Lover (Father), the Beloved (Son), and the Love that unites them (Holy Spirit), grounding the Trinity in the eternal reality that "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus' farewell discourse prepares His disciples for His death, resurrection, and ascension. It focuses especially on the coming of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, who will continue Jesus' work. Jesus introduces both the Father and the Spirit: "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will lead you to complete truth... All that the Father has is mine; Therefore, I said that He will take what is mine and declare it to you." We see the Three Persons of the Trinity acting in harmony: the Father shares all with the Son; and together, they send the Spirit; and the Spirit glorifies the Son and guides us into truth.

In the second reading today, St Paul in Romans 5:1-5 reveals this truth powerfully: "God's love has been poured into our hearts

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Ryan Innas Muthu

The Most Holy Trinity (C)

Readings: Proverbs 8:22-31;

Roman 5:1-5;

Gospel: John 16:12-15

by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." The same love and unity that exist within the Holy Trinity is poured into our hearts. Thus, we can experience the Trinity as they reveal themselves in love.

Today's first reading, from Proverbs, is a poetic and theologically rich passage that presents Wisdom as present at the beginning of creation, thus foreshadowing Christ, as the eternal Wisdom of the Father, who was with God in the beginning and through whom all things were made (cf. John 1:3; Colossians 1:16).

The Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and a living model for how the Church is called to live, in communion and on mission. As a Trinitarian community, the Church is called to reflect this unity through relationships marked by love, forgiveness, humility, and shared purpose. The life of the Trinity is not closed in on itself: the Father sends the Son, and together, they send the Spirit, and the Spirit sends the Church. Divine love begets the church's mission.

As the Church, we are to live in communion with one another and to go into the world, to bear witness to God's love in action. The Church is not merely a gathering of believers; it is a communion of persons reflecting the inner life of God, as shown in the Trinitarian community. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21).

St Augustine Kinarut journeying to be an ecological parish

KINARUT, Sabah: As part of its journey towards becoming an ecological parish, the Church of St Augustine held a half-day programme titled *Laudato Si' in Action* on May 25. The event was jointly organised by three key parish committees, Caritas, Creation Justice, and the Migrant Ministry.

Held from 1.30pm to 4.00pm, the programme featured insightful presentations from representatives of each ministry, highlighting the parish's commitment to integral human development and ecological conversion.

The first speaker, Melson Simit, Caritas coordinator for the parish, provided an overview of the Caritas ministry. He elaborated on its organisational structure at

both national and local levels, and shared about the various charitable works undertaken by Caritas in the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu.

The second presentation was delivered by Peter Zeter, a member of the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants (ACMI). He discussed the Church's outreach to migrants, outlining the challenges faced in ministering to them, both within the Church and in the broader social context.

Peter emphasised that ACMI currently focuses on serving Catholic migrants in the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, in collaboration with government agencies, NGOs, parishes, and other dioceses, both within and beyond Malaysia.

The final and central talk of the day was given by Sr Calista Solium, FSIC. She explained the core message and purpose of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' encyclical on care for our common home, stressing the urgent need for environmental stewardship. Sr Calista also shared that the Catholic Bishops of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei had pledged to transform every diocese into an ecological diocese.

As the programme highlight, Sr Calista introduced 20 practical protocols that parishes can adopt to become ecological parishes. She encouraged a gradual implementation, starting with a few protocols and expanding over time, as a realistic and sustainable approach to ecological conversion.



Church of St Augustine, Kinarut.

The event drew participation from committee members, parishioners, and members of the Indonesian migrant community. It concluded with a group photo session to commemorate the day.

KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

- 17-18 Clergy Monthly Recollection
- 19 Meeting – Archdiocesan Finance
- 19 AGM – Assunta Hospital
- 21 Confirmation – Klang District
- 21 Pure Life Society Malam Muhibbah 2025

PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

June

- 17 Council of Priest & Clergy Monthly Recollection, Stella Maris, Penang
- 17 Jubilee of Priests – Church of the Assumption, Penang at 6.00pm
- 18 Clergy Monthly Recollection, Stella Maris, Penang
- 21 Meeting – Penang Diocesan Heritage Committee, Minor Basilica of St Anne & Visit to Pagar Teras, Bukit Mertajam

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

June

- 17-18 Clergy Monthly Recollection – Good Shepherd Catholic Seminary, Melaka
- 18 Meeting – Malacca Johore Diocese Young People's Network
- 21 Mass – Perayaan Kesyukuran Menuai, MAJODI Centre
- 21 Sunset Mass (English) – Church of St Joseph, Plentong

Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #226

Dear friends of MJD,

The Church's old way of supporting mission work was reliance on big donors, parish fundraising and pledges and, in a good many parishes now, tithing. Think about this, dear Catholics! Have you considered dedicating and willing a gift or love offering to the MJD to plant churches, support charities, homes and institutions, and train up missionaries, catechists and pastoral workers? MAKE A WILL FOR THE FURTHERANCE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Let this be your legacy to the Church Alive.

Local takes: Blindness! Blind to the truth! The PM drew flak for regarding the Sabah Corruption scandal as a political perception. A think tank told the PM that it was not ok to offer public roles as political souvenirs. Aliran tells the Higher Education Minister that the Malaysian Higher Education System is deeply racialised, challenging his claims of pluralism and inclusivity. The King firmly stated to those clamouring and the brokers that 'Tan Sri' and 'Datuk' titles and federal awards were not for sale or lobbying. Can the blind lead the blind? Politicians play to survive.

Time to Return Home: "Brothers, sisters...I speak to you, especially to those who no longer believe, no longer hope, no longer pray, because they think God has left. To those who are fed up with scandals, with misused power, with the silence of a Church that sometimes seems more like a palace than a home."
"I, too, was angry with God. I, too, saw good people die, children suffer, grandparents cry without medicine. And yes... there were days when I prayed and only felt an echo."

But then I discovered something: God doesn't shout. God whispers. And sometimes He whispers from the mud, from pain, from a grandmother who feeds you without having anything.
"I don't come to offer you perfect faith. I come to tell you that faith is a walk with stones, puddles, and unexpected hugs. I'm not asking you to believe in everything. I'm asking you not to close the door. Give a chance to the God who waits for you without judgment."
"I'm just a priest who saw God in the smile of a woman who lost her son... and yet she cooked for others. That changed me. So, if you're broken, if you don't believe, if you're tired of the lies...come anyway. With your anger, your doubt, your dirty backpack. No one here will ask you for a VIP card."
"Because this Church, as long as I breathe, will be a home for the homeless, and a rest for the weary. God doesn't need soldiers. He needs brothers. And you, yes, you...are one of them." **Robert Prevost /Leo XIV**

A Thought for The Week: Living the Dream "Is the price of living a dream much higher than the price of living without daring to dream?" asked the disciple. The master took him to a clothes store. There, he asked him to try on a suit in exactly his size. The disciple obeyed, and was very amazed at the quality of the clothes. Then the master asked him to try on the same suit – but this time a size much bigger than his own. The disciple did as he was asked. "This one is no use. It's too big." "How much are these suits?" the master asked the shop attendant. "They both cost the same price. It's just the size that is different."
Lesson from the Master: When leaving the store, the master told his disciple, "Living your dream or giving it up also costs the same price, which is usually very high. But the first, let us share the miracle of life, and the second is of no use to us."

Something's Happening Near You:
 1. The **Pilgrim Cross** is making its rounds in the Parish of St Mary, Air Salak from May 3 - June 21.
 2. **Pesta Kesyukuran Menuai MJD** will take place on June 21 at Majodi from 9.00am-3.00pm, coordinated by the South Johor BM Team.

QnQ! Q asks? What they say about the Pentecost?
 1. And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions." **Joel 2:28**
 2. When you strip it of everything else, Pentecost stands for power and life. That's what came into the church when the Holy Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost." **David Wilkerson.**
 3. The Spirit, the living memory of the church, reminds us that we are born from a gift and that we grow by giving, not by holding on, but by giving of ourselves," **Pope Francis, 2020**

The Holy Spirit @work: Without Pentecost the Christ-event – the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus – remains imprisoned in history as something to remember, think about and reflect on. The Spirit of Jesus comes to dwell within us, so that we can become living Christs here and now. **Henri Nouwen**

Something To Tickle You: Keep your face towards the sunshine and shadows will fall behind you." **Walt Whitman**

Bishop Bernard Paul

Water security for the Orang Asli

TANGKAK, Johor: The Orang Asli community in Tanah Gembur, Bekoh, celebrated a major milestone with the successful completion of a water pipeline project. This was a collaborative effort between Caritas Malacca Johor Diocese (Caritas MJD), the Lions Club of Johor, and youth volunteers from Leo Clubs and Raffles University.

Facing water shortages during the dry season, the community appealed for assistance to build a four-kilometre pipeline from a more reliable upstream source in the jungle. Caritas MJD responded by proposing the project to the Lions Club of Johor, who successfully secured a USD5,000 (RM21,238.12) grant from Lions Club International to kickstart the initiative.

Leo Club members from Raffles

University and several secondary schools joined the cause, contributing time and energy to the project. Additionally, Caritas MJD and Raffles University jointly contributed RM7,000, bringing the total amount raised to approximately RM30,000.

The installation of the new pipeline ensures that the village will now benefit from two separate water sources, significantly improving water security and resilience during periods of drought.

Beyond addressing basic needs, the initiative also includes the renovation of the community's aging and leaky kitchen. Once restored, the upgraded facility will enhance the well-being and daily life of the residents by providing a safer and more functional shared space.

A simple opening ceremony



Volunteers clearing the land to lay the pipes.

was held to commemorate the project's completion, with Fr Aaron Alammalay present to distribute appreciation certificates



The volunteers after successfully completing the water pipeline project.

to key contributors. Leo Club volunteers also organised a tree-planting activity with members of

the Orang Asli community, further strengthening bonds of friendship and environmental care.

Christian Prison Network holds first national prayer gathering

PETALING JAYA: In a landmark event for Christian prison ministry in Malaysia, the newly formed Christian Prison Network (CPN) hosted its first national prayer gathering recently, uniting 29 staff and volunteers from three major organisations: Malaysian CARE, Prison Fellowship Peninsula Association (PFPA), and Catholic Prison Fellowship Association (CPFA).

Held at the Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM) headquarters, the event marked a powerful moment of worship, unity, and shared commitment among Christian organisations ministering to incarcerated individuals and their communities. The gathering embodied the spirit of Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-23, as participants came together across denominational lines to pray and collaborate.



Leaders and participants from three key organisations.

Rev Philip Lok, General Secretary of the CCM, welcomed participants with words of encouragement. Bishop Emeritus Ong, advisor to CPN, delivered a stirring exhortation based on 1 Chronicles 12:23-40, calling attendees to unity, readiness, and unwavering commitment to the mission of Christ, especially within the prison context.

Prayers were offered in four key areas:

- The Nation – for national lead-

ers, peace, and justice

- The Work – for ministries in prisons and halfway homes
- The People – for prisoners, ex-offenders, volunteers, and families
- The Partners – for churches, donors, and supporting organisations

The Christian Prison Network was established to be a national voice for Christian prison ministries, advocating unity and collabo-

ration in efforts to reach and support those behind bars and those reintegrating into society. Grounded in the Nicene Creed, the CPN aims to empower prisoners and ex-offenders to transform their lives through faith in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

This inaugural prayer gathering served as a launchpad for deeper collaboration, resource-sharing, and coordinated outreach efforts among Christian prison ministries.

It reaffirmed the vision of CPN, to foster strategic partnerships and build a united Christian response to the needs of the incarcerated and their families.

"There was a strong sense that God is doing something new through this network," one participant shared. "It was deeply encouraging to be with others who understand the challenges and the calling."

Looking ahead, the CPN steering committee will develop plans for 2025 and 2026, including more prayer gatherings, training programmes, and national initiatives to strengthen prison ministry across Malaysia.

In a society where incarceration often leads to isolation and stigma, the Christian Prison Network offers a hopeful alternative, a united front of love, support, and transformation through the Gospel. **Theresa Lee**

Fostering positive relationships in the workplace

KUALA LUMPUR: On June 3, the curia staff of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur participated in a one-day workshop *The Power of Positive Relationships* held at Corus Hotel.

Led by Anita Stephen from Progressive Pathway Consulting, the programme highlighted the significance of developing better relationships, personal growth, connection, and a shared purpose. The day commenced with an icebreaker, followed by sessions covering topics such as *Building a Culture of Positive Relationships at Work*; *Building Trusting Teams* and *Practical Tools for Building Better Interactions*. The event concluded with participants signing a *Positive Relationship Charter*.

During the session on *Building a Culture of Positive Relationships at Work*, attendees explored the difference between cultivating a culture by default and by design. In



Anita Stephen explaining one of the activities to the participants.

many work environments, culture often evolves by default, leading to challenges such as ignored Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), poor teamwork, repetitive tasks, acceptance of low standards, and

unhealthy work relationships, all of which contribute to unpredictable and inefficient practices. In contrast, creating a culture by design necessitates a conscious effort to foster an environment of

giving and receiving, achieved over time through the establishment of clear values, healthy behaviours, and attainable goals.

In group discussions, participants shared their frustrations regarding experiences of bullying, belittlement, public shouting, favouritism, and indecisiveness.

Throughout the workshop, Anita showcased several videos featuring Simon Sinek, an English-born American author and inspirational speaker on business leadership. A key takeaway from these videos was his assertion that "Leadership is not about being in charge; it's about taking care of the people in your charge." Anita emphasised that a leader's role is to cultivate a trusting team, a practice that develops gradually. Leadership is a lifestyle that can be adopted by individuals at any level.

