

There will be no issue on
June 29, 2025.
Our next issue
will be on July 6, 2025.

Pope Leo offers prayers after Air India Tragedy

AHMEDABAD, India: An Air India flight en route to London crashed shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad on Thursday, June 12, killing many of the 242 people onboard. The Boeing 787 struck a residential hostel for medical staff near the airport.

Pope Leo XIV expressed his condolences in a telegram signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, saying he was “deeply saddened” and entrusting the souls of the deceased to “the mercy of the Almighty.” He also

offered prayers for survivors and rescue workers.

Among the passengers were 169 Indians, 53 Britons, 7 Portuguese, and 1 Canadian, including 11 children and 2 infants.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the tragedy “heartbreaking,” while UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer described it as “devastating.” The crash has shocked both nations and drawn global sympathy. **Vatican News**



A family member cries upon hearing the news of her brother who died when the Air India Boeing 787 Dreamliner plane crashed in Ahmedabad, India. (OSV News photo/Amit Dave, Reuters)

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

1 Cor. 11:23-25



Obedience is better than sacrifice

■ P4



Penang diocese welcomes Flame of Love Movement

■ P7



Evangelisation and catechesis cannot be separated

■ P12



MJCCD 1: Faith Unshaken

■ P16



PARIS: In the wake of a tragic school stabbing in France, President Emmanuel Macron has announced that children under the age of 15 will be banned from accessing social media. This move has reignited global debate on how best to protect children in the digital era.

Macron’s announcement followed the June 10 death of a teaching assistant in Nogent, stabbed by a 14-year-old student during a routine school bag check. “We are banning social media for children under 15. Platforms can verify age. They must do so,” Macron posted.

The case has shocked France and prompted other countries to reflect on the mental, emotional, and spiritual toll of unsupervised digital engagement on young people.

Macron’s call comes as a growing number of countries implement or consider similar laws: Australia has already passed legislation ban-

ning children under 16 from joining social media, taking effect this December.

Spain, Greece, Ireland, and Italy are exploring comparable age restrictions.

In the United States, Florida and Utah have passed age-limit bills, though legal challenges remain.

Canada, Germany, and the UK are reviewing stronger enforcement of existing safeguards.

Currently, the European Union has declined to impose a union-wide standard, stating such measures remain under national jurisdiction.

In Malaysia, the government has yet to propose formal age-based restrictions on social media. However, a 2023 UNICEF Malaysia report reveals that over 70 per cent of teens aged 13–17 use social media daily, and one in five reports having experienced cyberbullying.

The Church Response

While no universal Church policy sets a minimum age for digital access, Catholic teaching emphasizes the shared responsibility of par-

ents, educators, and media platforms to protect young people from harm.

Instead of blanket bans, the Church advocates for formation over prohibition. This means helping youth develop spiritual discernment, media literacy, and Gospel-rooted values, enabling them to navigate the digital world responsibly.

“Children and young people should be helped through proper instruction to use the media wisely,” — *Inter mirifica*, Vatican II.

The Church also encourages age-appropriate digital access, shaped by family prayer, honest dialogue, community involvement, and a Christ-centred understanding of identity.

As the debate continues globally, the Church reminds the faithful: formation begins at home, and transformation begins in the heart. Catholic parents and educators are called not only to set boundaries but also to cultivate in children a deep sense of Christian identity, humility, and resilience — online and offline. **America/Agencies**

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

On Pentecost Sunday, Pope Leo XIV offered a sobering insight: "Social media is making us more alone." In a world increasingly tethered to digital devices, his words strike a poignant and necessary chord. The irony is glaring — social media was designed to bridge distances, foster relationships, and cultivate community. Yet beneath the surface of constant notifications, curated feeds, and endless scrolling lies an unsettling truth: the very tools meant to connect us may, in fact, be deepening our sense of isolation.

The Pope's words are not a condemnation of technology itself, but a prophetic reminder to reflect on how we use it. His statement invites us to pause and consider the quiet erosion of genuine human connection in a culture dominated by screens and avatars. In our quest for virtual engagement, we risk sacrificing the richness of real-life presence.

The illusion of connection is perhaps social media's most deceptive promise. We may have hundreds — even thousands — of online "friends" or followers, and yet still feel painfully unseen. The dopamine highs from likes and shares are fleeting and cannot substitute for heartfelt conversation or the grounding presence of a loved one. Pope Leo's insight echoes what psychologists and sociologists have long warned: loneliness is on the rise, especially among youth and young adults — the very ones most immersed in digital culture.

This loneliness is not simply about being physically alone, but about emotional disconnection. We are losing the art of listening — truly listening — to one another. Online, we often showcase polished, curated versions of

ourselves, leaving little space for authenticity or vulnerability. Our profiles may be vibrant, but our souls are often yearning for something deeper, something real.

From a Christian perspective, this growing sense of aloneness contradicts our very nature. We are created for communion — with God and with one another. Our faith is incarnational; it values presence, touch, community, and shared experience. Jesus did not minister through a screen. He walked with His disciples, shared meals with sinners, touched the sick, and wept with the grieving. His ministry was profoundly relational, grounded in the physical and emotional presence of others.

What does this mean for us, as disciples in the digital age? It calls for intentionality. Social media can be a powerful tool for evangelisation, connection, and information-sharing — but it must never replace the fundamental need for real human interaction. We must learn to use these platforms wisely, without allowing them to use us.

Pope Leo XIV's statement is also a challenge to the Church — and to society at large — to respond to this crisis of loneliness with both compassion and creativity. How can our parishes, families, and communities become places where people feel truly seen, heard, and valued? How do we ensure the young, the elderly, and the marginalised are not left behind in this digital evolution?

There are hopeful signs. Some faith communities are rediscovering the beauty of small groups, communal prayer, and face-to-face fellowship. Others are encouraging "digital sabbaths" or "unplugged weekends" — invitations to step away from screens and step into real conversations. Mental health

advocates, too, are emphasising the need to prioritise presence over performance, relationships over reach.

As individuals, we must ask ourselves some uncomfortable questions: Am I using social media to foster authentic connection or to mask my loneliness? Do I seek out in-person encounters, or do I retreat into virtual spaces when life gets messy? When was the last time I had a deep, undistracted conversation?

We are not called to reject technology outright, but to redeem it. Like any tool, social media can either build up or tear down — the difference lies in how we wield it. We need consciences formed by discernment, hearts open to encounter, and habits that prioritise presence over performance.

Ultimately, Pope Leo XIV's warning is a call to return to the foundations of human relationship — to rediscover the sacredness of simply being with one another, of listening with empathy, and of sitting in silence without the compulsion to record and post every moment. It is an invitation to build communities rooted not in algorithms, but in love.

In this paradoxical age where connection is instantaneous but intimacy is rare, we would do well to heed the Holy Father's words. Let us use our screens to share light, not to hide behind them. Let us seek one another not merely in messages and emojis, but in shared laughter, tears, and the breaking of bread.

In the end, the Gospel is not lived in the glow of digital glory, but in quiet acts of compassion and presence — in simply being there when the rest of the world is too busy scrolling.

Patricia Pereira

Corpus Christi: The mystery and miracle of the Eucharist

This Sunday, we come together as a Church to celebrate one of the most beautiful and meaningful feasts of our Catholic faith, the *Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, also called Corpus Christi*.

This feast reminds us of something very important: *Jesus is truly present in the Holy Eucharist*. Every time we attend Mass, we witness a great mystery. Through the words of the priest and the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine on the altar become the Body and Blood of Jesus. What looks like ordinary bread and wine is no longer just a symbol — it is Jesus Himself, alive and with us.

This feast is a chance to slow down and reflect on how we approach Holy Communion. So often, we may receive the Eucharist out of habit, without fully realising the incredible mystery we are entering into. But this Sunday invites us to pause and remember: *we are receiving Jesus Himself — His real Body, His real Blood, His real love poured out for us*. The Eucharist is not just a ritual or a symbol. It is a sacred moment of deep encounter. The same Jesus who walked with His disciples, who healed the sick, who forgave sinners, who died on the Cross and rose from the dead — *that same Jesus comes to dwell within us each time we receive Him in Holy Communion*.

The saints and doctors of the Church help us enter this mystery more deeply. *St Thomas Aquinas*, one of the greatest

theologians of the Church, called the Eucharist the Sacrament of Love and wrote: "O precious and wonderful banquet, that brings us salvation, contains all sweetness, and gives us a foretaste of heaven!" He reminds us that in the Eucharist, we receive not only grace, but the very source of grace — Christ Himself. *St Ambrose*, an early doctor of the Church, once said, "If it is daily bread, why do you take it once a year?... Receive daily what is to profit you daily."

His words challenge us to approach the Eucharist not as an occasional practice, but as our *daily spiritual food*, strengthening us for life's journey. This means when we receive the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, we are also called to become the Body of Christ in the world — bringing compassion, unity, and hope wherever we go.

Theologically, the Feast of Corpus Christi affirms the Church's belief in the *Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist* — that Jesus is truly present, body, blood, soul, and divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life" (CCC 1324), because it unites us intimately with Christ and with one another as His Body, the Church.

In today's fast-moving and often anxious world, many of us are searching for peace, meaning, and real connection. The Eucharist offers us exactly that — a

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Sr Shanti Mariadass, FdCC

Corpus Christi (C)

Readings: Genesis 14:18-20;

1 Corinthians 11:23-26;

Gospel: Luke 9:11-17

deep encounter with the living Christ who feeds our hearts and heals our wounds. For us as members of the Jesus' family, this feast reminds us that we are never alone: *Jesus is truly with us, in silence, in suffering, in the poor, and above all, in the Blessed Sacrament*. By receiving Him with faith and love, we find strength to forgive, courage to serve, and tenderness to love even when it's hard. Let this feast renew in us the desire not only to adore Jesus in the Host, but to let His Eucharistic presence shape how we live — gently, humbly, and joyfully — as His Body in the world.

So, this Sunday, let us not receive the Eucharist in a rush or with distracted hearts. Let us come forward with reverence, with awe, and with deep gratitude. Let us take time to kneel or sit quietly after Communion, to speak to Jesus from our hearts — to thank Him, to adore Him, to surrender to Him, and to ask Him to stay with us. Just a few minutes of sincere prayer can deepen our relationship with Him and open our hearts to be transformed by His love. The saints show us that the Eucharist is not a small part of our faith — *it is the heart of our life with God*.