The teams also participated in an activity aimed at enhancing their

active listening skills. They were tasked with identifying phrases that represented acts of paraphrasing, clarifying, acknowledging, encouraging, and validating. Moving forward, all participants were invited to sign a Positive Relationship Charter, committing to specific behaviours. Each individual noted behaviours they considered acceptable and unacceptable in the workplace, including phrases they wished to hear more frequently and those they preferred to avoid.

The workshop aimed to enable attendees to identify behaviours that strengthen or damage workplace relationships, recognise how everyday interactions impact team dynamics, learn to use practical tools to navigate differences positively, and contribute to building a culture that is open, courteous, and trustworthy.

A follow-up session is scheduled for June 25. **Gwen Manickam**

Celebrating 150 years of mission in Taiping

Charles Vincent Anand

TAIPING: Catholics in Taiping recently celebrated a momentous milestone — the 150th anniversary of the Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH), located in Klian Pauh.

Founded in 1875 by French missionaries from the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP), OLSH holds the distinction of being the oldest church in Perak and the third oldest within the Diocese of Penang. It is one of two Catholic churches in this historical town, the other being the Church of St Louis, established in 1897.

The two churches operated as separate parishes until 1997, when Bishop Antony Selvanayagam unified them under a single parish named the Taiping Catholic Church (TCC).

This year's celebration was especially meaningful for parishioners, as OLSH had been closed for the past five years due to the construction of the Ozanam Retirement Village (ORV) on adjacent land.

To commemorate the 150th anniversary, TCC parish priest Monsignor Stephen Liew organised a Triduum at OLSH, beginning on Thursday, May 29, the Feast of the Ascension.

The opening Mass was celebrated by Msgr Jude Miranda of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Pulau Tikus, Penang. Msgr Jude, who served as TCC parish priest from 2010 to 2018, played a pivotal role in the restoration and enhancement of OLSH while preserving its historical character.

On the second day, Fr Aloysius Tan from the Church of St Michael, Ipoh, presided over a Mandarin Mass, acknowledging OLSH's historical roots as a predominantly Chinese-speaking parish before the merger in 1997.

The Triduum culminated on Saturday, May 31, with the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrated by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang.

Following the solemn Mass, a procession of



Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Klian Pauh.



The Taiping Catholic Church nurses guild performing at the OLSH 150th anniversary dinner celebration at Dewan St Louis. (Taiping Catholic Church)

the Blessed Sacrament and a statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart took place through several kilometres of Taiping town, drawing the faithful together in public witness of their devotion.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian reflected on the importance of continuity in sustaining and strengthening the Catholic faith — both locally and globally. He spoke of how the legacy of the late Pope Francis continues through his successor, Pope Leo IV, mirroring how the foundations laid by the French missionaries have flourished in Taiping over the past 150 years.

Among those present at the Mass were

Taiping MP Wong Kah Woh, who also serves as Deputy Education Minister, along with Aulong assemblyman Teh Kok Lim and Pokok Assam assemblyman Ong Seng Guan, all from the Democratic Action Party (DAP).

The celebration concluded with a 150th anniversary dinner held on Sunday, June 1, at Dewan St Louis, attended by over 700 guests, including Cardinal Sebastian, clergy from various parishes, and local dignitaries.

During the event, Teh Kok Lim, who is also a Perak state executive councillor, pledged a RM10,000 donation to TCC in honour of the anniversary.

Empowering Catholics to address mental health challenges

PETALING JAYA: In response to the growing mental health concerns in Malaysia, the Archdiocesan Family Life Commission (AFLC), collaborated with the Catholic Counsellors, Therapists, Psychologists and Psychiatrists of Malaysia (CCTPPM) and the Family Life Ministry of the Church of the Assumption, to organise a two-part Mental Wellness Workshop aimed at promoting greater awareness and understanding of mental health within the Catholic community.

Held at Dewan Volle, Church of the Assumption, the sessions took place on May 17 and May 31, drawing over 100 participants from various parishes across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. The workshop was facilitated by Professor Dr Xavier V. Pereira, a renowned psychiatrist and psychotherapist.

Grounded in the Biopsychosocial model developed by Dr George Engel, the workshop featured engaging and interactive sessions, including discussions, role plays, and case

studies, to help participants grasp complex psychological concepts in practical and relatable ways.

Day 1 focused on *Mental Wellbeing: Understanding Stress and Anxiety*, exploring the physical, emotional, behavioural, and psychological symptoms of stress and its impact on relationships.

Day 2 addressed *Mental Wellbeing: Understanding Depression*, covering key topics such as self-harm prevention, suicide awareness, and strategies for managing interpersonal conflicts.

Dr Xavier highlighted that while stress is a natural part of life, even experienced by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36 – 46), it can be managed through a combination of psychological tools and spiritual support. He encouraged participants to find comfort in Scripture, recommending Psalm 23 for peace and relaxation, and Psalm 22 for trust during times of suffering and abandonment.

Designed especially for those involved in pastoral ministries, the workshop aimed to equip participants with foundational knowledge to better support others in their communities while also recognising the importance of their own mental wellbeing.

Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Many appreciated the accessible format and practical activities, noting a greater awareness of their own mental health and the importance of seeking help when needed.

Also in attendance were the Chair couple of the AFLC, Dato' Dr Robert Basker and Datin Shelah, who lent their support to the initiative across both days.

The workshop concluded with a renewed sense of commitment among participants to prioritise mental wellness, both personally and within their ministry work, in alignment with the World Health Organisation's vision of mental health as essential to personal and communal well-being. **AFLC Formations Team**



Rededication of Cahayasuara

KUALA LUMPUR: *Cahayasuara* was rededicated on May 31 during the 59th World Communications Day. The ceremony, which drew media teams and church representatives from across the Klang Valley, reaffirmed the Catholic Church's commitment to meaningful, faith-based communication.

Once a hub for Catholic media and communications, *Cahayasuara* was celebrated not only for its physical renewal but also for its continued role in fostering spiritual connection through media.

The day began with prayers, followed by blessing of the building.

At the auditorium, a video on the significance of World Communications Day was shown. The message echoed Pope Leo's reminder of every individual's responsibility to foster harmony through gentle and truthful communication.

In his address, Archbishop Julian highlighted the challenges and responsibilities of modern communication in an age of rapid change and misinformation.

"We have lived through two millennia of change," he said. "If we do not adapt, we will be left behind." He warned against the dangers of fake news and urged communicators to discern truth with care. "Be responsible in what we write, forward, and say. Let our communication uplift humanity and reflect Christ with gentleness."

He also called for deeper internal change and a renewed sense of mission: "When others see us, do they see someone who reflects Christ, compassion, kindness, and hope?"

Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Archdiocesan Social Communications Ministry, gave a historical account of the Cahayasuara building's evolution, from its origins as a wooden structure built in 1967 after the Second Vatican Council, to its current status as a dynamic centre for parish, outreach, and media ministries.

Reflecting on the theme of this year's Social Communications Day, he reminded attendees of media's dual purpose: "To uplift with truth, beauty, and goodness, while guarding against its misuse." He urged communicators to become storytellers of hope. "Let's bring good news into the world. Be promoters of non-aggressive communication and build a culture of care."

The event also featured a presentation by Arokiam Raj on his digital initiative "Know Your Church," and a prize-giving ceremony for an art competition inspired by the day's theme.

The celebrations concluded with lunch. **Elvina Fernandez**



Archbishop Julian Leow and Fr Clarence Devadass during the celebration (photo/Jeffrey Chee)

CMfD's jubilee pilgrimage experience

Pamela Ngeau Seu Wei

KUALA LUMPUR: The Catholic Ministry for the Deaf (CMfD) embarked on a Journey of Hope by visiting three designated Jubilee centres within the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

The first took place on May 1 at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist with the Rosary, followed by Mass celebrated by Fr Ferdinand Magimay. As it coincided with the *Novendiales* period, pilgrims took time to remember and honour the life of the late Pope Francis, signing a book of condolence in his memory.

The group also learned the history of the cathedral and the founding fathers. What began as a simple church has now been elevated to Cathedral status.

During lunch and fellowship, Fr Gerard Theraviam, the parish priest, shared insights into the meaning of the word "Cathedral", derived from "Cathedra", referring to the bishop's official chair in the principal church of a diocese. He reconnected with several CMfD

members, reminiscing his early priesthood.

The group then journeyed to the Church of Jesus Caritas (JCC) in Kepong, where they were welcomed by volunteers and given an overview of the church's 50-year history.

Pilgrims were moved by the presence of a first-class relic of St Maria Goretti, known as the patron saint of chastity and forgiveness. The group learned about her life and took time for veneration.

A particularly profound moment was the immersion baptism at the church's baptismal pool. Those who participated described feeling cleansed, forgiven, and renewed — strengthened in faith and spirit.

This was followed by adoration before the Blessed Sacrament in the Chapel of St John Vianney. The visit concluded with a tour showcasing sacred statues, many crafted in Vietnam, and a surprise birthday celebration for CMfD



The Catholic Ministry for the Deaf members at the Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong.



members born in May, accompanied by light refreshments.

The CMfD continued their pilgrimage on May 12 to the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA). The day began with Mass celebrated by Fr Paul Cheong, OFM Cap, followed by a life-sized Stations of the Cross, guided by the SFA pilgrimage team. Carrying two large crosses and one smaller one for children, pilgrims reflected on the suffering and sacrifice of Christ.

Before the next session, Fr Paul addressed the group, offering a reflection on the Cross: the vertical beam symbolising our connection

to God, and the horizontal beam, our relationship with one another. He reminded everyone that the Jubilee Year is a time to strengthen both.

The SFA team then led a walkthrough of the church — from the early presence of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins in Malaysia, to the founding of the Franciscan Centre, Friary, and Chapel, culminating in the present-day church built to accommodate a growing congregation. The life of St Francis of Assisi, the church's patron, was beautifully depicted through stained-glass windows, each accompanied by a narrative.

A highlight was the veneration of eight first-class relics, six of which were displayed in the Chapel of Portiuncula: St Francis of Assisi, St Pio of Pietrelcina, St Rita of Cascia, St John Paul II, St Teresa of Calcutta, and Blessed Angelo of Canete. Two additional relics were housed at the main church and chapel altars. Pilgrims also had the opportunity to have their rosaries blessed.

The CMfD community has been richly blessed by these pilgrimage experiences — moments of spiritual growth, reflection, and unity. In walking together, we are reminded that we are CMfD pilgrims of HOPE!

Heeding the call to evangelise

PETALING JAYA: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Mt 28:19-20). This missionary mandate of Christ formed the foundation of *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), the 2013 Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis, which was the focus of a session held on May 22, at the Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX).

The talk, delivered by Fr Richard Anthonysamy SJ, assistant parish priest of SFX, was the fifth session in the Journeying as Pilgrims of Hope series organised by the Firm Foundation Ministry.

Fr Richard highlighted the Pope's invitation to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, describing it as the source of authentic joy and the heart of Christian evangelisation. "The joy of the Gospel is Jesus Christ," he said, urging the faithful to reflect on their relationship with Christ — whether they have truly 'encountered' Him in prayer and how that encounter shapes their lives.

In outlining the Church's missionary transformation, Fr Richard echoed the Pope's call to move beyond comfort zones and reach out to society's margins. "Evangelising communities take the initiative, engage with others, bear fruit, and rejoice," he explained. "Pope Francis reminds us that the Church must not remain confined but instead go out into the streets — even if it means becoming bruised, hurt, and dirty."

The session also touched on the need for pastoral and structural renewal, with Pope Francis calling



Fr Richard Anthonysamy SJ

every diocese to undergo a "resolute process of discernment, purification, and reform." This, said Fr Richard, means breaking free from the mentality of "we have always done it this way" and embracing bold, creative strategies for evangelisation.

Fr Richard also drew attention to the challenges of modern communication, cautioning against distorted media portrayals of the Gospel. "The Church must communicate Christ's message — not just doctrines, but love, mercy, and justice," he said.

Participants were invited to consider their own parish, BEC, and ministry's response to the call of evangelisation. "How do we respond when we hear the call to evangelise?" Fr Richard asked. "Do we see it as our mission?"

The session also explored the social dimensions of *Evangelii Gaudium*, including Pope Francis' emphatic call to include the poor and marginalised. The Pontiff denounces systems that exclude — saying "No to the economy of exclusion, no to the idolatry of

money, and no to inequality that spawns violence."

Fr Richard discussed the various obstacles to evangelisation highlighted in the document: secularism, spiritual sloth, individualism, and the breakdown of family life. In the face of these, Pope Francis challenges Christians to ask themselves, "Is my faith evangelising my culture, or is my culture evangelising my faith?"

On the proclamation of the Gospel, Pope Francis insists that true evangelisation must include the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord. He quotes St John Paul II in affirming that this must be the Church's "absolute priority."

The Pope further urges all Christians to cultivate a spirit-filled faith that inspires both prayer and action. "We are called to leave the world a little better than we found it," Fr Richard said, referencing the Pope's call for evangelisers to be people of both interior depth and outward commitment.

Fr Richard concluded by stressing the need for unity in the Church and for ongoing dialogue with governments, cultures, sciences, and other faiths — all essential for full human development and the common good.

Participants were encouraged to discern the Holy Spirit's promptings through *Evangelii Gaudium* and to act on them in their daily lives, asking: What two or three messages from this exhortation is the Holy Spirit calling me to begin working on today? **Harry Kek Soo Beng**

Human Rosary unites community in prayer and devotion

SELAYANG BARU: The Chapel of Christ the King (CTK) witnessed a moving evening of prayer and fellowship as parishioners gathered to form a Human Rosary, marking the conclusion of the Month of Mary.

Jointly organised by the Legion of Mary and the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), the event drew faithful from all walks of life into a living formation of the Rosary, each individual representing a bead in this sacred chain of prayer. The Rosary was prayed in multiple languages, beautifully reflecting the cultural and linguistic diversity of the CTK community.

The evening began at 6.00pm with the recitation of the

Apostles' Creed, followed by the Rosary. These were led by members of the Legion of Mary alongside representatives from various BECs.

This was not only a homage to the Blessed Virgin Mary but also a powerful witness to the unity of the Church in prayer. Many participants described the experience as both memorable and deeply spiritual, with some calling it "a profound and uplifting conclusion to the Marian month."

The evening closed with final prayers and a time of fellowship, leaving hearts uplifted and souls renewed. It was a testament to the power of collective prayer and the enduring presence of Mary in the lives of the faithful.



Faithful praying the Rosary.

Ozanam Education Centre hosts Sports Day for underprivileged children

Marie-Jospeh Jean-Pierre

PETALING JAYA: The Ozanam Education Centre (Educentre), a beacon of hope for underprivileged children, held its Sports Day on May 24 at SJK(T) PJS1. The event was a celebration filled with excitement, energy, and joyful moments for the little ones.

Established in 2002 by the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Conference of Assumption, the Educentre has dedicated itself to providing quality preschool education for children aged four to six years old from B40 families and underprivileged backgrounds. The annual Sports Day is one of the centre's hallmark events, offering children not just a chance to engage in fun and games, but also an opportunity to build confidence, teamwork, and sportsmanship.

The day was filled with smiles, laughter, and excitement as children participated in the marching performance, pom-pom dance and



Some of the children showing off their prizes during the sports day.

various races, cheered on by proud parents, teachers, members and volunteers. The event fostered a strong sense of camaraderie and inclusiveness, emphasising the importance of physical activity and holistic development.

A heart-warming moment was the discovery that the current PIBG (Parent-Teacher

Association) chairman of SJK(T) PJS1 was a student of the kindergarten during the early years which later continued operations as the Ozanam Education Centre under SSVP. This clearly shows the long-lasting impact of the Educentre's mission and how quality early childhood education can empower individu-

als to become community leaders.

Looking ahead, the Conference has set an ambitious goal for this year, to secure a larger premise. This move aims to accommodate more children and to create a more holistic learning environment. The society envisions a space where children not only learn academic fundamentals but also receive the emotional and social support they need to thrive.

The success of the Sports Day underscores the vital role the Ozanam Education Centre plays in shaping young lives. It also highlights the unwavering commitment of its educators, members, and supporters in ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, gets the opportunity to dream, grow, and succeed.

For more information on how to support the Ozanam Education Centre's work, please visit their FB page: <https://www.facebook.com/ozanameducentre> and <https://ssvpassumption.org/>

EMHCs renew their sacred calling at spiritual retreat

KLANG: On May 25, the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) of the Church Our Lady of Lourdes, gathered for a spiritual retreat led by Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis. With the theme *Come and Have Breakfast* (John 21:12), this special day invited both new and existing ministers to reflect, renew, and reconnect with their sacred calling.

Fr Selva reminded participants that EMHCs play an important role in the life of the Church. More than just assisting with Holy Communion during Mass, EMHCs are also called to bring the Eucharist to the sick and homebound, and to offer prayers during funerals, birthday blessings, and other moments of need. To serve meaningfully, Fr Selva emphasised, ministers must first root

themselves in daily prayer and Scripture. Without this foundation, it becomes difficult to carry the Body of Christ with true reverence and compassion.

A key highlight of the retreat was learning a simple but powerful method of Scripture meditation. He encouraged everyone to begin their day with the Gospel, focusing on a word or phrase that speaks to their heart. Though it may feel unfamiliar at first, regular reflection helps deepen the relationship with God. Spending quiet moments with His Word allows us to hear His voice and strengthens our ability to serve others with clarity, kindness, and respect.

The retreat also invited ministers to consider the deeper meaning of the Mass, not just as a joyful celebration, but as a holy sacrifice. Jesus continues to personally invite each of us to His table with the loving words, "Come and have breakfast." He also encouraged the ministers to spend time in Eucharistic Adoration and attend Holy Hour whenever possible, drawing strength from the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

As part of ongoing formation, EMHCs are

guided by liturgical and pastoral norms to ensure their service is respectful and dignified. Whether distributing Communion during Mass or bringing the Eucharist to the sick, every action is rooted in deep faith and devotion. Proper handling of the Sacred Species, full participation at Mass, and sincere reverence for the Blessed Sacrament are essential parts of this ministry.

Bringing Holy Communion to the homebound and elderly is a special way to reach out to those who cannot come to Mass. This ministry helps connect them with the larger faith community. Ministers are encouraged to hold a simple Communion service and share prayers and companionship, offering comfort and peace to those they visit.

The retreat reminded all EMHCs that their strength lies not just in their duties but in their relationship with Christ. As Fr Selva said, "The strength of your ministry depends on the strength of your prayer life." May all who serve in this sacred role continue to grow in holiness, guided by the gentle invitation of Jesus: "Come and have breakfast." **Christina Pamela Lourdesamy**



Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis explaining the importance extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion play in the life of the Church.

Letters to Editor

Mass offerings and the downside of it

Dear Editor,

I'm writing to express my concerns regarding the lack of clear guidelines for Mass offerings in our churches. This issue has become increasingly frustrating for many parishioners like myself who wish to honour significant life events such as birthdays, wedding anniversaries and memorials through Mass offerings.

It is disheartening to see that some churches in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur have established protocols for these offerings while others remain silent or inconsistent. Why is it that certain parishes openly encourage these practices while others seem to have ignored them altogether? This disparity creates confu-

sion and disappointment among the faithful who seek to commemorate their loved ones or celebrate important milestones in a meaningful way.

For example, the Church of St Anthony at Jalan Pudu and the Church of the Sacred Heart at Jalan Peel do not allow the faithful to add in names of events like BIRTHDAY or WEDDING ANNIVERSARY or YEARS for death anniversary after the names that the Mass are offered for while a handful of other church allows it [not sure for how long]. I'm pretty sure that there are other churches that practise some other ways of Mass offerings. Why can't the church be in unison about matters like this? Is this what it means to be "Pilgrims of Hope" in this jubilee year? I

feel more hopeless and helpless when we encounter such situations in our churches and being told that such matters cannot be accommodated.

It would be beneficial for our churches to include a clear list of acceptable occasions for Mass offerings in their bulletins or notice boards. By doing so, parishes could provide guidance to their congregations and foster a sense of community around these important traditions.

Additionally, I have encountered situations where administrative staff members of the parish remain uncooperative in matters like this and the parish priests avoid addressing the topic of Mass entirely. This lack of communication and support can leave parishioners feeling frustrated and

undervalued.

I urge our church leaders or the archdiocese liturgical committee to establish consistent guidelines regarding Mass offerings and to communicate these clearly to members of the congregation. By doing so, we can ensure that all parishioners feel welcomed and supported in their desire to honour significant moments in their lives through the beauty and the sacredness of the Holy Eucharist.

Thank you for considering this important issue. I hope it sparks an enlightening conversation that leads to positive changes in our communities.

Lee-Ann Charlene Gomez
Kuala Lumpur



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

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

NEWS IN BRIEF

Church in India recognises first Eucharistic Miracle

VILAKKANUR: On May 31, the Catholic Church officially recognised a Eucharistic miracle that occurred in 2013 in Vilakkannur, Kerala. During a Syro-Malabar liturgy, Fr Thomas Pathickal saw the face of Christ imprinted on a consecrated host. After 12 years of investigation by the Holy See, the event was declared supernatural.

The recognition was marked by a solemn celebration led by Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli and attended by 10,000 faithful. Girelli called it a reminder of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist and urged unity within the Syro-Malabar Church, which has faced internal conflict over liturgical practices since 2021.

He emphasised that the Eucharist should be a source of unity, not division, and expressed hope that Christ the King Church would become a centre for reconciliation and pilgrimage in India. **AsiaNews**

Goan Jesuit chosen to discernment office in Rome

PANAJI: Jesuit priest Fr Joseph Cardozo has been chosen to assist the Office of Discernment and Apostolic Planning (DPA) for a Synodal Church at the Jesuit headquarters in Rome. This move follows a request from the late Pope Francis for the Society of Jesus to support the Church in deepening synodality.



Fr Cardozo, vice provincial and superior of the Jesuit community in Miramar (Goa), will work alongside Fr John Dardis, general councillor for DPA. He will contribute to planning the renewal of Jesuit provinces, analysing regional plans, facilitating workshops, and expanding the Magis Digital platform across South Asia.

He will also assist with the October 2025 meeting of superiors general and participate in an international conference in Salamanca, Spain (Nov 23–Dec 3), titled *Deepening Discernment in Common: Promoting Synodal Transformation*. The event will bring together 80 experts and mark a significant step in advancing Discernment in Common as a core offering of the Society of Jesus. **Matters India**

Catholic group serves meals, supports lonely South Koreans

SEOUL: The Marian Society of the Korean Martyrs Parish in Seoul has become a beacon of care for the poor and isolated since its founding in 2017. Volunteers provide food, financial aid, and companionship, especially to the elderly living alone.

Camillo Jo Ju-il, 92, who suffers from a spinal disorder, credits the group with lifting him out of loneliness. "After my wife passed away, I felt lost. But thanks to the love of parishioners, I now attend Mass daily," he shared.

Volunteers cook in the parish basement and deliver meals in containers, using these visits as a chance to connect with and support those in need. The society partners with local health and community centres to identify the most vulnerable.

In both 2022 and 2024, the society helped fund urgent surgeries for isolated individuals who couldn't afford treatment. Parish donations made this possible.

Jeong Jong-seok, the society's president, thanked the parish and archdiocese for their support, while secretary Maria Kim Jung-ae highlighted that many elderly lack family or government help and some children also need similar care.

In a rapidly aging society, their work stands as a vital witness to lived compassion. **ucanews.com**

Thai Bishops launch synod implementation

BANGKOK: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand (CBCT) has established a national committee to spearhead the implementation of the Synod on Synodality's Final Document, marking a new phase in the Church's global journey toward greater communion, participation, and mission.

The newly formed high-level committee is chaired by Archbishop Anthony Weradet Chaiseri, Vice-President of the CBCT, and includes representatives from all dioceses, CBCT offices, religious congregations, and lay organisations.

"This structure includes two levels," explained Fr. Suwat Luangsaard, CBCT Deputy Secretary-General.

"At the national level, the high-level committee brings together leaders from all sectors of the Church. At the diocesan level, similar structures will be established to reflect local contexts," the prelate added.

The move comes in response to a letter from the Synod's General Secretariat urging all bishops to begin the final stage of the synodal journey: implementation.

This stage marks a shift from a one-time global event to a continuous and dynamic ecclesial process.

The synodal journey, officially titled *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*, is structured in three phases: preparation, celebration, and implementation.

With the first two phases completed in October 2024, the Church has now entered the crucial third phase, turning discerned insights into lived realities.

CBCT's implementation plan begins with a comprehensive planning meeting scheduled for this month. It will focus on aligning the efforts of various CBCT offices



Delegates to the Asian continental phase of the "synod on synodality" of the Catholic Church gather in Thailand from February 24-27, 2023. (Photo courtesy of the FABC)

with the recommendations of the Synod on Synodality.

The goal is to create a unified framework that allows the Church in Thailand to "walk forward together," while being mindful of the country's unique pastoral and cultural context.

According to Fr. Suwat, the high-level committee will meet at least twice a year to coordinate and evaluate progress, working closely with diocesan-level teams.

These local teams composed of priests, religious, and laypeople will work with their bishops and report regularly to the CBCT. Evaluations will eventually be submitted to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and the Synod General Secretariat in Rome by 2028.

"This process ensures transparency, accountability, and mutual learning," Fr Suwat noted. "It reflects the spirit of walking together as a missionary synodal Church."

The Final Synod Document calls for the

establishment of "synodal teams" at local levels to help embed synodal principles in daily Church life. These teams are vital to enabling communities to listen, discern, and act together in mission.

Fr Suwat emphasised that this phase is not just about institutional planning. "It's an invitation to all Catholics in Thailand to walk forward together in unity, with renewed missionary zeal," he said. "This is a moment to rediscover the Church's true nature — as a community of missionary disciples."

Echoing this sentiment, Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod, in his message to the bishops, reminded local Churches that implementation should not be seen as "a simple application of directives from above," but rather as a reception process tailored to each Church's local culture and reality.

"The goal," said Cardinal Grech, "is not to add work upon work, but to help Churches walk in a synodal style." **Chainarong Monthienvichienchai, LiCAS News**

Couples attend family formation on religious moderation

YOGYAKARTA: The Archdiocese of Semarang gathered Catholic couples in Sleman for a formation on family spirituality and religious moderation in public life.

"This formation programme on Catholic family life with a perspective on religious moderation is part of our annual agenda," said CB Ismulyadi, Catholic Affairs Officer of Sleman Regency.

He said the programme is intended to provide families with an opportunity to reflect on their relationships, both in communication and in faith, and to support ongoing family ministry in Sts Peter and Paul Parish in Klepu and St John Chrysostom Parish in Pojok.

The formation was held on May 31 at the PAUD Pelita Kasih Foundation Hall, with 15 married couples participating from two parishes: Sts Peter and Paul in Klepu and St. John Chrysostom in Pojok, Sendangarum, and Minggir.

Organised by the Catholic Affairs Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman, the programme carried the theme *The Peace of Christ in the Family*, according to the archdiocese.

Speakers included Sr Agnes Samosir, FCJ (Coordinator of FCJ Outreach),



to moments of tension.

But rather than fear conflict, families can view it as "an opportunity to learn, grow, and build more authentic and harmonious relationships."

Fr Paulus Erwin Sasmita walked participants through the MBTI personality types, linking personality diversity to relationship challenges.

"One of the main causes of conflict is a lack of understanding of personal differences," he said. "What makes each person unique is the combination of their personality traits."

Markus Mardius guided couples through communication dynamics and challenges, urging them to recognise factors such as language, beliefs, and culture.