Pride and the illusion of holiness

SG SIPUT, PERAK: Fr Mark Michael has released a new catechetical book that boldly confronts a growing concern within the Church: the unchecked influence of pride. Titled simply *Pride*, the book sheds light on what Fr Mark describes as a “playground” for this cardinal sin to operate freely, even within sacred spaces and ministries.

Drawing from his 24 years of priestly ministry, Fr Mark writes with clarity and urgency about a spiritual condition that has silently taken root. “Over the past 24 years of my priesthood, I have witnessed a singular, persistent challenge across every facet of Church life: the cardinal sin of PRIDE,” he notes. “It often creeps in unnoticed and hides behind pious facades.

Fr Mark’s reflections go beyond superficial warnings. He observes that

pride can subtly distort intentions and cloud the Gospel truth, even among those called to serve. “It tempts even those within the Church to abandon Gospel values in favour of self-preservation, control and illusion. Responsibilities within the Church become opportunities for self-glorification,” he warns.

He goes on to explain how pride builds what he calls a “counterfeit spirituality”—an external appearance of faith that lacks genuine encounter with Christ. “Pride blinds the heart to truth and fosters a dangerous imitation of faith, a kind of artificial belief that lacks depth, humility, and Christ-like authenticity.”

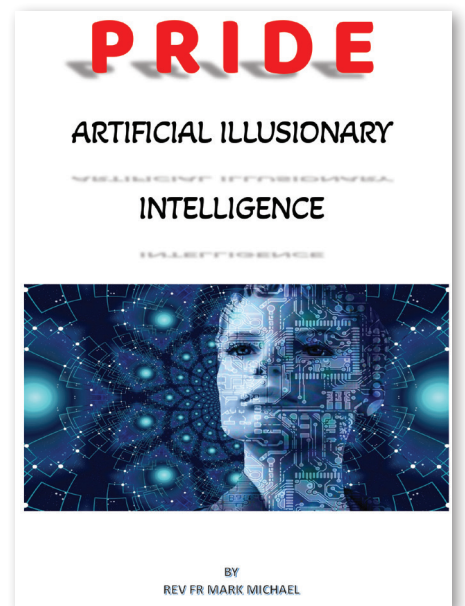
In a striking commentary on contemporary culture, Fr Mark introduces a new term: “artificial illusionary intelligence.” In an era where artificial intelligence is

reshaping the world and social media narratives influence identity, he cautions against allowing these forces to redefine spiritual truth. “Many are being swept into a wave of false and illusionary selfhood,” he notes, urging readers to reclaim a faith rooted in humility and authentic relationship with Christ.

Fr Mark’s latest book is a timely call to self-examination and renewal. It challenges the faithful to recognise the subtle ways pride may manifest and invites a return to Gospel humility.

The book is available for RM10 at the Catholic Information Service in Penang and the Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam.

As Fr Mark reminds us, we are called to live in Christ’s humility — not the world’s pride.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

- 28 Confirmation – Church of St Jude, Rawang
- 30 Confirmation – Church of St Thomas More, Subang

PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

June

- 23-27 AGM – Episcopal Regional Commission for Social Communication, Brunei
- 27 Malaysia CCR Conference 2025 in conjunction with the Sabah CCR 50th Golden Jubilee Celebration, Cathedral of Sacred Heart, Kota Kinabalu at 4.30pm
- 28 Opening Ceremony & Consecration Mass – Church of St Peter, Kuching at 10.00am
- 29 Consecration Mass of New St Peter’s Church, Kuching at 7.00pm
- 30 40th Sacerdotal Anniversary & Thanksgiving Mass and Dinner for Fr Vincent Chin, Rector of New St Peter’s Church, Kuching

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

June

- 24 Courtesy Call by OFM Visitor General
- 25 Mass in honour of St Josemaria – Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram
- 26 Meeting – Graceville Board of Management
- 28-30 Opening Ceremony & Consecration Mass – Church of St Peter, Kuching

Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #227

Dear friends of MJD,

The ordinary times are here. Three Vicariate Pastoral Councils (VPC) gathered at the Church of St Louis Kluang, for a combined study day last weekend. The three VPCs are readying for their respective Eucharistic Congresses. Training of Trainers are getting ready to introduce *The Synodal Method*, is a tool for discerning, deciding and designing communitarian initiatives.

Local takes: Malaysia is heating up. Severe humidity and soaring temperatures threaten us.

Downsizing, right-sizing, RIF (Reduction in Force), the management calls it. For the workers, its retrenchment, termination, sacking or being unemployed. It was reported that Petronas will reduce its workforce by 5000, freeze promotions and hiring until December 2026. Its net income fell 32 per cent. Maybe the GLCs will follow suit soon? Are workers “discardables”? In Japan, the management resigns while the companies keep the workforce. Their belief is that the rot starts at the head.

Others warranting concern is wasting human resource and needed workforce: 10,160 candidates absented themselves from the SPM exams; a whopping 37 per cent of the 550 trainees did not report for duty. The divisive politics, self-serving politicians and the rush to gain seats at the next elections is here already.

Times of Possibilities: Pope Leo XIV remarked on the possibilities of Pentecost and the New Earth: “The earth will rest, justice will prevail, the poor will rejoice and peace will return, once we no longer act as predators, but as pilgrims; no longer each of us for ourselves, walking alongside one another.”

A Thought For The Week: The 99 Club was a King who, despite his wealth and luxuries, was neither happy nor content. One day, he came upon a

servant who was singing happily while he worked. Fascinated, he sought the reason for such joy. The lowly servant replied: Majesty, I am nothing. We don’t need much. We have a roof over our heads and food for tummies.

Not satisfied, he sought his trusted advisor to understand this difference. The advisor said: Majesty, I believe this happy servant is not yet a member of The 99 Club. Just leave 99 gold coins in a bag at your servant’s doorstep. The servant found it, with great joy and began to count. He counted again and again, convinced that no one would leave 99 coins. He looked everywhere for the elusive coin, tired but pushed himself to earn one more to complete his collection.

From that day, he changed. He overworked, grumbled, accused the family for not helping him make the 100th coin. The king witnessed the change. No more singing.

The lesson from the advisor: Officially, your servant has joined the 99 Club. The 99 Club is a name given to the many who have enough to be happy, but yearn for more, saying “just one more thing, one last one and I will be happy for life”. Growing greed upsets our sleep, kills our happiness and hurts our loved ones.

Something’s Happening Near You:

1. The *Pilgrim Cross* is making its rounds in the Parish of Holy Spirit, Jasin from June 21 – July 5, 2025.

QnQ! Q asks? A Surge in Baptisms: Are people coming back to Christianity?
A new report, *Finding Jesus: Identifying Pathways to Faith in Adulthood* by the

Evangelical Alliance offers a window into the unexpected and deeply personal paths by which modern adults in the UK are discovering faith in Jesus. The journey often begins in quiet desperation — a silent search for meaning, a personal crisis, or the subtle gravity of kindness within a Christian community.

The most common spark for exploring Christianity was not an argument won or a sermon heard, but a quiet admission: “I needed help with life.” Thirty-seven per cent of respondents chose that phrase to describe their starting point, while others pointed to a longing for meaning (34 per cent) or the weight of personal pain (32 per cent) as turning points.

These are not people who arrived at church doors with theological curiosity, they knew little of the faith, with no prior connection to Christianity whatsoever.

For them, the word «Jesus» did not come with baggage or memory, only mystery. In fact, what drew many people in was not theology but presence — being seen, heard, and loved by a community of believers, experiencing something unexplainable — a healing, a vivid emotional experience, an overwhelming peace or presence. These experiences didn’t answer all their questions, but they opened a door, a gradual, often halting exploration, that demanded intentional discipleship and patient accompaniment. (*Zenit News / London*)

The Holy Spirit @work: We do not need to wait for the Holy Spirit to come; he came on the day of Pentecost. He has never left the church. Bethlehem was God with us, Calvary was God for us, and Pentecost is God in us. *Anonymous*

Something To Tickle You: When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.” *Lao Tzu*

Bishop Bernard Paul

Obedience is better than sacrifice

Sabrina Smith

SEREMBAN: The Church of the Visitation celebrated the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary from May 28 to June 1. Centred on the theme *Mary, Our Companion as Pilgrims of Hope*, the week-long spiritual journey was guided by parish priest, Fr Xavier Andrew, with reflections and homilies delivered by guest preacher, Fr Arul Mani Josephraj from India.

The celebration culminated with a grand feast day Mass presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow, together with several priests including Fr Kenneth Gopal, OCD, Fr Sin

Wee, OCD, and Fr Adrian Francis.

The celebration began with a reflection on Mary as the new Eve, the vessel through whom salvation entered the world. Quoting St Louis de Montfort's famous words, "To Jesus through Mary," Fr Arul Mani reminded the faithful that Mary brings Christ into our lives by her presence and example. As the Church journeys in hope, we are called to imitate her virtues, particularly her humility and her powerful intercession. Mary's fiat is a constant invitation to say "yes" to God's plan in our own lives.

On the second day, the focus shifted to obedience, a hallmark of Mary's life. Draw-

ing from 1 Corinthians 15:14 and other Pauline writings, Fr Arul Mani emphasised that obedience opens the door to grace. "Be it done unto me according to thy word," was not only Mary's response but an expression of total surrender to God. The preacher explained that grace leads to faith, peace, and ultimately blessings, highlighting the three types of grace: saving, sanctifying, and sustaining. Mary, full of grace, models for us a life fully open to God's gifts.

The third day explored the distinction between faith and devotion. Fr Arul Mani noted that while devotion is an act of love toward God, faith is rooted in obedience to His will. Devotion is the starting point; faith is the transformation that must follow. Referencing Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," he warned against shallow religiosity that lacks true transformation. Mary, who said, "Do whatever He tells you" (John 2:5), demonstrates that authentic devotion must grow into deep, living faith.

The Feast day itself brought together many in joyful celebration, with a solemn Mass led by Archbishop Julian Leow. Mary was honoured as the model of purity and holiness virtues necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven, as stated in Revelation 21:27. Citing the wisdom of the saints and scriptures such as Psalms 37:23 and Isaiah 30:21, Fr Arul Mani encouraged the faithful to strive for holiness by submitting



Guest preacher, Fr Arul Mani Josephraj.

wholly to God's will. Mary's life, wholly aligned with God, stands as a radiant example of virtue for all Christians.