"The key to communication is understanding our own personalities," he said. "We must adapt ourselves when interacting with others — especially our spouse — who may have a very different personality type."

At the end of the programme, couples made personal commitments, offered roses to their partners, and presented the Indonesian flag, symbolising their role in building peace in family, Church, and society. **LiCAS News**

Pastor Paulus Erwin Sasmita, Pr (St Paul Major Seminary, Kentungan), and facilitator Markus Mardius. The sessions addressed faith, communication, and personality differences.

Fr Adolfus Suratmo Atmomartaya, Pr, pastor of the participating parishes, welcomed the initiative and said it could help married couples become more resilient and serve as examples of harmony in their parish communities.

Sr Agnes, in her talk on family spirituality, emphasised that conflict is an inevitable part of life. She explained that humans naturally see the world differently, leading

Thousands gather to honour Ugandan martyrs

VATICAN: On June 3, thousands of Ugandan pilgrims and visitors from across Africa and beyond converged at the Namugongo Ugandan Martyrs Shrine to commemorate the feast of the 22 Catholics executed between 1885 and 1887 on the orders of Buganda King Mwanga II for refusing to renounce their faith.

Access to the vast grounds of the Namugongo shrine began as early as 5.30am, with pilgrims patiently enduring long queues behind tight security barriers and checks. Many were overcome with deep reverence, spiritual reflection, and emotion as they approached the sacred site. Others had walked many kilometres to be there.

This year, it was the turn of the Diocese of Lugazi to lead and animate the liturgical celebration of Holy Mass. The 2025 theme: *Oh Lord, let me see again, I, your pilgrim of hope.*

Before the Holy Mass, a diocesan choir filled the atmosphere with melodious hymns praising the Uganda Martyrs, reinforcing the

legacy of faith and courage that led to their martyrdom.

Delivering his homily, the Ordinary of Lugazi Diocese, Bishop Christopher Kakooza welcomed pilgrims to Namugongo — naming them country by country and describing Namugongo as a sacred place of faith and hope. He expressed gratitude to God for the gift of the holy martyrs and urged the congregation to unite in prayer. He also urged them to pray in thanksgiving for the gift of a new Pope, Leo XIV.

Bishop Kakooza emphasised that pilgrimage is a journey of faith and hope that strengthens believers. A holy pilgrimage is undertaken by a person of faith walking with Jesus towards holiness, he said.

The bishop's homily was based on the Gospel story of Bartimaeus, the blind man who called out to Jesus outside the city of Jericho.

"With one voice, we have come out to cry



Some of the bishops at Namugongo Shrine on June 3, 2025.

to the Lord with hope. We have come in the faith of the martyrs. These martyrs gave up their lives for the sake of Christ," said the prelate of Lugazi. "The Lord took the little faith of Charles Lwanga and his companions and turned it into something great."

Bishop Kakooza added, "We can face challenges, but our hope calls us to transcend worldly attractions. We are invited to participate in this spiritual journey of communion with God and others. It is a journey that calls for resilience and perseverance. Our struggles

on earth are temporary," Bishop Kakooza told the packed Namugongo shrine.

The Uganda Martyrs were canonised by Pope St Paul VI in 1964. In July 1969, Pope Paul VI became the first reigning pontiff to visit sub-Saharan Africa when he travelled to Uganda. The visit included a pilgrimage to the site of martyrdom at Namugongo.

In 1993, Pope St John Paul II also visited Namugongo. Then, in 2015, Pope Francis also celebrated Mass at the Namugongo shrine during his visit to Uganda. **Vatican News**

New York Archdiocese asks laity to help find future priests

NEW YORK: In the Archdiocese of New York, where ordinations to the priesthood have sharply declined in recent decades, a new initiative is seeking to rekindle vocations. Launched this spring, *Called By Name* is the archdiocese's latest attempt to spark interest in the priesthood.

"Only two men applied to seminary last year to be diocesan priests," said Fr George Sears, director of vocations for the archdiocese. "As far as I know, that's the lowest number that I've ever seen."

During Mass on Good Shepherd Sunday last month, parishioners across the city were invited to fill out pamphlets or scan a QR code to nominate young men they believe might be called to the priesthood.

Since May 11 more than 260 names have been submitted. Each nominee will receive a personal letter from Cardinal Timothy Dolan inviting him to dinner in August. *Called By Name* comes at a time of mounting concern for the future of the priesthood not only in New York but also across the nation.

Within the Archdiocese of New York, the number of priests has fallen by more than half since 1970, according to data published by the Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University.



This year's class of ordinandi at St Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers. Bishop James Massa is seated in the centre. (CNA photo/Theo Deluhery, Diocese of Camden)

Fewer men are entering the seminary and many parishes now rely on one priest to serve communities once staffed by two or more. In the past 50 years, many parishes in New York have been forced to merge or close, leaving communities without a resident pastor.

Sears said he speculates that the reason for a waning interest in joining the priesthood is layered. "There's a greater fear of making a long-term commitment," he said. "Also the idea, somehow that fulfilment comes from a certain checklist, like, my life is fulfilled if I have the right career as opposed to happiness coming from a relationship based in love."

He pointed to other factors including a growing secularism in society, the migration of Catholic families from the Northeast to other regions of the country, and the lingering impact of the Church's sexual abuse crisis.

"We're still very much suffering from the results of the sexual abuse scandal," Sears said. "I think we're still in the shadow of that."

Daniel Ogulnick, a Catholic man in his early 20s and a native New Yorker, first heard about the archdiocese's initiative on Good Shepherd Sunday while sitting in the pews of St Joseph's Church in Manhattan. For him,

Called By Name may not go far enough.

"The same way that God calls us as individuals, maybe the Church should approach it through parish priests really getting to know the young men in their parish and thinking about each one's unique talents and gifts," Ogulnick said. He said he believes a more personal approach may be more effective, especially for men like him who are actively discerning a vocation.

Sears doesn't disagree, but he stressed the limits of the current situation in the diocese. "When we're in a 'vocations crisis' ... you're spread thinner," he said, adding that *Called By Name* can help priests foster relationships with young men discerning the priesthood whom they might not otherwise reach.

"The hope is that the priests who are involved in this can say to everyone, 'Hey, come ... join us. Come and pray with us a little bit. Meet some other men who are also curious,'" Sears said.

At St Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, the final step of formation for men preparing to become diocesan priests in the Archdiocese of New York and the only major seminary still operating in the state, 18 men are currently enrolled, though not all are studying for diocesan priesthood. **Fiona Murphy, CNA**

Kenyan Catholic media professionals celebrate World Communications Day

NAIROBI: Catholic media organisations in Nairobi celebrated World Communications Day with a message of unity, compassion, and hope. The event brought together media representatives from various Catholic outlets across the city and beyond, emphasising the vital role of communication in fostering hope and understanding in today's digital age.

The gathering which took place at St Patrick's Catholic Church in Thika was presided over by celebration of Holy Mass led by the Bishop Chair of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) Commission for Social Communications, Bishop Wallace Ng'ang'a, *pic.*

The Bishop Chair expressed his joy at seeing Catholic media come together, united in their mission to spread the Gospel through various media platforms. "Your commitment in sharing the Good News through various forms of communication," he said, "reflects the essence of our faith."

Bishop Wallace who also serves as the

Bishop of Military Ordinariate in Kenya, emphasised that "communication is the compassion and kindness we show," urging media professionals and all present to reflect Christ's love in their messaging. He pointed out that in a world increasingly driven by digitalisation, sharing hope remains a vital responsibility. "Our words must uplift, inspire, and bring hope to those who need it most especially to the voiceless," he affirmed.

Furthermore, he called on all communicators to promote gentleness in dialogue, emphasising that sincere kindness and respect should underpin every conversation. "My prayer is that you may continue to empower our world in ways that inspire a deeper understanding of God's love," he said.

The 59th World Day of Social Communications whose theme is, *Share with*



gentleness the Hope that is in your Hearts resonated with the communicators as Bishop Wallace elaborated on the concept of being bearers of light in a world that often feels overshadowed by wars, insults, corruption, and all kinds of negativities. "In a time when despair and negativity take root, it is our duty to be bearers of light," he stated.

Bishop Wallace highlighted the importance of gentleness in communication, stressing that the way communicators share stories of hope can be as impactful as the message itself. "Let us confront conflicts not with the intention of retaliation or revenge, but with understanding, and let us be bearers of light," he remarked.

Bishop Wallace further reflected on the overarching theme of the Jubilee, Pilgrims of Hope and emphasised that this theme calls all

believers and communities to embody hope as a guiding force in their spiritual journeys. Bishop Wallace reminded congregants that hope sustains us through life's challenges and inspires a forward-looking perspective rooted in faith. He urged everyone to view themselves as pilgrims walking together towards renewal, unity, and deeper communion with God and one other.

The Bishop also highlighted the importance of fostering a spirit of openness and inclusivity within the Church. He noted that synodality — listening and dialogue — serve as the foundation for building such inclusive communities. Bishop Wallace encouraged participants to create environments where diverse voices are heard and valued, emphasising that true communion requires genuine openness to others' perspectives and experiences. In doing so, the Church can better fulfil its mission of love, understanding, and synodality in an increasingly interconnected world. **Vatican News**

What physical therapy taught me about holy brokenness

I was sitting at my desk in the middle of the workday when I realised I couldn't get up from my chair. The offending move? I'd leaned a little too far forward, causing a sharp pain to radiate through my lower back and hips and rendering me incapable of standing up without a double white-knuckled grasp on my desk.

At six months pregnant, I was gradually getting used to the general physical discomforts that come along with the shifting organs, weight gain and quickening baby kicks, but what I wrote off as a minor back spasm followed me throughout the next two weeks, preventing me from doing most day-to-day tasks without pain. At my next prenatal appointment, my doctor gently informed me that no, it was not normal to be in excruciating pain when rising from a chair. I left with a six-week prescription for physical therapy.

I've been fortunate to avoid major physical maladies throughout my life. I've never broken a bone, only been in one minor car accident and never reached the competitive levels of athletics that invite injury. When I entered the outpatient rehab centre 10 minutes from my house, I had no idea what lay ahead.

Now that I'm halfway through my prescribed appointments, I've grown more tolerant of — if not yet comfortable in — the large, brightly lit training room. We patients are a vulnerable, motley crew: elderly folks recovering from strokes and falls, high school athletes rehabbing sports injuries, people working to get back on their feet after car accidents. Then there's me, the lone pregnant woman waddling around belly-first among exercise balls and stationary



(Pixabay/Ronan Enright Solicitors)

bikes, stretching on machines with laughably low levels of resistance. It's been a challenging and uncomfortable experience, but also an unexpectedly holy one that has taught me several spiritual lessons.

I loathe admitting that something is too difficult for me to accomplish, and my weekly physical therapy appointments have become a time for reflection on human finitude. We all have limits, and pregnancy has made me acutely aware of my own: lifting heavy objects and standing for long periods, to name a few. My cheerful physical therapist is quick to suggest modifications for exercises that prove too painful, as well as

postures and breathing techniques that accommodate my growing body. My current physical state has reiterated my need to depend on others and on God when the literal and metaphorical weight becomes too great to bear.

When St Ignatius of Loyola experienced a maiming injury from a cannonball and was forced onto a long and painful road to recovery, he had a lot of time to think. And while our circumstances are certainly different, Ignatius inspires me to make the most of my forced time-out. At physical therapy appointments, my slow, intentional movements have become an "offering up"

of sorts; and though I'm not always successful, I try to use the quiet time of my repetitive exercise sets to pray, meditate and talk with God about my worries and hopes for my growing family.

In the open training room, it's easy to catch glimpses of other patients' small challenges and triumphs. Perhaps amplified by a tiny tornado of pregnancy hormones, I often find myself moved to tears by what my soul sees as sheer resilience. We patients, with ages and abilities across the spectrum, are showing up and doing the work through pain and injury to build strength, improve mobility and live well in the bodies that we have. I never expected to feel a sense of community at physical therapy, but the solidarity of quiet, encouraging nods has shown me I'm not alone.

All the bodies at physical therapy are working through some kind of brokenness. As I move through the final trimester of my pregnancy, I can't help but think about Mary, herself breaking open to bring the Christ child into a broken world. I know through my faith that brokenness can lead to healing and renewal, and my belief in a God who restores is crucial to my physical journey through the suffering of a back injury, the pain of childbirth and the unpredictability of postpartum recovery.

When I first received that script for physical therapy, I was not thrilled about the idea of adding even more doctors' appointments to my calendar. Yet, these past few weeks have changed my perspective, inviting me to discover a body and spirit connection that I never would have realised without landing in a room full of others on the journey right alongside me. **Jennifer Sawyer, NCR**

Silence: Longing to share the unspeakable

How I long to speak in the language of silence — without uttering a single word.

These words have lingered in my heart as I sit with the invitation to reflect and write. Silence, as many have feared, is not emptiness; it is presence — a presence that abides. A presence that speaks without a single sound, yet makes one feel so loved and beheld.

"Silence," as Meister Eckhart reminds us, "is the language of God." And indeed, as a woman consecrated to God, the lure of silence has never left me. It is not an escape from life, but a deep entering into it — and, in fact, saying "yes" to all of life.

I begin most days with silent meditation and I end them the same way, in quiet communion with the One who is always near. In this rhythm of silence, I find myself carried by grace, held in the loving breath of God, and entrusted to be a bearer of light through the day's unfolding moments (I can assure you that there are days I badly needed it!).

This sacred silence is not mine alone. I have encountered what I can only call a communal silence, one that binds hearts in a shared reverence, a collective yearning for our merciful and loving God. One moment that lives in me was during the liturgy of Good Friday. No words were spoken at the beginning. No sign of the cross. Only the slow, solemn procession of the ministers, walking in stillness, then prostrating themselves in silent surrender.

And then, as the wooden cross was carried through the assembly — its weight a silent testimony to love's cost — each person came

forward in quiet devotion, touching, kissing, honouring the mystery. And finally, as the Passion was proclaimed and we heard those aching words, "and He breathed His last," we all fell to our knees. A silence descended — not void, but full. Full of sorrow, yes, but also of hope. Full of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

Such moments teach me again and again: it is in silence that we hear the heartbeat of the One who promised us that "I am with you always, until the end of time" Matthew 28:20.

I have fallen deeply in love with God through silence and meditation. In these moments, I often encounter a sacred stillness shared with the earth — a kind of communal silence, yet one that reaches into even deeper realms of God's abiding presence. I feel this communion most vividly when I walk through the woods on my hikes or sit quietly in our backyard. In that silence, there is a palpable energy — a gentle vibration of God's glory — woven into everything: from the humble earthworms beneath the soil to the towering majesty of the pine trees; from the delicate, backward-flying hummingbirds to the loud commanding crows perched above. All of creation seems to participate in this holy hush, inviting me to listen with my whole being, and to simply be.

In recent days, the world has felt heavy with noise, grief, and uncertainty. One sorrow in particular has weighed deeply — the passing of our beloved Pope Francis. So much has been written, so much said. Yet no

words ever seem to suffice. His life, marked by authenticity and integrity, speaks a truth so desperately needed in our time. A shepherd who dared to walk humbly in the footsteps of Christ, he bore witness to the Gospel not only in word, but in deed. He showed us what it means to be human, to be holy, to lead through mercy and simplicity.

And then, in contrast, we look around us — especially here in the United States — and see how those in power often move in the opposite spirit. Policies shift like shadows, not from conviction but from convenience (and seemingly, money-making). Empathy and compassion — hallmarks of true leadership — are traded away for short-term gain. Words abound, but wisdom seems absent. And in all this, the human toll grows, sorrow deepens, trust betrays, and our souls become weary.

It is so daunting at times.

And yet, in the face of all this, perhaps the only faithful response — for me, at least — is silence. Not the silence of indifference or oblivion, but the abiding silence of prayer, of presence, of deep listening. A silence that asks: What is the true purpose of our lives? Why must we continue to love, to hope, even in the midst of brokenness? It is the kind of silence where God dwells — quiet, steady, and real. A silence that does not escape the world but holds it tenderly. A silence that nourishes hope when words fall short and all that remains is trust.

But more than that — silence has become for me an act of resistance. In a world over-

whelmed by noise, by propaganda, by performative statements and hollow promises, I choose to respond with silence that is rooted in truth. It is not a passive silence — it is a silence that refuses to join the chorus of empty speech. A silence that exposes injustice by refusing to normalise it. A silence that becomes a form of protest against systems that crush the human spirit with lies and domination. A silence that holds space for the wounded, the voiceless, and the forgotten — without rushing to explain them away or fix them.

As a woman religious, I have learned not to be defined by the verbosity of titles or the expectation to always have the "right" thing to say. In a world that too often devalues women's wisdom unless it is loud or marketable, I claim the power of quiet witness. I do not need to shout to be heard by the One who matters most. I do not need to perform to prove my worth. My silence is not absence; it is presence. My silence is not weakness; it is strength.

So yes, I long to speak to you in the language of silence — without saying a single word. For it is in that silence that I have encountered the God who sees, who hears, who loves. And in that same silence, God has found me too. There, I have also come to know myself: as a woman, a sister, a witness, a lover of justice and a pilgrim of hope. "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

Let us abide there. **Nodelyn Abayan, Global Sisters Report/NCR**

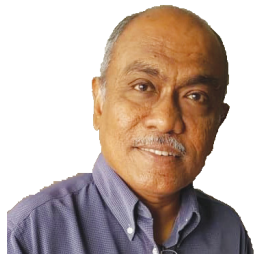
In the previous article, I examined the role of the Christian community in accompanying the neophytes (new converts) in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) during the Period of Mystagogy. The call for the involvement of the community in the catechumenal process is in line with directive of the Church that the RCIA “is to take place within the community of the faithful” (RCIA, 4).

The Church also states that, “the People of God, as represented by the local Church, should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptised” (RCIA, 9). By this, the Church makes it very clear that the Christian community is not only the context but also the true agent for initiating new members into the Church. As such, there exists a close and crucial relationship between the Christian community and the RCIA. Nowhere is this more evident than in the parish, which is the most immediate and visible expression of the community in the Church.

The importance of relationships

Often, it is the practice for some parishes to celebrate a commissioning rite on Pentecost Sunday to formally mark the end of the RCIA process and to symbolically “send forth” the neophytes, “into the world” as disciples of Christ. After that, it is assumed that they would somehow integrate themselves into parish life and mission. However, this is not the case all the time.

While a number of new converts feel welcomed and accepted by the members of the parish, some can actually face difficulty integrating in the community. This is especially so since they start missing the friendly and regular small group experience that they had with the RCIA team and fellow catechumens with whom they had journeyed for many



Echoing the Faith

DR STEVEN SELVARAJU

Accompanying the newly baptised in our midst

months. Gradually, feeling “isolated” or “lost” in the larger parish setting, they may eventually opt to leave the community.

This is why it is important, especially when the RCIA process comes to a conclusion, that members of the parish be more attentive to the new converts around them and help them feel accepted through their warmth, support and prayers. They have to make the effort, as much as possible, to foster relationships with the converts. After all, relationship is a key element in the RCIA. Relationships actually help in determining whether a person not only becomes a Catholic but also whether he or she has sense of belonging in the parish.

In his study, *Dropouts, Returnees: A Study of Religious Change Among Catholics*, Dean Hoge, a sociologist, identified three categories of people who convert to Catholicism in the United States:

- i. **Intermarriage converts** – persons who are already or about to be married to a Catholic who feel some concern for the marriage or are influenced by their spouses or relatives in their choice or religion.
- ii. **Family life converts** – non-Catholic with children being raised as Catholic, or who express concern over the children’s religious upbringing.
- iii. **Seeker converts** – persons motivated by a spiritual search or a sense of void or meaninglessness in their lives.

Often, a person becomes a Catholic, says Hoge, because he or she has developed a close bond with a person in

the community. And it is most likely that he or she stays in the community because of this bond. As such, it is the relationship with a person or persons already in the Church or the search for a meaningful relationship with others that is a crucial factor in someone remaining in the community long after his or her baptism.

According to Fr Robert D. Duggan, in *Sociological Perspectives on Conversion*: “Nothing is quite as powerful as that one-to-one experience of being loved as an individual, feeling the strength and support of affective bonds that deepen and grow, and coming to understand that all this is connected to a particular community which makes such an experience possible”. Duggan too states that it is the presence of a person or persons with whom that convert can interact that seems to make the difference in him or her remaining in the community.

Facilitating relationships

While it is essential to affirm the role of the parish RCIA team in the catechumenal process, it is also important to acknowledge that they should never see themselves as the only point of contact with the converts.

Often, when the next batch of candidates enter the RCIA, the team members would be busy in trying to foster new relationships and as a result may not have sufficient time to dedicate to those from the previous group. Also, godparents may not be able to adequately accompany the converts on their own.

This is why RCIA team members, sponsors and godparents have the task of “facilitating” relationships, that is, to serve as bridges or links between the converts and the rest of the community. As much

as possible, they have to connect the catechumens to others.

The potential of parish ministries or groups and Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) in this regard has to be highlighted. It is highly recommended that catechumens be introduced to certain ministries or groups in the parish and BEC from the Period of Catechumenate onwards or if not, at least before the conclusion of the RCIA process. This is in order to help them to experience a sense of a close-knit community, which they had once experienced during their time in the RCIA. In a sense, ministries or groups and BECs can serve as essential means by which converts are helped to integrate in the larger parish setting.

Conclusion

Unless the members of the community become more aware that the initiation of adults into the Catholic Church is their responsibility too, the burden of the task will continue to be left to the RCIA team, sponsor or godparent. Therefore, it is essential that community members, especially in the parish, have a greater awareness of their role and responsibility in the RCIA so that they may accompany the new converts in their midst.

Dr Steven Selvaraju, STD, STL, holds a Doctorate in Theology with Specialisation in Catechetics and Youth Ministry from Pontifical Salesian University, Rome. He serves as Director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre, Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

The key ideas in the article are presented in an illustrated format below. The illustrations are by Dr Steven Selvaraju.

ACCOMPANYING THE NEWLY BAPTISED IN OUR MIDST

The comic strip consists of 10 panels illustrating the challenges and solutions for integrating newly baptised members into the parish community.

- Panel 1:** A group of people stands in front of a church. A speech bubble says: "The Church states that the Christian community is not only the context but also the true agent of the adult catechumenate (RCIA, 9)".
- Panel 2:** A priest in a red vestment is performing a commissioning rite with his hands raised. A speech bubble says: "On Pentecost Sunday, it is usual in some parishes for a Commissioning rite to be held to formally mark the end of the RCIA process."
- Panel 3:** A newly baptised person looks isolated. A speech bubble says: "However, it cannot be assumed that all the newly baptised will integrate quickly and easily into the parish community." Another speech bubble says: "Everyone seems so 'distant'. I miss my friends from the RCIA group."
- Panel 4:** A group of people is talking. A speech bubble says: "Therefore, it is important for members of the parish to be aware of the new converts in their midst and to befriend them."
- Panel 5:** A newly baptised person is invited to breakfast. A speech bubble says: "Hi. We're going to have breakfast. Please join us." Another speech bubble says: "Okay."
- Panel 6:** A group of people is at a table. A speech bubble says: "After this, we are going for choir practice. Why don't you come and see what we do. Who knows, you may want to be in the choir too." Another speech bubble says: "I really can't sing well but would love to give it a try. Thanks for inviting me..."
- Panel 7:** A newly baptised person is introduced to a parishioner. A speech bubble says: "Hi guys. Say 'hello' to Agnes, one of our newly baptised members." Another speech bubble says: "Relationship with other parishioners is a key factor in determining whether a new convert finds a sense of belonging in the parish."

Meet the first deacons ordained in Rome under Pope Leo's pontificate

Six years after arriving in Rome from Scotland to study for the priesthood, Matthew McCafferty and Kieran Burt were ordained deacons in the papal Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls on May 10, 2025. Though ordained together, each had a different journey leading up to that momentous day.

And soon afterwards, they met Pope Leo XIV.

Both deacons explained that their ordination happening back-to-back with the election of a new Pope created "a real spiritual high" — especially since they had prayed and studied for so long.

"I have, for as long as I can remember, thought about becoming a priest," said Deacon Kieran Burt, 24, a deacon for the Diocese of Motherwell. "It was nothing sort of real or concrete at first," he added. "I just quite liked fancy vestments, and I liked the music."

After years of altar serving and active involvement in his parish, he couldn't shake his thoughts about the priesthood.

With the help of his parish priest, who also happened to be a vocations director, now-Deacon Burt was able to explore "what this feeling [he] had might actually be and whether it could be a call" and eventually applied to seminary.

For Deacon McCafferty, the journey towards priesthood began during his university studies. Upon returning home to Scotland after spending a semester in New Jersey, where he witnessed the vibrancy of US Catholic students' faith, McCafferty felt pulled towards the Church.

"I joined the Catholic society during my last year at university and started going to Mass every day," said Deacon McCafferty, 31, from the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh.

"I remember reading an article that summer between coming back from the States and going into my last year at university which talked about going to daily Mass and how if you make the time for it, the rest of your day kind of falls into place. I found that to be demonstrably true."

"That did change my life," Deacon McCafferty said. "It was the first time I began to really pray and ask God what it was that He might have in store for me."

After teaching high-school history for two years, his calling became clear: "There was no big voice in the sky, no bright lights or anything — just a small little niggles that didn't go away and that grew to a certain point where I had to go and explore."

Preparing for Ordination Amid the Conclave

In Rome, the two seminarians studied philosophy at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas — Pope Leo XIV's alma mater — and theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, while living at the Pontifical Scots College in



The diaconal ordination of Matthew McCafferty (kneeling in background) and Kieran Burt (kneeling in foreground) on May 10 in Rome. (NCRRegister Photo/Benwen Lopez)

Rome.

After years of study and formation, both had the unique opportunity to witness the final days of the pontificate of Pope Francis, attend his funeral, and experience the whirlwind that followed — including the conclave.

With their diaconate ordination scheduled for May 10 and the conclave set to start on May 7, McCafferty shared that they were all "slightly concerned as to what would happen if the conclave ran into the day of the ordination."

As Pope Leo XIV's name was announced on the evening of May 8, they were blessed to gather with families and friends in St Peter's Square to witness a day and moment none of them will soon forget.

"We were right up the front, right in the middle," Deacon Burt said. "I found the whole thing totally surreal. I couldn't believe that after six years of being in Rome, my family was there to experience that with me. I couldn't stop crying."

"It was really touching," Deacon McCafferty explained. "In the midst of all those thousands of Catholics that were in the square and in Rome, a little group of them was my family. That memory will be with me for a very long time — standing there with family members, witnessing history."

Ordained Against the Backdrop of Church History

Even though "the conclave and the new Pope was sort of era-defining for the Church," Deacon McCafferty noted, "we were going through a life changing moment, too."

"I felt totally overwhelmed by the fact that something that I had thought about, prayed about and dreamed about since I was 10 years old was finally happening," Deacon Burt added. "The whole experience was quite surreal."

While "delighted to have reached that point in [his] life," Deacon McCafferty admitted it was all "a bit of a whirlwind."

Reflecting on the "opportunity to be ordained in a papal basilica," the new deacon emphasised how extraordinary the experience was and the unique connection it offered to the papacy.