The celebration concluded with a Thanksgiving Mass reflecting on Mary as the soul that magnifies the Lord. Fr Arul Mani reminded the congregation that our purpose in life is to know, love, and serve God. St Paul's exhortation to live a life worthy of God's calling was echoed in his homily, alongside the reminder that true worship is our highest form of glorifying God. Quoting Padre Pio, "If you are distracted, you are not fully focused," he encouraged attentive, sincere worship rooted in love for both God and neighbour.

This year's Feast of the Visitation reminded us all that Mary journeys with us — not only as a historical figure but as a living presence guiding us as pilgrims of hope. Through her example of humility, obedience, devotion, purity, and glorification of God, we are invited to live more fully our call as disciples of Christ.



Archbishop Julian Leow receiving the bread and wine from the Orang Asli community.

Pentecost outreach



The children taking part in a colouring competition.

BESTARI JAYA: An outreach programme was held at Chapel of St Anthony in Minyak Estate.

Held on Pentecost Sunday, June 8, the programme brought ten impoverished families together from Minyak Estate and the surrounding estates of the chapel.

The outreach was organised by the chapel committee, led by Peter Perianayagam in collaboration with a Catholic group from Kuala Lumpur.

The programme focused on sharing God's love and compassion with the needy, especially those on the margins in rural estates. It aimed to spread Christian hope, build relationships, and foster belonging through the Chapel of St Anthony.

Everyone was welcomed, and a reflection in English, translated by SPH Youth chairperson Cyril Naveen, encouraged seeking the Holy Spirit for boldness in living and sharing the faith, especially with the poor and marginalised.

During tea fellowship, guests mingled warmly. Indoor games like a balloon-blowing contest and a colouring competition brought joy to children and adults, with many winning prizes.

Families received 450kg of provisions, including 30 types of food items, pillows, towels, and educational books. The day ended with a prayer, celebrating unity, care, and the Gospel message of love and compassion. **Bernard Anthony**

A transformative retreat of faith, formation and renewal

PORT DICKSON: A recent retreat-formation programme turned out to be a different and unforgettable experience for catechists from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist — just as promised by retreat guide Martin Jalleh.

The retreat opened with a surprising and deeply affirming session entitled *In Praise of Catechists*, featuring a collection of quotes by three popes — St John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. Participants were moved to hear themselves described as "irreplaceable evangelisers" (St John Paul II), with Pope Benedict XVI asserting that catechists "undoubtedly deserve the gratitude, encouragement and constant attention of their pastors."

Among the many affirmations from Pope Francis, one that especially resonated was: "Teaching the faith is something beautiful! It is perhaps the best legacy we can pass on."

Grace Chung, who has served as a catechist for a decade, said the session opened her eyes to the bigger picture. "For many of us, being a catechist was just a duty. It was refreshing to realise we are building God's Kingdom and have made, and continue to make, an indispensable contribution to the spread of the faith."

Another teacher, Wendy Lo, shared that the retreat renewed her sense of mission. "It reminded me that we are sources of hope for children who are broken, struggling at home, or feeling lost. We are here to make a difference."

During one session, participants identified growing challenges they face as catechists, particularly in reaching today's children and youth. The concerns they voiced included:

1. Lack of facilities, conducive learning environments, and logistical support
2. Minimal parental involvement and engagement
3. Inadequate support and training for



The catechists with Martin Jalleh.

catechists

4. Curriculum relevance and student engagement
5. Rapidly changing youth culture, the impact of social media, and the rise of artificial intelligence

These honest conversations led to meaningful sharing of practical recommendations based on their lived experiences. Catechist April Mendoza, drawing on her own journey, emphasised that transformation must begin within the catechist. "Sometimes, we must retreat in order to advance. The pause helped me renew my own faith — for my students, my children, and myself."

Central to the retreat was the call for a paradigm shift in how catechists view God and their role. Martin Jalleh encouraged them to move from seeing God as distant or demanding to a God who seeks us, embraces us, and even delights in us. This new perspective, he said, must form the foundation for servant-leadership in the catechetical ministry.

Participants were particularly moved during the inner healing session, where each catechist was affirmed by the others. Tears flowed as

they humbly received words of encouragement and recognition for their silent yet faithful service.

Martin reminded the catechists that they are not alone — they are co-workers in God's vineyard and must intentionally strive for unity. He then shared his "5H Secret" to being an effective catechist:

1. Holiness — cultivating a personal relationship with God
2. Head — a sound knowledge of faith
3. Heart — passion and zeal for the young
4. Hands — practical communication skills
5. Humour — using joy to connect and inspire

To conclude, he echoed Pope Francis' call for catechists to be creative and adaptable, just as Jesus was, and presented a "Catechist Toolbox" — 12 practical 'S' strategies to make catechism classes enriching, engaging, and exciting.

The catechists returned home spiritually recharged, filled with gratitude, and determined to be "the Lord's Catechist with a difference," ready to proclaim Christ with renewed conviction, creativity, and compassion. **Philip Thomas**

A spiritual awakening at Kepong parish

Dianne Kuseela Devi

KEPONG: Over 1,000 faithful from Malaysia and abroad gathered for a three-day spiritual retreat titled *Grace Upon Grace*. The retreat was led by internationally renowned preacher, Fr Michael Payyapilly, VC from May 30 to June 1.

From the very beginning, the retreat radiated an atmosphere of expectation and prayer. Fr Michael, currently based in the UK, delivered powerful teachings rooted in Scripture and lived faith. Each day's theme was built around deepening one's relationship with Christ, inviting all to experience a fresh outpouring of God's grace.

The first day focused on discipleship — what it truly means to follow Christ. Fr Michael invited participants to reflect on their spiritual identity and challenged them with the provocative question: "Do you want to smell like the world or smell like Christ?" His teaching emphasised living as witnesses of Christ in our families, parishes, and daily lives.

Day Two turned inward to explore the quality of our relationship with



God. Participants were reminded of the importance of family prayer and anchoring one's life in the Word of God. Fr Michael highlighted the need to centre every moment around Jesus, encouraging the faithful to live in communion with the Holy Trinity — modelled after the Holy Family.

The final day expanded the theme outward, focusing on the Church as a living, active community of disciples. Fr Michael spoke about the importance of reaching out in love, building one another up, and evangelising through acts of kindness and

mercy. Many testified to experiencing healing, peace, and spiritual renewal throughout the retreat.

The retreat was not only a time of teaching and worship but also a space for fellowship. Participants shared meals, prayers, and personal stories, building bonds rooted in faith. The Spirit moved powerfully, transforming hearts and renewing commitments to Christ.

Fr Michael left participants with two key challenges:

1. Spend time with Jesus in the Blessed

Sacrament and let Him love and speak to your heart; and

2. Read the Word daily — allow Scripture to nourish your soul and shape your life.

These simple but transformative practices are meant to carry the retreat's message into everyday living.

The sessions were also made available online to benefit those unable to attend in person. The retreat has left an enduring spiritual impact, inspiring all who attended to carry "grace upon grace" into their lives and communities.

Pentecost rally ignites a spirit-filled revival

CHERAS: The Church of St Francis of Assisi played host to a three-day Pentecost rally themed *Ablaze with the Spirit*, June 6-8. A total of 228 participants from 20 parishes gathered to encounter the Holy Spirit and be set ablaze for mission.

Led by Catholic lay missionary, Jude Antoine, this Spirit-filled weekend transformed lives through praise, worship, teaching, sacraments, healing, and personal testimony.

The rally opened on Friday evening with the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Holy Hour, and Eucharistic Celebration, preparing hearts to welcome the Holy Spirit. The air was thick with anticipation as Jude began his first session by reminding everyone that Pentecost is about the harvest of souls and that this harvest begins at home. "We are living in a moment of Kairos," he said, "and your family is your first harvest field." He reminded the faithful that every baptised Catholic is charismatic by virtue of the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. Participants were encouraged to rekindle the spiritual gifts received through Baptism and Confirmation.



Praise and worship session.

Jude emphasised that while we receive the sanctifying gifts of the Holy Spirit through Baptism and Confirmation, many of these gifts lie dormant within us. To bear fruit, we must surrender fully, allowing the Spirit to renew our minds, stir our hearts, and use our wounds to heal others. "God doesn't call the perfect, He calls the

willing. He seeks wounded healers. Our scars become sacred when they reveal His grace," Jude shared.

Saturday's sessions deepened this call through back-to-back teachings, praise and worship, and culminated in a powerful Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Prayer for Healing session. As the Eucharist

was exposed, Jude led participants into deep healing prayer. The atmosphere became one of silence, tears, and lifted hands. Many were overwhelmed by the presence of Jesus and experienced personal breakthroughs. Confessions were made available, and many experienced emotional and spiritual breakthroughs.

Jude reminded the faithful that healing is not just for personal comfort, it is for freedom. "When you are set free, you can help set others free." In response, five priests were made available for Confessions, with lines steadily forming to receive the grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The final moment of the rally came with the Laying of Hands session. Fourteen prayer teams stood by the altar to minister to participants. The gentle movement of the Holy Spirit brought healing and peace, and many rested in His presence. One participant, Elena, shared, "We don't need to be fully healed to help others heal. God works through our mess."

May the fire of Pentecost continue to burn brightly in every heart that was set ablaze. **Shivonne Prevena and Trasilla Annette**

Formation draws hundreds at CDM, Penang

PENANG: The Church of Divine Mercy (CDM) hosted a two-day Pre-Pentecost Experience formation on May 20 and 21, drawing more than 470 participants from CDM and various parishes across Penang Island.

Led by Fr Daniel Raj Jeyraj VC and Fr William John Bosco VC from the Divine Mercy Retreat Centre in Chennai, India, the event combined spiritual formation with daily Mass in a unique and engaging format that left many participants deeply moved.



The organising team with Fr Daniel Raj VC and Fr William John VC.

The seminar began with a warm welcome and words of encouragement from parish priest, Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap, setting a tone of expectation and openness. Praise and worship sessions helped prepare hearts to receive what many described as "awesome," "dynamic," and "spiritually impactful" experiences.

On the first evening, Fr Daniel explored the Person of the Holy Spirit, presenting Him as the Advocate who defends and sanctifies. He challenged the faithful to walk boldly in holiness and reject the lies of the enemy, who seeks to "steal, kill, and destroy."