"We had just seen the new Pope come out on the loggia two days before, and then we were in St. Paul's, where, maybe more than any other papal basilica, the presence of the popes is quite in your face. They are all 'looking down on you' from those famous mosaics around the walls."

Shaking Hands With the Pope

After the diaconate ordination, Father Nick Welsh, vice rector of the Scots College, registered the ordinations with the Vicariate of Rome, as required by Church law — confirming that Deacons McCafferty and Burt were the "two first clerics ordained in the Diocese of Rome under the new Bishop of Rome."

"I texted the vice rector," Deacon McCafferty said, "and jokingly said, 'That's at least worth a handshake from the Pope.'"

To their great surprise, they were blessed to be in attendance when the Pope took possession of St. Paul Outside the Walls.

Deacon McCafferty looked forward to conversing in English with the US-born Pope — but then admitted, "I ended up getting a bit too excited and nervous when I got to the moment, and all my rehearsed words completely went out of my head. I just about managed to take his hand, kiss his ring and say: 'Holy Father, thank you. I'm praying for you.'"

Deacon Burt, however, found himself at ease.

"I was quite surprised that I wasn't nervous at all," Deacon Burt said, "partly because I feel like I know him. He is quite grandfatherly, and there is something really gentle and approachable about him. I felt like I could just walk up to him and speak to him. I felt quite peaceful about meeting him."

"I shook his hand and I kissed his ring and I said to him, 'Holy Father, just to let you know, Matthew and I were the first to be ordained in the Diocese of Rome under your pontificate,'" he recounted. "And he said, 'Oh, really? That's lovely! And then I said, 'Well, it's a great honour and a privilege for that to be the case, and I assure you that every day I will pray for you.'"

Deacon Burt added, "I got the impression that he really heard what I had said to him."



Bénédicte Cedergren celebrates with her fellow Anglicum-alumni-now-deacons. (NCRRegister Photo/Bénédicte Cedergren)

and that I got to meet him ... I feel a really close connection with him."

"When he was at St John Lateran, he said, 'I'm here to offer you the little that I have and am,'" Deacon Burt observed. "Things start off as small, by doing small things with great love, as St Thérèse of Lisieux, the patroness of the missions, said. I too really look forward to going home and just offering the little that I have and am." **Bénédicte Cedergren, Register**

Inspired by Pope Leo to be missionary-minded priests

Deacon Burt returned to Scotland in June to serve in different parishes during the year leading up to his priestly ordination.

Reflecting on the religious landscape in Scotland, Burt explained that, "since COVID, we have seen a huge decline in Mass attendance," adding, "In my parish, I think something like 60 per cent of people didn't return after the pandemic."

"Pope Benedict spoke about the Church getting smaller; and, in a sense, when it gets smaller, it becomes a little bit more apostolic," he observed.

"Perhaps we can be missionary disciples, catechising more and better to smaller groups who can then go out to build up a community. We also need to involve laypeople a lot more because the priests are getting fewer and fewer. I see it as a challenge, but I'm quite encouraged by it as well."

For Deacon McCafferty, who will remain in Rome for another year to complete his licentiate in canon law, the experience of the universal Church in Rome has been a gift — especially the encounter with the new Holy Father, which he described as "very personally invigorating and life-giving."

"I think God gives us these moments because it can be

quite difficult to remain positive and upbeat in the face of decreasing church attendance and other challenges," he observed.

"I have found myself to be a little bit more optimistic than I have been in the past," Deacon McCafferty admitted. "I think that there is a lot of work to be done at home, but you can look at it as having the same opportunity as the disciples had: to talk to people who don't know Christ."

"It's quite appealing to belong to a missionary evangelical Church, to go back not to preserve a status quo or go back to the glory days of Catholicism in Scotland, if they ever existed, but to go back to be a maybe slightly smaller Church, but more apostolic and more evangelical — in the true sense of the word — to be a bit like the early Church, the Church of the Apostles. I find that quite an attractive proposition."

Inspired by Pope Leo's focus on mission and unity, the new deacons look to their future ministry in Scotland with hope — and feel more connected than ever to Rome and the Pope.

"I am a cleric of the reign of Leo," Deacon McCafferty said. "And the fact that that happened right after his own election,

Balancing the silver and golden keys of St Peter's chair



Making Sense

EMMANUEL JOSEPH

Our new Pope has just completed his first month in office, and the excitement surrounding the conclave — at least in the secular media — has begun to fade. News coverage has returned to its usual rhythm, with trade sanctions, wars, and political scandals neatly slotted between weather forecasts and sports updates.

Reflecting on the month between Pope Francis' passing and the election of Pope Leo XIV brings into sharp focus the astonishingly vast influence the Catholic Church continues to wield in the world.

'Why' is an interesting question. As the spiritual leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics, he holds considerable political influence in Catholic-majority countries like Mexico and Brazil and for most intents and purposes, Vatican's "host" country, Italy and in other European countries like France or Spain with large Catholic populations. Even in the Pope's native United States, around 20 per cent of the population identify as Catholic.

"Identify" — a politically charged word these days as we traverse a world trying to balance political correctness and realpolitik, with religion sandwiched in the between.

The exemplary life of Pope Francis seemed to embody this.

In choosing to exercise mercy and compassion to the fringe communities- the LGBT community, atheists, clergy and lay faithful alike who faced crises of belief and have left, or were leaving, the Church, he was accused by his detractors of being "soft" on

Catholic teachings.

On the other hand, secularists were accusing him not doing enough to reach out to these marginalised communities. It isn't certain their benchmark of "enough"- transgendered Catholic ordinations? The Gospel proclamation presented as an interpretive dance?

Tributes poured in both sides, while respectful, some took the opportunity to tinge their obituaries with a tint of regret that His Holiness did not go "all the way", be it his actions of reaching out to the outskirts, helping the poor, reforming Vatican's institutions, combating scandal, involving women in the Church, encouraging synodality to levels never before seen, or on the other side of coin, defending the traditions and conservative ways of Catholicism.

In the end, a leader, even one anointed by God to be His Vicar on earth, would find it hard to please everyone.

The question that arises — in the end did it make a difference?

The hardened liberal disbeliever will not likely abandon their ideals and suddenly attend Sunday mass, nor is it probable that the ardent fan of Latin tradition joins another church out of spite.

Reflecting on this as a humble pew-side Catholic, perhaps in this lies the wisdom of our Lord in instituting the apostolic succession in the first place?

The two keys in the heraldic symbol of papacy draws from Mt 16:19, where Jesus

builds the Church on Peter himself, and charges the chief apostle on "binding and loosing" in earth as in Heaven.

Some interpret "binding and loosing" as an allusion to the two Jewish interpretive traditions at the time; the houses of Hillel and Shammai, on the interpretation of the law by the poskim or legal scholars of Halakha, or Jewish Rabbinic law, as the saying that goes "the house of Shammai binds, the house of Hillel loosens", can be seen as a primitive form of the modern literal and mischief rules that legal jurists use in interpreting statutes.

Interestingly, in those days, religious laws generally tended to be debated to find consensus in an ancient "synod" of sorts, yet Jesus directly spoke to Peter.

The golden key symbolises Heaven and the silver, Earth.

Balancing the two is tricky- more so in a highly secular and increasingly material world. To make matters more confusing, recent political developments in the West relegated virtues like freedom of speech, religion and welfare are now intertwined with things that the Church may not necessarily agree on, like rights to abortion while conservatism and the Bible may now be also associated with migrant clampdowns and raising of economic borders. The lines between good and evil has probably never been this blurred.

The majority of Catholics administered by Vatican too, are comfortably straddled between the two groups- liberals and

orthodox with cafeteria Catholics or even "mater si, magistra no" (mother yes, teacher no) in the mix somewhere.

The Church, therefore, has, for most intents and purpose, a spectrum of believers trying to find solace and God in a fragmented world.

The Church, is often said, is not a museum for saints but a hospital for believers. Given our Catholic collection of reliquaries, perhaps it should be both.

Not all sick people are cured after a first visit, many suffer from chronic illness, like some form of spiritual diabetes. But if all that outreach was for naught, and the status quo remained- then the question arises again.

Would it make a difference?

Perhaps the idea is to keep the afflicted in the process of seeking a cure in the first place. To ensure that as many of the lost, needy but faithful remain within the folds of their Mother Church. To keep their hope in God, (and maybe God's hope in them?), alive.

To just "abide" in Him, as He asked us to.

Emmanuel Joseph oversees IT as his 9-5 job and from 5-9, he serves a few NGOs, think tanks and volunteer groups. He serves as an advisor for Projek Dialog and is a Fellow with the Institute of Research and Development of Policy.

The Catholic Feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s did have some impact on the Church. As time went, female participation in the liturgy as lectors and as Eucharistic Ministers were introduced, and girls began to be able to participate as altar servers. In recent years, the late Pope Francis showed openness to the greater role of women in the Church at large. At the International Conference titled *Women in the Church: Builders of Humanity*, Pope Francis spoke about the urgent need for women's contributions, which he said are characterised by tenderness and compassion, in order to foster unity and restore humanity's true identity.

Pope St John Paul II, in the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* on the Dignity and Vocation of women on the occasion of the Marian Year 1988 states, "By reflecting on the whole account found in Gen 2:18-25, and by interpreting it in light of the truth about the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26-27), we can understand even more fully what constitutes the personal character of the human being, thanks to which both man and woman are like God. For every individual is made in the image of God, insofar as he or she is a rational and free creature capable of knowing God and loving Him." (MD 7) He added that "woman" is the representative and the archetype of the whole human race: she represents the humanity which belongs to all human beings, both men and women." (MD 4)

In addition, women receptivity is the foundation of feminine attributes. This



PERCEPTIVITY

Sr Margarete Sta Maria FdCC

Women participation in the synodal Church

gift to nurture life encourages women to contribute to Church and society. Women's sensitivity to the deepest human needs brings hope to the hopeless and marginalised society. The future of humanity depends on woman and her ability to love sacrificially and that dignity of every woman is complete when she loves all people in her capacity as an image of God. Hence, "the moral

and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that God entrusts the human being to her in a special way." (MD, 30)

An important example of this type of femininity in the Church is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary is the perfect example of femininity because she dedicated her life to God and to serving God in the most powerful way possible, by bringing God's Son into the world. Mary is obedient, she is a mother, she is a virgin, and she says "Yes" to God. Like Mary, women are encouraged to be the "feminine genius" as Pope St Paul II calls it. Women are called to be "genius" in the sense of embodying receptivity in their hearts and minds.

St Edith Stein — an atheist Jewish philosopher and university professor turned convert, nun, and theologian who was killed at Auschwitz — expands our understanding of this idea: "Woman naturally seeks to embrace that which is living, personal, and whole. Stein goes on to describe this inclination as a yearning to "cherish, guard, protect, nourish and advance growth." (The Collected Words of Edith Stein)

Furthermore, our true feminine heart will

flourish when we actively receive life and love, have the ability to see and understand the needs of others, place value on the human person, and have the capacity for both spiritual and physical motherhood. Mary is the perfect feminine genius. She is receptive, sensitive, generous and life giving. *Lumen Gentium* 64 also states that "contemplating Mary's mysterious sanctity, imitating her charity, and faithfully fulfilling the Father's will, the Church herself becomes a mother by accepting God's Word in faith.

Generosity is another attribute of women's nature. Giving enlarges the heart and makes it youthful, with an ever-greater capacity for loving. Selfishness, on the other hand, impoverishes the heart and narrows its horizons. The more we give, the richer we become. The Gospel tells us that the generous hospitality of Martha and Mary has universal appeal to all who yearn for the warmth of human communion. Both Martha and Mary represent the importance of *diakoneo* (to serve). Jesus' teachings are embodied in women discipleship. They serve, sacrifice, demonstrate genuine faith, and are willing to risk their lives for the sake of the Gospel by sharing their gifts. Martha and Mary gave attention to Jesus and likewise, Jesus allowed women into His inner circle of friends. Simone Weil, who was both political activist and contemplative, said that: 'Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity'. Paying attention to someone is an act of service, of generosity. It shows that they are of value to you. Paying attention to God though is even more important. It can literally change our lives.

"The synodal journey of the Church led us to rediscover the root of the varieties of charisms, vocations and ministries: 'we were all baptised into one body and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.'" (1 Cor 12: 13). [Final Document on Synod on Synodality,21] Synodality leads us into the heart of a spiritual journey where the Church, as people of God and a community of faith on the journey, guided by the Spirit, is engaged in a dynamic of mutual listening and discernment to address the pastoral and social challenges of our time.

Women's contributions enrich the synodal journey, infusing it with a richness born from diverse perspectives and a commitment to collective discernment and action. This commitment to openness not only ensures clarity but also promotes an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Also, unity is forged through shared understanding and common mission. Hence, woman — in herself and in what she represents in and to the Church — is described as an answer of love for the Church, the world, and God. (MD 28)

In conclusion, the synodal journey and the roles of women who embrace the divine feminine call us to embrace the transformative power of newness and growth. Pope Francis' inclusive approach has set a precedent for a more equitable and harmonious Church, where every voice is valued and heard. Therefore, let us walk together as pilgrims of hope towards a synodal Church.

Sr Margarete Sta Maria FdCC is the Director of the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute



Fr Ron Rolheiser

It is better for you that I go away

It is better for you that I go away! These are some of Jesus' parting words on the night before He died.

How can it be better for us when someone we love deeply goes away? That would make sense only if the relationship is dysfunctional or abusive. But how can that be true in a case where we love someone deeply and will painfully miss him or her?

The ascension of Jesus supplies the roots for an answer. He tells His disciples that it is better for them that He goes away because, if He doesn't, they will be unable to receive His spirit. Why not? Why must He go away in order that those who love Him can receive His spirit?

This plays on the mystery of presence and absence. We bring something to others with our presence, but we also leave something with them in our absence. In brief, what we leave in our absence is a new space within which they can receive our person more purely. This may sound hopelessly abstract, but we experience this in ordinary ways in our lives.

Here's an example: Imagine a young woman, deeply loved by her parents, who has just graduated from high school and is leaving home to attend college, or train for the work force, or begin a job. Her childhood years are forever over and she senses it, as do her parents. There's pain and sadness on both sides. She probably won't have the words, but if she did, she could say to her parents what Jesus said to His loved ones as He spoke His words of farewell: It is better for you that I go away; otherwise you cannot receive My spirit.

Except, for her, the words would sound like this: It is

better for you (and for me) that I go away; otherwise, I will always be your little girl and will be unable to gift you with my adult presence. I need to go away so that my absence creates the space for me to come back to you as an adult.

Such is the mystery of presence and absence. Such too is the mystery of Jesus' ascension, how new spirit can be recognized and received only after there has been an absence, a going away.

This is depicted powerfully in the scene in John's Gospel where Mary Magdala meets the resurrected Jesus on Easter Sunday. Initially, she doesn't recognise Him; but, after she does, her immediate reaction is to embrace Him in a familiar hug. However, Jesus stops her with the words, "Don't cling to Me because I have not yet ascended to My Father and to your Father."

Why? Why is Jesus seemingly reluctant to receive a familiar embrace from a longtime friend?

The hesitancy has precisely to do with the familiarity. Mary wanted to welcome back her old Jesus, but this wasn't her old Jesus. This was the resurrected Christ, who now had something new to give her. What Jesus was gently telling her when He asked her not to "cling" to Him was that if she continued to cling to His old person, to the way she once had Him, she would be unable to receive His new presence and what He was now bringing to her.

Mary Magdala's attempt to embrace the risen Jesus is akin to loving parents who, having painfully missed their now adult daughter while she was away, welcome her home with a hug and the words: Our little girl is back

home! Hearing these words, the daughter, whether she voices that or not, would need to say gently: If you cling to the little girl you once had, you will be unable to receive the riches which your adult daughter can now bring you.

This dynamic, how the painful absence of someone we love can transform their presence so that they can now nurture us in a deeper way, is the essence of the mystery of the ascension, Jesus' ascension and our own.

Still, it's hard not to cling. As we watch those around us change, grow, move away, and become something other than how we have always known and loved them, like Mary Magdala, it can have us both weeping in joy and regret: in joy to see our little girl now a vibrant adult woman; in regret because we have lost her in how we once had her as our beautiful little girl.

It is better for you that I go away. Jesus spoke those words on the night before He died. I was at the deathbed of both my father and my mother. Our family clung to them. There was no way we believed that it was better for us that they were going away. It's been fifty years now since they died and, painful as their leaving was, we realize they are now able to give us something we could not receive from them before they went away.

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

The life of prayer is a process that has great advances and setbacks. There is no monotony when it comes to spending time with God. For those who commit themselves to pray, there is a daily adventure waiting for them.

We oftentimes think of the human soul as the microcosm and the universe as the macrocosm, but these thoughts are inversed and misplaced. It is the human soul searching for God that is the true macrocosm. There is an interior universe that is unimagined until it has been experienced in prayer.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* identifies three major types and movements of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. The three are not always progressive. They often intertwine and almost always depend on one another.

Vocal prayer is the most fragile and inclined to either neglect or exaggeration. *Meditative prayer* is the centre, which can mature vocal prayer and lead us to *contemplative prayer*.

Contemplative is the most developed form of prayer. It is a close union with God. It is the purest and most refined expression of prayer. When the Christian thinks of prayer, contemplative prayer is the exemplar of what prayer is called to be.

The *Catechism* takes up the question about contemplative prayer and teaches us: "What is contemplative prayer? St Teresa answers: 'Contemplative prayer [*oracion mental*] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us.'"

It is interesting to note that in the answer of St Teresa of Avila to the question of contemplative prayer, echoed by the *Catechism*, the great mystic can only tell us "in my opinion." Not even she will claim a definitive definition since contemplation touches the mystery of the human heart and the great mystery that surrounds God.

In her opinion, however, St Teresa identifies contemplation as shared time between friends. It's enjoying the company of someone who loves us.

In its efforts to describe contemplation, the *Catechism* gives another definition: "Contemplative prayer seeks Him 'whom my soul loves.' It is Jesus, and in Him, the Father. We seek Him, because to desire Him is always the beginning of love, and we seek Him in that pure faith which causes us to be born of Him and to live in Him. In this inner prayer we can still meditate, but our attention is fixed on the Lord Himself."

Contemplation is spending time with the one who loves us, and it is also spending time with the one we love (and desire to love more deeply). In this explanation, we see the true interior journey of contemplative prayer.



Vocal prayer is fragile; meditative prayer is at the centre

The *Catechism* continues with some practical guidance: "The choice of the time and duration of the prayer arises from a determined will, revealing the secrets of the heart."

Contemplative prayer cannot rely on the emotions, or on random free time in our schedule. If we are to reach and maintain contemplation, we need "a determined will." We need to set time aside and hold to that resolution.

No athlete will excel in a sport if their practice is sporadic. No musician will reach excellence if their rehearsals are intermittent. In the same spirit, no Christian will reach contemplative prayer without a set prayer time in which the soul can peacefully aspire, encounter, and spend time with God.

The *Catechism* insists: "One does not undertake contemplative prayer only when one has the time: one makes time for the Lord, with the firm determination not to give up, no matter what trials and dryness one may encounter.

One cannot always meditate, but one can always enter into inner prayer, independently of the conditions of health, work, or emotional state. The heart is the place of this quest and encounter, in poverty and in faith."

In this way, the quest of contemplative prayer resembles the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The *Catechism* explains: "Entering into contemplative prayer is like entering into the Eucharistic liturgy: We 'gather up' the heart, recollect our whole being under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, abide in the dwelling place of the Lord which we are, awaken our faith in order to enter into the presence of Him who awaits us. We let our masks fall and turn our hearts back to the Lord who loves us, so as to hand ourselves over to Him as an offering to be purified and transformed."

Contemplation is not easy to reach and maintain. It requires the determination of love and a thirsting desire to be with God. **Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, Crux**

Little Catholics' corner



Hello children,

Today we celebrate the feast of the Blessed Trinity.

The word 'trinity' means something that has three parts. Blessed Trinity is a title for God that tells us that He is three Persons in one God.

Before Jesus came, the people didn't know that God was a Trinity.

The Israelites knew that there was only one God, but they didn't

know very much about Him.

Jesus showed the people that there were three Persons in God when He taught them about Himself and the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The three Persons in the Blessed Trinity are all equal but different.

We cannot understand this, but we believe it because Jesus taught it.

It is one of the Mysteries of our Faith. What does the Holy Trinity

do for us?

We know that God the Father made everything and we are intended to go back to Him.

The Holy Spirit guides us towards Him, and Jesus is the way.

Children, every time you make the Sign of Cross or say the "Glory Be" you are praying to the Blessed Trinity.

Love
Aunty Eliz

WORD SEARCH

(PSALM 8:4-9)

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

GREAT EARTH THROUGH WORK SHEEP

HEAVENS HANDS MOON STARS CATTLE

ARRANGED MIND MORTAL GLORY FISH

CROWNED POWER FEET THINGS BIRDS

SAVAGE BEASTS WATERS



John 16:12-15

...and I will tell you what the Father has said to me, but I will not tell you anything more than what I have heard from the Father.

The shamrock or clover can be used to represent the Blessed Trinity, one God in three Persons. Look in the mirror to find a prayer to the Trinity.

Create the paragraph by filling in the blanks with the correct words from the word bank at the bottom of the story. And don't forget to colour the two pictures below.



When the _____ of _____ comes he will _____ you to the _____ truth, since he will not be _____ of his own _____, but will say only what he has been _____; and he will _____ to you the _____ to come.



accord truth lead spirit complete reveal told speaking things



You are role models for young people



The Pope encouraging the cyclists with his Apostolic Blessing. (Vatican Media)

The cyclists rode through the Vatican Gardens before starting their final leg of the Giro. (Vatican Media)

VATICAN: On the afternoon of June 1, Pope Leo XIV welcomed the 159 cyclists on their final stage of the Giro d'Italia. Before riding through Vatican City, the riders paused to greet the Pontiff. The calm of this special segment—so different from the usual intensity of the race—offered a unique moment: a kind of “reverse race,” where the true victory was found in slowing down and taking a moment to exchange a glance with the Pope, who greeted the riders with a smile and a blessing, accompanying them on their journey.

This initiative - the relationship between the Vatican and the race - has its roots in an idea embraced by the late Pope Francis, who had sought to connect the Giro d'Italia with the spiritual heritage of the Eternal City. This year, Pope Leo XIV revived the tradition, offering the cyclists a warm and meaningful welcome.

“Good morning to all of you! Welcome to the Vatican!” the Pope began, speaking from the Square of the Roman Protomartyrs, next to the sacristy of St Peter’s Basilica. He warmly greeted the cyclists: “It’s a pleasure to greet you on this

final stage of the Giro d'Italia. I hope today is truly a wonderful day for each of you,” he said, emphasising not only the athletic competition but also the deeper meaning of the occasion—a symbolic moment that transcends the boundaries of sport.

Pope Leo XIV took the opportunity to highlight the importance of athletes as role models for young people everywhere. “Know that you are examples for young people around the world. The Giro d'Italia is deeply loved—not only in Italy but in many countries. Cycling is important, just as sport in general is,” the Pope said, ap-

plauding the spirit of sacrifice and camaraderie that defines athletes.

He went on to reflect on the importance of caring for both body and spirit—a message that resonated with the cyclists, who dedicate themselves daily to physical training. “Thank you for all you do—you are true examples. And I hope that just as you take care of your bodies, your spirits will always be blessed. Always be attentive to the whole person: body, mind, heart, and spirit,” he said, concluding with a blessing for all the participants. “May God bless you,” he said, adding a few words in English.

Remain faithful to Jesus

Bernard Anthony

BENTONG: Archbishop Julian Leow administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to four young candidates during the 8.00am Sunday Mass at the Church of the Sacred Heart, marking a significant milestone in the lives of the Confirmands and the parish community.

The archbishop was joined by parish priest Fr Clement Lim, who concelebrated the Mass. The modest church was filled to capacity with parishioners, family members, and well-wishers.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian addressed the Confirmands directly, underscoring unity as a defining characteristic of the Catholic Church.

“One of the hallmarks of the Catholic Church is unity—we have one faith, one baptism, and one Lord,” he said. “This is the same Apostolic and Catholic Church handed down to us over 2,000 years.”

He reflected on the early history of the Church, recalling how numerous heresies were addressed and corrected within the first three centuries, emphasising the Church’s continued call for unity, even amid today’s denominational divisions.

“Jesus prayed that we all may be one,” the archbishop said. “Though there are many Christian denominations, we continue to pray for unity, even with differences in doctrine.”

Highlighting the role of the Holy Spirit, Archbishop Julian reminded the faithful that the Spirit brings truth and clarity, confirming that Jesus is the full and final revelation of God.

“There is no new teaching after Jesus,” he affirmed. “The Holy Spirit reveals and confirms all that Jesus has taught.”

The archbishop also urged the Confirmands to follow the example of St Stephen, the first martyr, whose faith and witness—even unto death—remain a powerful model for all believers.

“Remain faithful to Jesus,” he encouraged. “We have the Magisterium and the Church’s teachings to guide us in truth and authentic interpretation of the Word of God.”

He concluded his homily with a timely warning to the congregation, urging caution in the digital age.

“Beware of half-truths, especially those spread through Artificial Intelligence (AI). Let the Holy Spirit guide you in discerning what is right and true.”

The Confirmands took active roles in the liturgy, serving as lectors and gift bearers during the Mass.

In his closing remarks, Fr Clement Lim congratulated the newly confirmed and expressed gratitude to Archbishop Julian for making time in his busy schedule to visit the small parish community in Pahang.

Fr Clement also acknowledged the dedication of the catechists, most of whom are



senior citizens, and issued a call for more young Catholics to step forward and serve in the catechetical ministry.

After the Mass, the Confirmands received

their certificates of Confirmation from Fr Clement at the entrance of the church and later posed for photographs with Archbishop Julian.

KL SOUTH DISTRICT BIBLE KNOWLEDGE SEMINAR 2025

CHERAS: The KL South District Bible Knowledge Seminar 2025, held at the Church of St Francis of Assisi, was a day marked by grace, wisdom, and meaningful engagement with God's Word. Designed to support Bible Knowledge (BK) students preparing for the SPM exam, the seminar featured a dynamic lineup of speakers and interactive sessions. Participants left inspired, spiritually enriched, and better equipped for both their academic and faith journeys.

Dr Peter Pereira, an esteemed Bible teacher from the Church of St Francis Xavier Petaling Jaya, led a masterful review of the Gospel of Luke using thematic themes. His well-structured and analytical approach helped students compare and contrast key facts and narratives, offering a clearer understanding of the Gospel's message. Every detail

was carefully unpacked, ensuring students walked away with a complete and enriched perspective of Luke's account of Jesus' life and ministry.

Next, Justin Gilbert, a passionate young BK teacher from the Church of the Sacred Heart, took students through the Acts of the Apostles, chapter by chapter. His detailed explanation of events, characters, and teachings ensured that every significant aspect was addressed. His energetic delivery made the early Church come alive for students and teachers alike.

Helton Culas, from the Church of the Visitation, Seremban, shared valuable exam strategies while underscoring the sacredness of Scripture. He reminded participants that Bible Knowledge is not merely an academic subject — it is the Word of God. Helton encouraged

students to begin every study session by inviting the Holy Spirit to guide their understanding, and to read Scripture slowly, prayerfully, and with reverence. He emphasised that the BK textbook is an extract from the Bible, not a workbook. To aid comprehension and analysis, he introduced the "WH method" (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How), humorously nicknamed the "Wife-Husband method." Helton also urged students to prepare thoroughly before class and to make answering practice questions a habit, noting that going blank during exams is often the result of insufficient practice.