The following evening, Fr John Bosco focused on the Gifts, Fruits, and Charisms of the Holy Spirit — timely teaching in the lead-up to Pentecost. During adoration, he led the congregation through a time of ministry and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Several participants reported healing and spiritual breakthroughs.

A nine-day novena leading up to the

formation also spiritually prepared the organising team, underscoring the Spirit-led nature of the entire experience.

This Pre-Pentecost formation proved not just a moment of preparation for the feast of Pentecost, but a powerful opportunity for renewal and encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Testimonies of Healing and Encounter:

"My son Cadenn was healed of the illness that caused a metallic taste in his mouth." — **Melinda**

"I came with pain at the back of my head, and now it is completely gone." — **Annie Chin**

"I am the one healed when Fr called out sweaty palms." — **Mark Dawson**

"I never saw the Holy Spirit as an Advocate who defends me, a criminal. I'm so glad I came." — **Carmelita Xavier**

"Several Grab drivers rejected my booking, but when I prayed, the next driver accepted. I knew I had to be here." — **Ann Cardoza**

St Ignatius parish celebrates the joy of family love

PETALING JAYA: The Church of St Ignatius (SIC) came alive with the spirit of unity and celebration for Family Month in May themed *Family is a Community of Love*.

This month-long celebration was a collaborative effort by various parish groups — the English and Mandarin Family Life, Catechetical, Youth Ministries, BECCOT, Bethany Counselling, and the Formation Team — reflecting the strength of faith in action.

The festivities kicked off with the launch of five core family values: enhancing communication; promoting harmony and reconciliation; deepening faith life; building connections and nurturing mutual respect; and cultivating strong family values. These messages, beautifully captured in printed quotes, were displayed at the Community Centre. Featured were reflections from Pope Francis, Pope Benedict XVI, Pope St John Paul II, St Teresa of Calcutta, Cardinal

Celso Costantini (founder of the CDD), and several well-known public figures.

Each Saturday in May brought something special. On May 3, families attended insightful talks: *Strengthening Family Communication* by play therapist Juliana Tang (English) and *Communication Detective* by licensed counsellor Lily Wong Lai Fang (Mandarin). Through role plays, film clips, and interactive activities, families gained practical tools to communicate more effectively.

On May 10, Fr Philip Chua and Fr Stephen Ng, CDD led sessions in English and Mandarin respectively on *The Joy of Love in the Family*, focusing on family spirituality. Parishioners bonded over shared tea breaks, deepening the sense of community.

One of the most anticipated events was the Family Fun Day in FRIM on May 17. Held at the lush Kepong forest reserve, it drew nearly 200 parishioners. Laughter and cheer echoed through the trees as families



Parishioners and families having a telematch at FRIM, Kepong.

joined in Jazzercise with Janet Ginibun and team, explored nature on a guided walk, and competed in lively ‘back-to-school’ telematches. Many brought their own picnic mats and tucked into delicious meals while enjoying one another’s company. Even toddlers had their own special corner filled with soap bubbles and activities. Parish priest, Fr Thomas Koo, CDD and assistant parish priest Fr Martin Then, CDD, joined the fun, much to the delight of participants.

“Keep it up! Kudos for putting so much heart into bringing joy to all, especially seniors and kids,” shared one grateful parent. “It was a fantastic outing!”

The month culminated in a vibrant indoor carnival, *FamFest! Food, Fun, Fiesta*, held on May 31 at the parish Community Centre. The day brimmed with energy — food and craft stalls, game booths, open mic sessions, and performances by the English, Mandarin-, Bahasa-, and Tamil-speaking communities. Catechism children came dressed in

Laudato Si’ inspired costumes crafted from recycled materials.

The Youth Ministry put on an entertaining show with cultural dances, *wushu* demonstrations, songs, and band performances. Parishioners joined in spontaneous dancing, led by Fr Thomas himself, filling the hall with warmth and joy. The event closed with full hearts, new friendships, happy tummies, and arms full of gifts.

Throughout the month, families deepened their communication, discovered joy in family love, engaged in friendly competition, and prayed together — especially the Rosary — for the sanctification of families. The Family Month concluded with a sunset Mass, a fitting end to a meaningful and memorable celebration.

In his closing remarks, Fr Thomas shared, “We give thanks to God for all the blessings He has bestowed on us this Family Month. Let us carry on as families filled with love for one another.” SIC Family Life Ministry



Performance by the catechism children.

A celebration of unity and friendship across faiths

KUALA LUMPUR: The parish of Kristus Aman (KA) in Taman Tun Dr Ismail (TTDI) recently hosted a heartwarming Easter Tea Party, bringing together friends and neighbours from various faith communities in and around TTDI.

The event was an initiative by Fr William Michael, organised by the Parish Ministry of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (PMIEA), with the joyful support of the KA youth team.

This special occasion was more than just a gathering over tea; it was a beautiful expression of unity in diversity. Among the guests were members of the Bahai Community, Full Gospel Assembly, Kuil Sri Maha Mariamman, Damansara Utama Lutheran Church, and TTDI Gospel Centre. While Masjid Al-Taqwa was unable to attend due to a prior engagement, they extended their warm regards and expressed a sincere interest in joining future gatherings. The event provided a rare but precious space for members of different faith traditions to come together, connect, and share in the spirit of friendship.

Fr William opened the gathering with a warm welcome speech, acknowledging the presence of the invited guests and expressing his heartfelt gratitude for their willingness to come together in the name of peace. He spoke about the importance of unity and friendship, especially in a time when the world deeply needs voices of harmony and compassion. “Despite our differences,” he said, “there lies a fundamental truth — that we are all human beings striving for



Fr William Michael with his parishioners.

goodness. Thus, with building connections we can foster a world where we value one another.” He expressed his hope that this would be the first of many such interfaith encounters. His speech concluded with a touching echo of Pope Leo’s timeless greeting: “Peace be with you.”

Adding a youthful touch, the KA youth team presented a short slideshow that gave guests a glimpse into the history of KA and the various community activities it has held over the years. It was a meaningful way to introduce the church’s role and heart for service to new friends.

The chairperson of PMIEA, Celestine, in his closing address shared “today is a gentle beginning of what I truly believe can be a beautiful journey”. He further emphasised the importance of continuing these joyful

interactions and newfound connection. As a practical next step, he suggested the creation of a shared WhatsApp group to keep the conversations and friendships going.

To cap off the afternoon, Fr William led a brief tour of the chapel for interested guests, offering insights into the architecture and the sacred elements within. Meanwhile, light refreshments were served, and the parish hall was soon filled with lively conversation, laughter, and the sound of new friendships being formed.

The Easter Tea Party was a gentle yet powerful reminder that, despite differences in belief and practice, the desire to connect, understand, and walk together in mutual respect is very much alive. May this gathering be the beginning of many more bridges built in our community.

Filipinos celebrate independence with Mass

KUALA LUMPUR: Ambassador Maria Angela Abrera Ponce and officials from the Philippine Embassy joined the Filipino Catholic community for Mass on June 8 at the Cathedral of St John to commemorate the opening of the 127th Anniversary of Philippine Independence.

Held on Pentecost Sunday, the Mass brought together Filipinos from across the city for a moment of prayer, thanksgiving, and national reflection. It was organised by Tahanang Pilipino, a Filipino Catholic community that regularly gathers for spiritual fellowship and support.

Parish priest, Fr Gerard Theraviam, presided over the Eucharistic celebration. The Philippine flag stood prominently beside the altar, symbolising unity and patriotism among overseas Filipinos.

During the Mass, special prayers were offered for the Philippines, its leaders, and the millions of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) around the world. The celebration served not only as a tribute to the country’s independence but also as a reminder of the resilience and faith of the Filipino diaspora.



Penang diocese welcomes Flame of Love Movement

Christopher Kushi

BUKIT MERTAJAM: On June 2, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, formally approved the establishment of the Flame of Love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary movement during a presentation meeting at the Minor Basilica of St Anne. With this endorsement, the Diocese of Penang becomes the first in Malaysia to officially recognise this international Marian movement, which is currently active in more than 50 countries.

The Flame of Love movement originated in Hungary, inspired by messages reportedly received by Elizabeth Kindelmann, a Third Order Carmelite, from Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her spiritual diary, later published under the title *The Flame of Love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*, includes the Unity Prayer and a special petition to be added to the Hail Mary: "Spread the effect of grace of thy Flame of Love over all of humanity."

The mission of the Flame of Love is to lead

individuals to a deeper consecration to Jesus through Mary. The movement promotes a life rooted in prayer, fasting, frequent attendance at Mass (beyond weekends), regular confession, Eucharistic Adoration, and family prayer. Members also commit to praying for world peace, clergy and religious vocations, the souls in purgatory, and conduct home visits with a pilgrim statue of Our Lady.

During the event, Cardinal Sebastian invited members of the movement to share personal testimonies about the impact of the Flame of Love, especially through its unique Rosary devotion.

Anna Tan shared how the Rosary has helped her grow in meditative prayer and establish a consistent spiritual routine. Elizabeth Lim highlighted how praying together as a community has deepened their sense of unity and faith. Winnie Gracia gave a moving testimony of seeing the Blessed Virgin Mary in a dream, smiling with a rosary surrounded by fresh roses. She also described frequently



Cardinal Sebastian Francis and Deacon Lazarus Jonathan with the team.

smelling roses and jasmine during prayer, even when none were physically present.

Elizabeth Raymond spoke about her commitment to fasting every Monday and Friday to support the movement's mission of "blinding Satan and spreading love worldwide." Ester Ooi expressed how meaningful it is to recite the *Hail Mary* with the added Flame of Love petition. Cecilia Lee, from a devout Hakka family, shared the joy of being invited by Cardinal Sebastian to recite the *Hail Mary* in her native Hakka dialect, bringing back cherished memories of her childhood prayers with her mother in Changloun, Kedah.

Indiana Ann Oh summed up the testimonies by stressing the urgency of praying for humanity in today's troubled world.

After hearing all 13 heartfelt testimonies, Cardinal Sebastian remarked, "As the English saying goes, 'He who bakes the cake eats it,'" suggesting that those who have nurtured the movement are now ready to enjoy its spiritual fruits. He affirmed his full support, along with Deacon Lazarus Jonathan and the People of God of the Penang Diocese, in uplifting and promoting the Flame of Love Movement. The members

present were filled with joy and gratitude.