He also guided students through the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions, a new component in the BK paper. Helton encouraged them to engage with Scripture



The students during an ice-breaking session.



Helton Culas sharing valuable exam strategies to the students.

fully — with heart, mind, and soul — and to reflect deeply on Section C application questions by considering the personal and moral implications of each passage. He advised students to draw modern-day applications in their answers, such as issues related to peer pressure, school stress, or family challenges, and to include personal reflections like "This passage taught me to..." or "I have learned to..." He reminded them to stay focused on the given text and its relevance, rather than quoting from other books of the Bible. The session concluded with a vibrant Q&A, where students eagerly asked questions and received clear, encouraging responses that addressed both exam techniques

and biblical understanding.

To conclude the day, Damian Ezekiel, a BK teacher from the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, hosted an engaging Kahoot quiz on the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. The friendly competition filled the room with joy and laughter, and prizes were awarded to the winners — bringing the seminar to a lively and uplifting close.

The seminar was undoubtedly a blessing and a success — not only as exam preparation but also as a chance to grow deeper in one's relationship with God through His Word. Heartfelt thanks go to the organisers, speakers, and all participants for making the event both meaningful and memorable.

Sacred Heart Church hosts faith camp for Mandarin-speaking youths

BENTONG: The Church of the Sacred Heart welcomed approximately 30 young Catholics for a faith live-in camp and retreat held from May 31 to June 2. The three-day event was primarily attended by Mandarin-speaking youths aged 13 to 25, who came from various parishes across the Klang Valley.

Organised by the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras, the retreat combined prayer, fellowship, and faith-based activities, offering participants a space to deepen their relationship with God and one another. Accommodations for the group were arranged at the adjacent SK Katholik, where the youths stayed overnight using their own sleeping mats.

The retreatants participated in the 8.00am Sunday Mass on

June 1, which coincided with the Sacrament of Confirmation that was celebrated by Archbishop Julian Leow, with Fr Clement Lim, the parish priest, concelebrating.

During the Mass, Fr Clement acknowledged the presence of the youth group and highlighted the challenges young people face in today's world.

"It's not easy being young today," he said. "Pray for our youth, that they may come to know the faith and be inspired to share it with others."

In his post-Mass address, Archbishop Julian Leow reminded the congregation that the Church was also observing the 59th World Communications Day, themed *Share with Gentleness the Hope That Is in Your Hearts*.

The archbishop reflected on the



double-edged nature of the digital age, especially for the younger generation.

"The internet can be a good tool, but it can also divide people and foster aggression — through cyberbullying, online abuse, and misplaced values," he cautioned. "Many young people seek affirmation through likes and views, but these are often shallow and virtual."

He urged parents, adults, and the Church to actively guide and support young people, helping them to distinguish truth from

misinformation and to prepare for real-world challenges.

"The Church has been around for 2,000 years," he said. "In the first 300 years, it countered heresies with truth. Today, though the questions come in different forms, the Church must still provide the right answers—and we must walk with our youth as they seek them."

Archbishop Julian emphasised that the Church is a spiritual family for the youth, encouraging them to seek answers from the right sources namely, the Church

itself, rather than turning to unreliable voices online.

"On this World Communications Day, let us pray for our young people — not virtually, but with a human touch," he added. "God is the ultimate communicator, and we must open our hearts to share the Good News with gentleness and truth."

Following the Mass, Archbishop Julian and Fr Clement joined the youths for a simple brunch fellowship, taking time to engage with them personally and offer encouragement. **Bernard Anthony**

Polish nuns beatified for heroic witness amid wartime horror



A nun carries the reliquary during a ceremony on May 31, 2025, in Braniewo, Poland, as the church beatifies 15 nuns from the Congregation of St Catherine Virgin and Martyr, martyred in 1945. (OSV News/Courtesy of Polish bishops' conference)

WARSAW, Poland: Their names may have faded from history books, but on May 31, the Church officially remembered them forever. In a solemn ceremony in Braniewo, northeastern Poland, 15 nuns from the Congregation of St Catherine Virgin and Martyr, were beatified — recognised as martyrs who gave their lives during the final, brutal months of World War II.

The sisters were killed in 1945 as Soviet troops advanced into the region. Rather than flee, these women of peace chose to remain with the vulnerable people in their care, offering comfort and protection amid chaos and violence. Their witness, long overlooked, was honoured by the Church in a liturgy rich with gratitude and reverence.

Sr Cristofora (Krzysztofa) Klomfass and her 14 companions died horrific deaths, often while trying to protect patients, or defending their own dignity. According to Sr Lucja Jaworska, the postulator of the beatification process, “All these sisters died at the hands of Soviet soldiers. They defended the purity they had vowed to God, this virtue, which today is so often questioned in different ways by the world.”

Despite the unimaginable violence they faced, the sisters never renounced their faith or their vows. “They died for their faith, in defence of dignity, purity and the people entrusted to them. They were victims of hatred against Christianity and the Catholic Church,” said Jaworska.

Pope Leo XIV, in his remarks after the Regina Caeli prayer June 1, said that, “despite a climate of hatred and of terror against the Catholic faith,” the sisters “persevered in their service to the sick and orphans.”

Leo asked: “Let us commend to the intercession of the new Blessed Martyrs all those women religious throughout the world who devote themselves generously for the sake of God’s kingdom.”

Presiding over the beatification Mass,

Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints and papal envoy to the ceremony, emphasised in his homily that the newly beatified sisters offer a message.

“Sr Klomfass and her 14 companions offer us today a special lesson, resilience in the face of a culture of hatred and division, so prevalent in our society today,” Semeraro said.

He went on to call the sisters’ martyrdom a “supreme testimony of faith” offered in the context of “ideological warfare which, in their time in Europe, brought persecution, death, violence and destruction.”

With the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II approaching, Semeraro urged the faithful to remember not just the tragedy, but also the moral clarity and peace that can rise from such darkness.

“Let this day, and this beatification of 15 nuns, become a call to peace for the whole world,” he said, adding a poignant reminder of today’s ongoing wars, including the one in Ukraine.

“Today, during this beatification celebration, we do not recall their stories to seek revenge or demand reparation through human justice,” the cardinal explained. “Rather, we seek to receive what is most precious from them: forgiveness, mercy and love for every human being.”

This message of forgiveness stood at the heart of the ceremony. The new blessed call each of us, he said, to two words: forgiveness and conversion.

“They urge us to forgive — that is, to remove from ourselves the sadness of harbouring resentment and hatred,” he said. “They call us to conversion: in our communities, in our daily lives, choosing peace, fraternity, respect for others’ freedom, and harmony in our human relationships.”

The papal envoy said that the sisters’ lives speak powerfully to contemporary

questions about faith and the cost of moral conviction. In a world where Christian values often come under fire, the courage of these women stands as a challenge, Semeraro said.

“Today we need credible witnesses like these new blessed,” said Semeraro. “To strengthen a faith that is often fragile, to rekindle the flame of hope in our Christian communities, and to expand the horizons of our hearts to the boundless love of God.”

The end of World War II was a horrific time for the St. Catherine sisters in Poland. As they resisted a “furious attack” of the Red Army and a soon-to-come Soviet ideological occupation of this part of Europe, 105 sisters and one postulant were killed.

“Half a million civilians died in Warmia,” St Catherine, Sr Angela Krupinska told *Gosc Niedzielny Polish Catholic weekly*. They “could not evacuate, and the sisters mostly did not want to flee, as they chose to stay with the civilian population, children and the sick,” she said.

“The end of the war was indeed the most difficult moment in the 450-year history of our congregation. Its entire structure was shattered at that time.”

She said that their martyrdom was marked by the “immensity of love.”

“It amazes me: Those women suffered terrible torments, rape, beatings — out of hatred for the habit. And they did not stop loving, they did not stop believing. I look at these sisters not from a religious, but from a universal perspective: With their attitude, they stopped evil. They did not pass it on. In a terrible world of chaos, lack of meaning and hope, they stopped hatred, did not carry it further. They trusted God to the end, they all forgave.”

Katarzyna Szalajko, OSV



A painting of the 15 nuns is seen during a ceremony on May 31, 2025, in Braniewo, Poland. (OSV News/Courtesy of Polish bishops' conference)

MEMORIAM

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23rd Anniversary

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Luke 1:78-79

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Nuns and others attend a ceremony on May 31, 2025, in Braniewo, Poland. (OSV News/Courtesy of Polish bishops' conference)

CHURCH OF ST. ANNE, PORT KLANG

FEAST OF ST. ANNE

FRIDAY, 18 - SUNDAY, 27 JULY, 2025

FEAST OF ST. ANNE 2025 MASS SCHEDULE



FRIDAY, 18 JULY, 2025

HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT / HARAPAN TIDAK MENGECEWAKAN / எதிர்நோக்கு ஒருபோதும் ஏமாற்றும் தராது / 希望不会令人失望

6.30 pm Rosary
7.00 pm Adoration/Novena
7.30 pm Mass (E/T/BM)

SATURDAY, 19 JULY, 2025

GOD THE FATHER - THE SOURCE OF HOPE / ALLAH BAPA - PUNCA HARAPAN / இறைத்தந்தையே எதிர்நோக்கின் ஊற்று / 天主圣父——希望之源

8.30 am Parish Youth Rally
-2.00 pm and Mass
6.30 pm Rosary
7.00 pm Adoration/Novena
7.30 pm Mass (E/T/BM)

SUNDAY, 20 JULY, 2025

JESUS CHRIST, THE ANCHOR OF OUR HOPE / YESUS KRISTUS, SAUH HARAPAN KITA / இயேசு கிறிஸ்து -- நம் எதிர்நோக்கின் நங்கூரம் / 耶稣基督，我们的盼望之锚

8.00 am Rosary & Novena
8.30 am Mass (Tamil)
10.00 am Rosary & Novena
10.30 am Mass For Children
6.30 pm Rosary
7.00 pm Adoration/Novena
7.30 pm Mass (E/T/BM)

MONDAY, 21 JULY, 2025

THE HOLY SPIRIT - LIGHT AND GUIDE OF HOPE / ROH KUDUS - CAHAYA DAN PANDUAN HARAPAN / தூய ஆவியார் -- எதிர்நோக்கின் ஒளியும் வழிகாட்டியும் / 天主圣神——希望之光与指引

6.30 pm Rosary
7.00 pm Adoration/Novena
7.30 pm Mass (E/T/BM)

TUESDAY, 22 JULY, 2025

THE TRINITY - COMMUNION OF FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE / TRITUNGAL - PERSEKUTUAN IMAN, HARAPAN DAN KASIH / மூவொரு கடவுள் -- நம்பிக்கை, எதிர்நோக்கு மற்றும் அன்பின் ஒன்றிப்பு / 天主圣三——信、望、爱的共融

6.30 pm Rosary
7.00 pm Adoration/Novena
7.30 pm Mass (E/T/BM)

WEDNESDAY, 23 JULY, 2025

HOPE IN SUFFERING - PATIENCE AND PRAYER / HARAPAN DALAM PENDERITAAN - SABAR DAN DOA / துன்பத்தில் எதிர்நோக்கு -- பொறுமை மற்றும் இறைவேண்டல் / 苦难中的希望——耐心和祈祷

6.30 pm Rosary
7.00 pm Adoration/Novena
7.30 pm Mass (E/T/BM)

THURSDAY, 24 JULY, 2025

BE RENEWED IN HOPE / DIPERBAHARUI DALAM HARAPAN / எதிர்நோக்கில் புதுப்பிக்கப்படுதல் / 重燃希望

6.30 pm Rosary
7.00 pm Adoration/Novena
7.30 pm Mass (E/T/BM)

FRIDAY, 25 JULY, 2025

MARY, MOTHER OF HOPE - STELLA MARIS / MARIA, BUNDA HARAPAN - STELLA MARIS / மரியா -- எதிர்நோக்கின் தாய் -- கடல்விழி / 玛丽亚，希望之母——海洋之星

9.30 am Rosary & Novena
10.00 am Mass followed by Anointing of the Sick
6.30 pm Rosary
7.00 pm Adoration/Novena
7.30 pm Mass (E/T/BM)

SATURDAY, 26 JULY, 2025

FEAST OF SAINTS ANNE & JOACHIM

CHURCH - A BEACON OF HOPE FOR THE WORLD / GEREJA, CAHAYA HARAPAN BAGI DUNIA / திருஅவை -- உலகிற்கான எதிர்நோக்கின் ஒரு கலங்கரை விளக்கு / 教会 —— 世界的希望灯塔

8.00 am Rosary & Novena
8.30 am Mass (English)
10.30 am Rosary & Novena
11.00 am Mass (English)
5.30 pm Rosary
6.00 pm Adoration/Novena
6.30 pm Mass (Multilingual) followed by Procession

SUNDAY, 27 JULY, 2025

CHURCH - A BEACON OF HOPE FOR THE WORLD / GEREJA, CAHAYA HARAPAN BAGI DUNIA / திருஅவை -- உலகிற்கான எதிர்நோக்கின் ஒரு கலங்கரை விளக்கு / 教会 —— 世界的希望灯塔

6.30 am Rosary
7.00 am Mass (English)
8.30 am Rosary
9.00 am Mass (Tamil)
10.30 am Rosary
11.00 am Mass (Mandarin)
12.30 am Rosary
1.00 pm Mass (Bahasa)
5.30 pm Rosary
6.00 pm Thanksgiving Mass (E/T/BM)

CALLED TO BE A BEACON OF HOPE

蒙召成为希望的灯塔

எதிர்நோக்கின் கலங்கரை விளக்காக இருக்க அழைப்பு

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