Sr Mercie Lai, of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM), also offered her reflections: "As we read the signs of the times, it is alarming to witness humanity under constant attack — families in crisis, and widespread suffering. The Flame of Love Movement is timely, offering us assurance and hope. Jesus is the Door of Hope, and through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we are called to spread the Flame of Love and pray for humanity." Since March 2025, Sr Mercie has been providing spiritual guidance to the group, which gathers weekly at the Minor Basilica of St. Anne for prayer and meditation.

Vanitha Nadaraj, the national coordinator for Malaysia, also expressed her gratitude: "With this official recognition, we pray that Our Blessed Mother's mission will spread across the nation. Through her intercession, we will extinguish the fire of hatred with the fire of love. Let us allow her to lead us to the Flame of Love, who is JESUS HIMSELF."

In 2013, Pope Francis granted his Apostolic Blessing to the Flame of Love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In 2023, the Archdiocese of Singapore officially accepted the Flame of Love as a recognised ministry.



Sr Mercie Lai with the Penang Flame of Love prayer group.

JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE 2025

Novena and Feast Day of SAINT THOMAS, the Apostle

27 JUN - 6 JULY 2025

St Thomas, The Greatest Gift of Our Times



27 Jun Fri SAINT THOMAS: Journeying in Faith, Living in Hope 8:00PM MASS

28 Jun Sat SAINT THOMAS: Believing Hearts, Hopeful Lives 5:30PM Novena 6:00PM MASS

29 Jun Sun SAINT THOMAS: Faith Renewed, Hope Rekindled 8:30AM MASS

30 Jun Mon SAINT THOMAS: Touched by Christ, Transformed by Hope 8:00PM MASS

1 July Tue SAINT THOMAS: A Faith that Transcends Doubt 8:00PM MASS

2 July Wed SAINT THOMAS: Inspiring Generations to Witness Christ's Presence 8:00PM MASS

3 July Thur SAINT THOMAS: My Lord, My God and My Hope 8:00PM MASS

4 July Fri SAINT THOMAS: Pilgrims of Faith, Messengers of Hope 8:00PM MASS

5 July Sat SAINT THOMAS: The Wounds of Christ, Our Hope 10:30AM MASS (Anointing of the Sick)

5 July Sat SAINT THOMAS: Called to Believe, Sent to Proclaim 5:30PM Novena 6:00PM MASS, followed by a procession

6 July Sun SAINT THOMAS: The Greatest Gift of Our Times 9:00AM **THANKSGIVING MASS TO ST. THOMAS**



CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS
 Jalan Gambut, 25000 Kuantan, Pahang
 Tel: +609-5177 106 Email: stthomas@archkl.org
 website: www.stthomaskuantan.org
 @stthomaschurchkuantan
 St. Thomas Catholic Church, Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia

ALL ARE WELCOME!

- The recitation of the Rosary and Novena to St. Thomas will be held 30 minutes before Mass
- Mass offerings and donations can be made at the Parish Office or via email
- Cheque payable to: Gereja Katolik St.Thomas or Bank-in to Public Bank Account 3181532920

NEWS IN BRIEF

Philippine bishops urge Senate to proceed with Duterte trial

MANILA: Catholic leaders in the Philippines have joined civil society groups in condemning the Senate's delay in proceeding with the impeachment trial of Vice President Sara Duterte, who faces allegations of corruption and misuse of public funds.

In a joint statement issued on June 11, the religious coalition One Faith, One Nation, One Voice — which includes Bishops Broderick Pabillo, Gerardo Alminaza, and Alberto Uy — stressed the need for transparency and justice. "This is not a personal attack, but a call for truth," said Bishop Uy, while Bishop Elias Ayuban Jr. warned against senators acting as "defence advocates" before the trial begins.

Activists and lawyers warned that the Senate's inaction could fuel public unrest and erode trust in the country's democratic institutions. "It's a betrayal of public trust," said Renato Reyes Jr. of Bayan. "The people may be forced to take direct action," added Aaron Pedrosa of Sanlakas.

The impeachment court returned the case for clarifications after a vote of 18-5 on June 10. ucanews.com

Former police chief charged with child sexual exploitation

JAKARTA: Fajar Widyadharmas Lukman Sumaatmaja, a dismissed police chief from Ngada Regency in East Nusa Tenggara, has been arrested and charged with the sexual exploitation of minors and distribution of pornographic videos to an Australian-based website. His crimes, involving three minors and one adult woman, came to light after Australian authorities alerted the Indonesian government in mid-2024.

Investigations revealed Sumaatmaja used power, deception, and accomplices to arrange abuse sessions between June 2024 and January 2025. Authorities confirmed he uploaded at least eight videos and tested positive for drug use. A female university student is also under investigation for aiding the crimes.

He faces multiple charges under child protection, anti-sexual violence, and electronic information laws, with possible prison terms of up to 15 years and heavy fines. Rights groups and victims' families are calling for maximum punishment, including the death penalty.

Church-affiliated and civil organisations have condemned the case, urging authorities to seize the perpetrator's assets, provide restitution and psychological support to victims, and ensure stronger legal protection against sexual violence and police abuse.

Alarmingly, this case is one of several recent incidents involving police officers accused of sexual violence in the region. Local protection units reported over 240 cases of violence against women and children in the province in the first five months of 2025. ucanews.com

Report exposes abuse of Christian women in Pakistan

LAHORE: A recent investigation by Franciscan priest Fr Lazar Aslam has highlighted the widespread sexual violence faced by Christian women and girls in Pakistan. His report, submitted to Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), documents several harrowing cases, including the rape and blackmail of 20-year-old Asma, the murder of 17-year-old Samiya following a gang rape, and the brutal assault of Shumaila, who was attacked in front of her husband after the perpetrators discovered their Christian faith.

The report reveals a disturbing pattern of impunity, with police offering little support and survivors facing ongoing threats. Fr Aslam has urgently called for justice, protection, and support for survivors, especially those from poor and vulnerable Christian families.

"We demand justice and call on the state to protect these families. The victims are poor and belong to a minority — the perpetrators are powerful and continue to issue threats," said Fr Aslam.

These incidents reflect the systemic discrimination and lack of legal protection experienced by religious minorities in Pakistan. The international community, Church leaders, and human rights organisations are urged to speak out and press for reforms that uphold the dignity and safety of all citizens, regardless of faith. ICN

Nun honoured for anti-human trafficking efforts

BANGKOK, Thailand Sr Marie-Agnes Suwanna Buasap of the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres has been nationally honoured by Thailand's Ministry of Social Development and Human Security for her exceptional work in combating human trafficking. The recognition was awarded on June 5 during National Anti-Human Trafficking Day in Bangkok.

Based in Thailand's remote northern region, Sr Marie-Agnes has led groundbreaking grassroots efforts to protect vulnerable women and children from exploitation. Her approach emphasises education, empowerment, and deep community engagement, working directly with at-risk populations.

Her initiatives include training 3,182 teachers across 35 schools to deliver anti-trafficking lessons, reaching over 60,000 students. She also helped establish Talitha Kum Kids networks in schools, supported youth-led campaigns in border regions, and introduced women's livelihood projects to boost local income and reduce vulnerability.

Additionally, Sr Marie-Agnes deployed 40 trained volunteers to run workshops for over 800 women, offering awareness, skills training, and lead-



Sr Marie-Agnes Suwanna Buasap receives a national award for her anti-human trafficking work during a ceremony in Bangkok. (Vatican News/Sr Marie-Agnes S. Buasap, SPC)

ership development. "To fight trafficking, we must become deeply integrated in the communities we serve. Building trust is essential," she said.

Her work is part of the global Talitha Kum network, a Catholic movement of women religious fighting human trafficking in more than 90 countries. The name "Talitha Kum," drawn from the Gospel of Mark, means "Maiden, I say to you, arise."

Sr Marie-Agnes called on the faithful

to embrace the Church's 2025 Jubilee Year theme of being *Pilgrims of Hope*, especially for those living on the margins. "This is about bringing hope through concrete action," she said. "It's not just charity, it's justice and solidarity."

At a time when global trafficking prosecutions are declining, her award highlights the critical role of faith-driven, grassroots activism in addressing one of today's most urgent human rights challenges. LiCAS News

Catholic business leaders launch faith-driven executive programme

THAILAND: Catholic business leaders from Thailand and the Philippines gathered at the Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Training Centre on June 7-8 for the first session of the Catholic Business Wisdom Enhancement Programme. The formation initiative aims to integrate Christian values into business leadership.

The programme was co-organised by the Catholic Business Executives and Professionals (CBEP) of Thailand and the Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals (BCBP) of the Philippines. It is part of a broader collaboration under UNIAPAC, a global Catholic business network representing

over 45,000 executives in 38 countries.

The CBEP Academy, launched through this initiative, offers a spiritual and ethical roadmap for executives. It focuses on discernment, stewardship, and viewing work as a sacred vocation rather than just a means of livelihood.

Bobby Lavina, chairman of Phinma Foundation Inc., reminded participants that "work is not a consequence of sin—it is part of God's plan." He encouraged business leaders to reflect on how their work can better reflect Christ and serve the common good.

Joey Avellana, president of Avellana & Associates, echoed the message, saying God is the "first worker" and

that humans are co-creators with God. He challenged participants to move beyond profit-driven motives and discover whether their careers reflect a true calling.

Avellana also critiqued shallow views of success in the workplace. He warned against the idea that financial stability or career achievement alone defines success, urging participants to ask deeper questions like, "Is this my vocation?" and "What is God's plan for me?"

Other speakers included Dench Decino, country head of Ernst & Young Global Delivery Service, and PV Beley, former president of BCBP. Together, they provided a mix of corporate insight and spiritual depth.

The presence of Archbishop Francis Xavier Vira Arprondratana of Bangkok and Fr William LaRousse of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) highlighted the Church's strong backing of the initiative. Their support reinforced the importance of faith-based dialogue in business spaces.

George Varakorn Techamontrikul, CBEP Thailand chairman, called the gathering "a long-awaited milestone." He said the programme would strengthen UNIAPAC's Asia chapter and open doors for future Catholic business formation across the region. More sessions are planned to promote leadership rooted in faith, integrity, and service. Peter Monthienvichienchai, LiCAS News



Participants engage in small group discussions reflecting on how their business practices can better reflect the face of Christ. (LiCAS News/Peter Monthienvichienchai)

Unity and synodality are the heart of evangelisation

VATICAN: Pope Leo urged members of ecclesial movements, associations, and new communities to carry out their mission with unity and joy. He said this during a Pentecost vigil at St Peter's Square, where nearly 70,000 pilgrims gathered on June 7. The event was part of the Jubilee of Ecclesial Movements. It highlighted his call for a Spirit-filled and united Church.

Reflecting on the first Pentecost, the Pope said that Mary, the Apostles, and the disciples received "a Spirit of unity" that transformed their fear into bold witness. "Theirs were not multiple missions, but a single mission," he preached. "They were no longer introverted and quarrelling with one another, but outgoing and radiant with joy."

Pope Leo praised the diversity of new ecclesial groups, many of which emerged after the Second Vatican Council. He said they enrich the Church when they remain rooted in communion. "St Peter's Square, with its wide-open and welcoming embrace, magnificently

expresses the communion of the Church that each of you has experienced," he said.

He then offered a reflection on synodality, a term that has shaped his papacy. "Synodality means walking together, guided by the Holy Spirit," the Pope said. "The Greek word *syn*, meaning 'with', reminds us that God is never alone. God is relationship: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

The Pope emphasised that the Church is "a people on the move," not set apart from humanity but immersed in it. He compared the Church to yeast in dough, lifting up the world through faithful witness. "This journey of synodality is the Church's name for living in communion, sharing burdens, and walking in hope," he said.

He called on all communities to recognise both their strengths and limitations, stressing that true unity grows from humility. "Each of us must feel part of a greater whole. Apart from that, even the most original charism

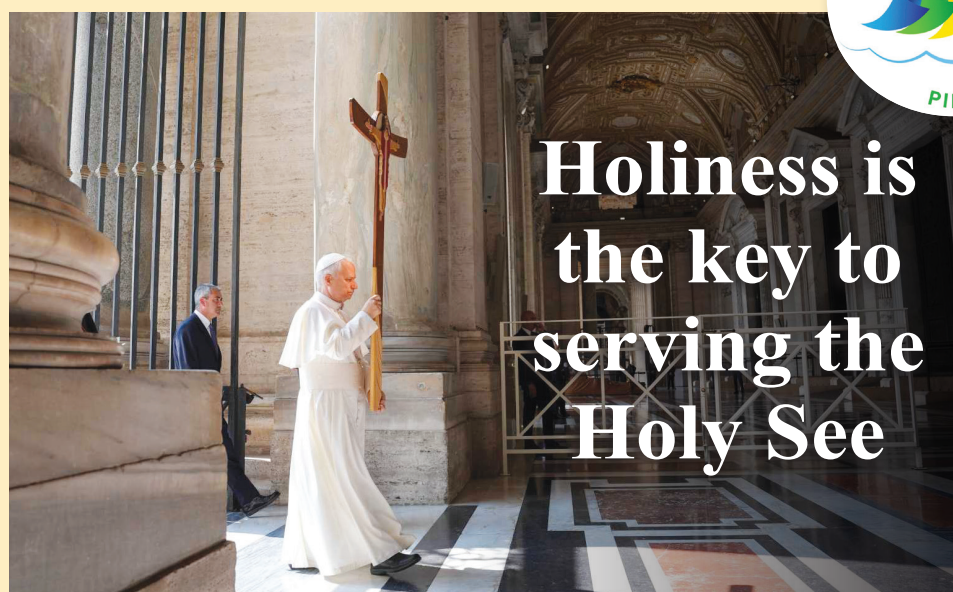


Pope Leo XIV gives his homily at a Pentecost prayer vigil in St Peter's Square at the Vatican June 7, 2025, with participants in the Jubilee of Ecclesial Movements, Associations and New Communities. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

witners," he warned.

On the topic of evangelisation, Pope Leo rejected the idea of conversion as conquest. "Evangelisation is not our attempt to conquer the world," he said. "It is the grace that radiates from lives transformed by the Kingdom of God. It follows the path of the Beatitudes — meekness, mercy, purity, peace, and justice."

The Pope closed with a strong call to remain deeply connected to local churches and to obey the Holy Spirit in all things. "Be rooted in your parishes and dioceses," he urged. "The challenges of the world will seem less overwhelming if we journey together. May Mary, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of the Church, intercede for us as we carry out this mission." CWN



Holiness is the key to serving the Holy See

Carrying the Jubilee cross, Pope Leo XIV leads a procession including members of the Roman Curia toward the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica during the Jubilee of the Holy See at the Vatican June 9, 2025. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV, celebrating the Jubilee of the Holy See on June 9, urged all who serve the Church to root their mission in personal holiness. Speaking during Mass on the feast of Mary, Mother of the Church, he said, "All the fruitfulness of the Church and of the Holy See depends on the cross of Christ. Otherwise, it is only appearance, if not worse."

The day began with a meditation in the Paul VI Audience Hall by Sr Maria Gloria Riva, of the Perpetual Adoration Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. She spoke about hope, cautioning against focusing too much on either the past or the future. The past, she said, can be a "trampoline" toward the eternal horizon.

Pope Leo then led a solemn procession through the Holy Door into St Peter's Basilica, carrying the Jubilee Cross. Cardinals, bishops, priests, religious, and lay staff of the Vatican joined him for the celebration.

In his homily, the Pope reflected on the

fruitfulness of the Church, which he said mirrors Mary's — made real when its members love as Jesus did. He described holiness as the essential element that links Mary, the Church, and the Holy See.

He stressed that holiness is not abstract but lived through daily faithfulness. "The Holy See lives in the holiness of each of its members," he said. He highlighted the witness of ordinary people — a priest faithfully doing his work, or a parent caring for a struggling family — as examples of this fruitfulness.

Pope Leo also emphasised Mary's role in the life of the Church. Just as she supported the Apostle Peter, the Church today supports the ministry of Peter's successors through a Marian spirit — one of service, self-giving, and communion.

He closed by praying that the Church, guided by Christ's love, may always be fruitful in the Spirit, grow in the holiness of her people, and welcome all humanity into her embrace. CNS

Papal diplomats reflect Church's universal mission of peace

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV met Apostolic Nuncios and papal representatives from around the world on June 10 for the first time since the start of his pontificate. Upholding tradition, he gave each a ring inscribed with "sub umbra Petri," a sign of their bond to the successor of Peter.

In his address, Pope Leo urged them to remain closely united to the Pope and in communion with local bishops. "Only in obedience and effective communion with the Pope can your ministry be effective for the Church," he said.

He praised the Holy See's diplomatic corps as a global witness to the Church's unity and mission, calling them a symbol of human fraternity and peace. Off-the-cuff, he described their work, especially in helping select bishops, as "irreplaceable."

Pope Leo thanked them for their pastoral spirit and diplomatic insight, quoting Pope St Paul VI, who said papal representatives allow the Pope to "participate in the very life of his children."

Reflecting on the Acts of the Apostles, Pope Leo likened their mission to St Peter healing



The ring bears the inscription "Sub umbra Petri".

the lame man, saying papal envoys must offer not riches but Christ himself — building hope and relationships even in difficult places.

He called on them to be "Peter's gaze" and ambassadors of Christ's love, especially in regions marked by suffering, war, or injustice.

Pope Leo concluded by encouraging them to be "instruments of communion and unity" and witnesses of faith and dignity throughout the world. Vatican Media

Vatican Bank reports RM159 million profit in 2024

VATICAN: The Vatican Bank, officially known as the Institute for the Works of Religion (IOR), reported a net profit of €32.8 million (RM158,952 million) for 2024, a seven per cent increase from the previous year. The growth was driven by higher interest, commission, and brokerage income, along with tighter cost control. The total volume of client assets rose to €5.7 billion (RM27 billion), and net assets increased to €731.9 million (RM3.5 billion).

The IOR's strong performance also led to a dividend of €13.8 million (RM66 million) being allocated to the Holy Father, reaffirming its mission to support the Church's religious and charitable works. All investments were conducted in line with Catholic social teaching, with 100 per cent of as-

set management lines posting gains and 79 per cent outperforming their benchmarks.

The bank's Tier 1 capital ratio — a key indicator of financial stability — reached 69.43 per cent, a 16.1 per cent rise from 2023, due to reduced risk exposure and stronger equity. This places the IOR among the most well-capitalised financial institutions globally in terms of liquidity and solvency.

Improvements in technology and staffing in 2024 further enhanced the IOR's operations and customer service. As the only financial institution authorised to operate within Vatican City, its audited financials confirmed compliance with international accounting standards and another year of stable, sustained growth. CNA



The Vatican Bank. (CNA/Andrea Gagliarducci)

Dr Jo Skinner

Modern medicine's astonishing ability to preserve life has nudged the possibility of death and the process of dying ever further from our consciousness. The past year or so has been a confronting one of deaths for me, and with two of my patients currently receiving palliative care, I am reminded what an extraordinarily rewarding role it is to be a part of a person's final journey. Death is a universal experience that befalls all of us and yet few of us take the time to let our loved ones know what values and beliefs are integral to our sense of being and how these should inform our final days.

The standard consultation with a GP is a mere fifteen minutes. In that sliver of time, it is expected that we address the problem the patient has presented with and, ideally, check that they are up to date with their preventative health care. This means that discussions about end of life are left very much until the end of life, and often this is too late as the patient has lost decision-making capacity. I recognise my own reticence to treat dying like a normal process and to raise end-of-life planning with my patients while they are well. I am not alone in finding it challenging to broach conversations about death before a patient is confronted with their own mortality.

Case No 1 — Prue

Prue is in her early fifties and was the victim of a serious assault a few years ago. She experienced head injuries which precipitated a gradual decline in her cognitive abilities. After a prolonged hospital stay, she is now cared for in a supported living arrangement, and her deterioration has been rapid. I am providing shared palliative care with one of the outreach teams from a local hospice. She is completely immobile, incontinent and needs to be fed. She recognises family members, but her speech is impaired and communication poor.

When we reach the end of life, whether we consider ourselves religious or not, we grapple with spiritual questions that go to the core of who we are. Death gives a fresh meaning to life, and acknowledging that we will die one day can bring a fresh focus to life. The tragedy with Prue is that she no longer has the capacity to address these big questions, with the real risk that her deeper needs may not be met before she departs.

When I first met Prue, she was gregarious and modelled clothes for women over fifty. She was well, and I only saw her for preventative care and the occasional illness. Early after her assault, Prue's daughters be-



Why we need to talk about dying

The privilege of dying well

Case No 2 — Helga and Franz

Helga and Franz migrated to Australia from Germany, keen to live near their children Karl and Britt. Franz was diagnosed with motor neurone disease soon afterwards and died two years later. I saw them regularly, but it was always about Franz, as Helga was too busy caring for him to worry about her own health. Eighteen months after his death, I had a call from an emergency department asking for Helga's medical history. It was scant, as she had always been in robust health. The next day she presented to me with a diagnosis of pneumonia and a request to follow up with a chest x-ray. I was shocked when I saw her. She was emaciated and barely recognisable.

One of the advantages of general practice is that we know our patients well, and seeing how much Helga had changed made me suspicious that there was something else going on. In addition to a ten-kilogram weight loss, she now had a loud heart murmur and a grossly abnormal ECG.

I sent her back to hospital with a detailed letter, and a few days later received distraught calls from Karl and Britt. Helga had a rare neuroendocrine tumour with a metastasis on her heart valve. She had a cardiologist, respiratory physician and oncologist caring for her

and began a punishing regime of chemotherapy. She slipped from being a woman of few words to one of no words and continued to deteriorate. I received a flurry of letters from specialists, and Britt asked me the dreaded question, 'How long has Mum got?'

The truth is I had no idea. With the unstoppable momentum of medical technology, dying is a process that can be prolonged almost indefinitely. Another round of third-line chemotherapy, dialysis, ventilation, surgery. There is no end to what can be done when the threat of death looms. I stepped into uncomfortable territory, uncertain of Britt's views. 'It is difficult to know exactly.'

And to my shame, it is only then that I broached the topic of end-of-life care and arranged an appointment with all three of them present. Helga had quite literally lost the will to live and was relieved when I gently suggested palliative care — to pull the plug on further treatment unless it improved the quality of her remaining life. She visibly relaxed, whispered that she would be with Franz soon. Her only request was that after her death, her ashes and those of Franz would be returned to Germany and interred in the church where they were married. It prompted Britt and Karl to collate photographs of their childhood in the small German town where they were born, and provided a sense of closure when they planned the trip after Helga died.

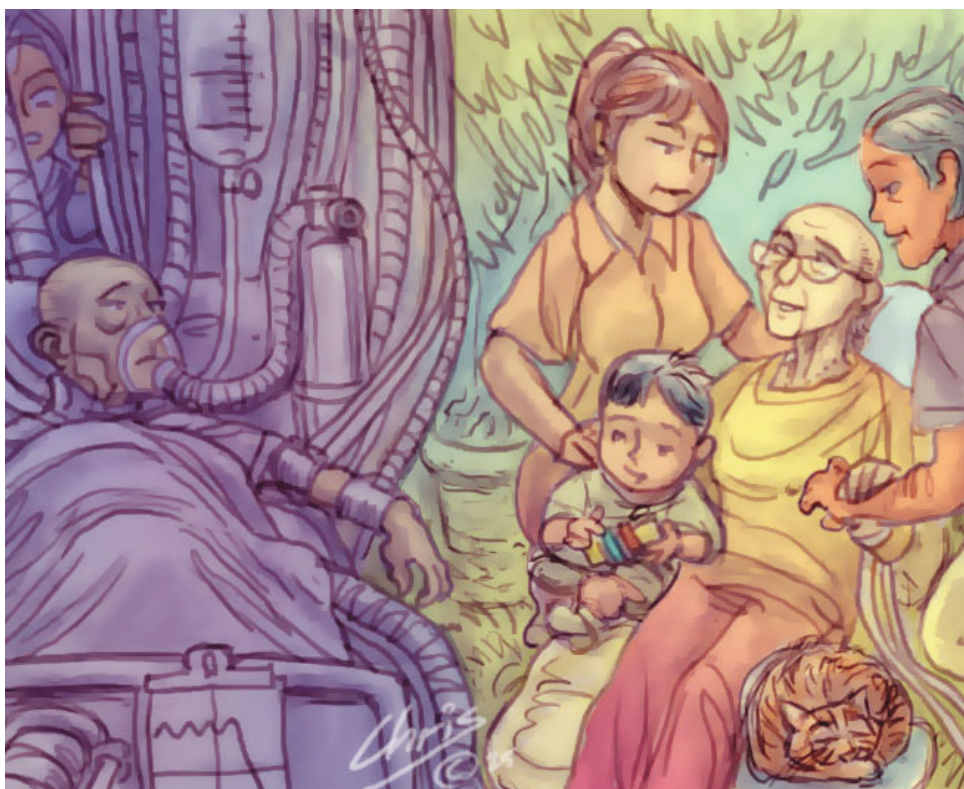
A month after she passed away, I saw Britt while out running. She asked why we kept treating her mother when she was so clearly terminal. I didn't have any good answers.

Dying well is something that is hard to talk about when our schedules are crowded with commitments, and we are up to the eyeballs with the business of being alive. Death, once commonplace and swift, has been sanitised and prolonged, often without added quality of life. The whole process of dying has been muddied with interventions. It has distracted us from the all-important issues of spending time with loved ones, tying up loose ends, of knowing we have someone we trust to make important financial and health decisions should our ability to do so decline.

It is immensely satisfying to listen to someone whose time has become finite, to respect their wishes and allow them to live their final days with dignity, knowing that important decisions will proceed in line with their values and beliefs. It can be confronting to consider our own mor-

tality, but when we do, it gives us a freedom to live our lives to the fullest right up to the end. We plan every other aspect of our lives. We put considerable thought towards celebrating important occasions like weddings, birthdays and anniversaries. We take the time to work out itineraries for holidays and never question the need for endless paperwork to sign up for a mortgage or buy a car. End-of-life planning is just another milestone in our lives — one that requires some thought and careful attention. It is a small but necessary investment for the privilege of dying well, the comfort of knowing that our values will be considered after we take our final breath. **Eureka Street**

Jo Skinner is a Brisbane-based GP, women's fiction author, freelance health writer and distance runner.





Silent and unmet needs in dementia

“My husband died young, so I became a single mother in my 20s. I had to work two jobs — at the *kopitiam* and as a seamstress. My best friend would come by, buy me a meal, and chat.”

Mary’s face lights up every time she tells this story, her voice animated with joy. But what’s striking is how often she repeats it — over and over again, with the same enthusiasm. For those unfamiliar with her, this repetition can become frustrating. People start to avoid her, thinking she’s simply forgetful or lost in loops of memory.

One day, after she had told the same story for the sixth time that morning, we gently asked her, “How does it make you feel when



Dancing with Dementia

DR CECILIA CHAN

your best friend brings you a meal?” She paused, her eyes clouded, then slowly answered through tears, “It brought me so much joy. I was so lonely.”

We were quiet. In that moment, we understood: Mary wasn’t just reminiscing — she was reaching out. Her repeated storytelling wasn’t a “behavioural issue.” It was a call for connection. We embraced her and assured her that we saw her, heard her, and valued her. She smiled, hugged us back — and from that day, she never repeated the story again.

Mary lives with Alzheimer’s. She no longer has friends who know how to engage with her. She has stopped attending church services — too exhausting, too long. Though her helper ensures her basic physical needs are met, she is often left alone, deprived of

the deeper human needs: companionship, dignity, purpose.

Too often, actions like Mary’s are dismissed as “dementia behaviours” — irritating or meaningless habits. But when we pause to listen deeply, these “behaviours” reveal something far more significant: unmet needs.

Mary wasn’t simply repeating a memory — she was expressing a yearning for connection. As theologian Paul Tillich once wrote, “The first duty of love is to listen.”

Mary taught us that listening is not just a clinical tool or a therapeutic intervention — it’s a profoundly human act. It reminds us that behind every repeated story or unusual action is a person trying to communicate something meaningful.

Person-centred dementia care — a model championed by the late Dr Tom Kitwood — challenges us to move from labelling behaviour as a “symptom” to understanding it as expression. If we view Mary’s repetition

merely as a clinical issue, we pathologise her — and we miss her deeper truth. But if we’re curious and compassionate, we may uncover her need for companionship, her grief, her desire to be remembered and loved.

To truly support someone living with dementia, we must first try to understand their experience. When we shift our perspective from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What are you telling me?”, we open ourselves to empathy — and to more meaningful ways of care.

In the end, we all walk the same road — fragile, human, destined for the same end. Perhaps the greatest lesson dementia teaches us is that in our shared vulnerability, we are not so different. And in recognising this, we can be more fully human — together.

Dr Cecilia Chan is a Gerontologist and Dementia Advocate and Activist. She can be contacted via WhatsApp (013-4384388).

Why inclusion matters in the Catholic Church

Inclusion has become quite a buzzword in the last several years. We hear about inclusive schooling for children which often means that students are required to “fit” a certain mould and be “ready” for certain skills before entering the school or classroom. However, this is not the true meaning of inclusion. Inclusion means everyone is included and the necessary accommodations are made to suit the needs.

The United Nations defines social inclusion as: the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.

Inclusion is not merely a social ideal; it is imperative in the house of God. Yet, many people with disabilities, including those who are neurodivergent, sometimes find themselves out of place or fearful to be themselves at parishes because the community has not made room for the community in a meaningful way.

What Is Neurodivergent?

Some disabilities are more obvious than others. Just because we do not see it, does not make their struggles any less. In Malaysia, those who are neurodivergent are considered disabled and eligible to apply for the Persons with Disabilities or *Orang Kurang Upaya* (OKU) card. The term “neurodivergent” describes people whose brains process, learn, or behave differently from what is considered “typical.” This includes conditions like autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and specific learning differences such as dyslexia or dyspraxia.

Inclusion for neurodivergent individuals requires more than kindness; it requires awareness, flexibility, a willingness to listen and learn. Many neurodivergent people

are excluded not by malice, but by environments that are too rigid, loud, bright, or judgmental. Something as simple as harsh lighting, loud music, or a sarcastic tone can be overwhelming, leading some to choose to stay away.

“Let the Children Come to Me”

Jesus’ ministry was filled with compassion for those whom society overlooked or rejected. When the disciples tried to shoo away children, Jesus corrected them: “Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matthew 19:14)

Today, how often do we hinder children with disabilities from fully participating in the Church? Are parents made to feel embarrassed if their child with autism flaps their hands or makes noises during Mass? Are catechists trained to support a student with ADHD who can’t sit still or struggles with reading? Do we offer sensory-friendly liturgies, or do we expect everyone to “just behave”?

In Malaysia, we are blessed to live in a society that is already quite diverse, culturally. We see much headway by individual parishes whose parishioners and members of the clergy have taken active steps in making necessary accommodations for all children of God to feel accepted at church. While gratitude is in order, we must continue to encourage more to follow suit so that eventually, this becomes a norm and not an accommodation.

Create Opportunities for True Belonging, Not Pity or Charity

Inclusion is not about pity or charity—it’s about belonging. There is a vast difference between being tolerated and being



Inclusion Matters

Desiree Kaur

celebrated. To truly include people with disabilities, we must recognise that they are not just recipients of ministry—they are ministers, too. Above all, we must treat everyone with respect and dignity. Providing necessary accommodations for the disabled is not charity but their basic human right.

Disability is not a punishment nor a spiritual failing. People with intellectual, sensory, emotional, or physical differences are not “broken” or “less-than.” In fact, many neurodivergent individuals, including those with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, or Tourette’s, have rich spiritual lives, deep empathy, and profound insights. What they often lack is a welcoming and understanding environment in which to share their gifts.

Practical Ways to Foster Inclusion

Creating inclusive spaces and opportunities means including the neurodivergent community when it is created. Here are a few suggestions for parishes and ministries:

1. Train Those Who Serve the Church:

Include disability awareness and neurodiversity education in seminary and ministry formation.

2. Offer Sensory-Friendly Masses:

Adjust lighting and volume, and allow movement or fidgeting without judgment.

3. Create Inclusive Catechesis: Use visual supports, flexible seating, and alternative methods of communication.

4. Partner with Families and Self-advocates: Parents of children with disabilities and self-advocates are often the best sources of insight. Invite their feedback and collaboration.

5. Rethink Accessibility: Inclusion is more than wheelchair ramps. It means making room for different ways of thinking, feeling, and praying.

6. Celebrate Diverse Gifts: Invite people with disabilities to serve as lectors, greeters, altar servers, or in music ministry, with appropriate support.

The late Pope Francis had repeatedly called for a more inclusive Church. In a 2021 message, he said: “Making the disabled feel like the subject of pastoral care and not simply the object of charity is the true path to inclusion.” The Holy Father reminded us that inclusion is not optional — it is integral to our mission as Catholics.

Conclusion: Why Inclusion Matters?

To include people with disabilities—including those who are neurodivergent—is not a burden. It is a blessing. It calls us to stretch, to grow, and to see Christ in new ways. It reminds us that love is not neat or predictable — it is patient, flexible, and fierce.

Let us work together to make every Catholic parish a place where every person feels safe, seen, and spiritually nourished. After all, inclusion is not just a nice idea. It is the living out of the Gospel.

Because in the eyes of God, no one is on the margins. Everyone is at the centre.

Desiree’s advocacy for all abilities began in 2017 after her son Haans was diagnosed with autism. Frustrated by the lack of accessible information, she took the initiative to educate herself, earning a Master’s in Special Education. A former PR practitioner, she went on to establish Project Haans, a website supporting Malaysia’s special needs community. She also co-hosts the Kita Family podcast with four other mothers of neurodivergent children.

Evangelisation and catechesis cannot be separated

BUKIT MERTAJAM: Evangelisation and catechesis are inseparably intertwined, forming the heart of the Church's mission in the world today. This was highlighted at the *Evangelising Catechists Leadership Formation 2025*, held from May 31 to June 2 at St Anne's Minor Basilica. Organised by the Penang Diocesan Catechetical Commission in collaboration with the Peninsular Malaysia Institute for New Evangelisation, it brought together 47 catechists from across the diocese of Penang.

The formation emphasised the central role of the *kerygma*, the first and foundational proclamation of the Gospel. Referencing Pope Francis, participants were reminded that the *kerygma* is "first in a qualitative sense" and should permeate the entirety of catechesis. "Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful, and wisdom-filled than the *kerygma*," the Pope wrote, affirming that all catechetical efforts are, in essence, deeper engagements with this core message.

Deacon Clement Samuel, head of the Penang Diocesan Catechetical Commission, laid the theological and pastoral foundation of the formation. In his keynote, *The Call of an Evangelising Catechist*, he used John 21:1-19 to present Peter as the Church's first evangelising catechist and emphasised that a catechist's identity must be rooted in Christ's unchanging call, regardless of shifting cultural influences. Drawing from the *2020 Directory for Catechesis*, he identified three core roles of catechists: Witness (storyteller), Teacher (mystagogue), and Accompanier (friend).

According to Deacon Clement, the credibility of catechesis hinges on the witness of the catechist's life. Self-evangelisation, especially in times of doubt or spiritual crisis, prepares catechists to accompany others authentically. He addressed the contemporary "restlessness" among catechists caused by technological shifts, philosophical confusion, and waning church engagement, suggesting that these crises can become moments of renewal through divine encounter, mission, and lifelong discipleship.

In a second session, *Evangelisation and Catechesis*, Deacon Clement revisited the Great Commission (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19-20), clarifying what evangelisation is and is not. He cautioned against reducing it to mere debate, numbers, or words, and reiterated Pope Paul VI's teaching that evangelisation transforms all of humanity from within. Catechesis, then, becomes a multi-faceted process: nurturing knowledge of faith, liturgical celebration, prayer, community life, and Christian living.

He stressed the need for pastoral conversion, moving catechesis beyond academic models toward transformative, community-based experiences that shape

missionary disciples in knowledge (Head), encounter (Heart), and action (Feet).

Michael Xavier, chairman of the Institute for New Evangelisation, expanded on this integration in his presentation, *Understanding Evangelisation in the Catholic Tradition*. He described catechists as "co-missionaries" in the Church's essential evangelising mission and outlined four levels of evangelisation: Pre-Evangelisation, First Proclamation, Deepening Conversion, and Mystagogical Formation. Using practical examples, he showed how catechesis is embedded throughout the evangelising journey, from demonstrating kindness to reverent preparation for sacraments.

Michael urged catechists to reflect: "Does your life reflect what you are advocating in your catechetical sessions?" He emphasised personal holiness — rooted in prayer, sacramental living, joy, and faith-in-action — as the true foundation of effective catechesis.

Carmelita Xavier and Arokiadass Anthonysamy co-facilitated *The Art of Evangelising* and *The Holy Spirit: The Guiding Voice*. They emphasised that all authentic evangelisation is empowered by the Holy Spirit, who inspires creativity, proclamation, and transformation. They encouraged catechists to evangelise through lifestyle, storytelling, multimedia, and compassionate engagement with communities, especially those marginalised or estranged from the Church.

Arokiadass led a *Consultation and Encounter with the Holy Spirit* session, providing space for personal discernment and communal spiritual conversation. Together with Michael Xavier, he co-facilitated an *Open Dialogue and Testimony* session, encouraging deep listening and mutual encouragement.

Carmelita also explored the unique dynamics of evangelisation within RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). She advocated for gradual faith formation anchored in Scripture, the liturgy, personal witness, and communal accompaniment — placing Jesus Christ at the centre of the journey.

Mary Huang addressed evangelising in the context of catechism, particularly with Gen Z and Alpha students. She emphasised understanding the needs and behaviours of digital natives and stressed the importance of building trust, using affirming language, and connecting doctrine to lived experience. She en-



Catechists during one of the group activities.

couraged catechists to embody the baptismal roles of Priest (sacrifice and holiness), Prophet (proclamation and witness), and King (service and leadership), and to evangelise through love and the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Alex Choong's session, *From Believer to Missionary Disciple*, offered a roadmap for spiritual and pastoral growth. Introducing the "Five Thresholds of Conversion" (Trust, Curiosity, Openness to Change, Seeking, and Intentional Discipleship), he emphasised that discipleship is a process that unfolds in relationship and within community. He challenged catechists to embrace their charisms, gifts from God that enable effective evangelisation, and to create goal-oriented action plans grounded in the Church's missionary mandate. These efforts, he said, align with wider Church initiatives such as the Jubilee Year of Hope.

The formation concluded with a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, who blessed and sent forth the catechists renewed in their mission. Cardinal Sebastian emphasised that the Church needs its best people to serve as catechists, especially to guide children and youth — the most vulnerable and spiritually formative demographic.

In essence, the *Evangelising Catechists Leadership Formation 2025* reaffirmed that evangelisation and catechesis are two facets of the Church's singular mission: to proclaim Christ and form disciples who live, share, and embody the Gospel in today's world. Through witness, formation, and community engagement, catechists are called to be agents of transformation in the Church and society.

Sharings

"We plan to observe the current situation and discern how best to revive the catechism classes, with the hope of making them more engaging and spiritually enriching for the children. In all our efforts, we continue to ask for the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, trusting that He will open the hearts of the children to receive the faith. Having two or three committed individuals working together in each session would create a more supportive and effective environment for both teaching and learning." **Moses, Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam**

"I was surprised when I saw the phrase Evangelising Catechist. It brought back memories of the School of Evangelisation I attended decades ago, where we went from house to house, knocking on doors to share the Gospel. That was my initial understanding of evangelisation. However, this seminar offered me a new and refreshing perspective. I was especially drawn to attend because of the session on goal-setting, which I believe is crucial for shaping the direction of the EC ministry throughout the Diocese of Penang. I want to be part of that journey. One session that truly stood out for me was on the identity of the Evangelising Catechist. It gave me a much clearer sense of purpose and direction for this ministry." — **Sr Mary Anne, FMM, Our Lady of Fatima of the Holy Rosary, Kelantan**

"I am 24 this year and the youngest participant. I have learned so many valuable things from the speakers and the experienced ECs from different parishes. I was truly amazed by the energy of the participants — many of whom are older than me, yet so passionate in learning and faith. It reminded me that being an evangelising catechist isn't just about changing others, but allowing ourselves to be transformed first. This formation reminded me to slow down, reconnect with God, and be a witness through example. I plan to share what I've learned with my parish catechist team — both in teaching methods and in deepening our spiritual lives. Consistently making time for God each day helps us grow. But real change takes time, teamwork, and dedication. It's a journey we must commit to together." **Richard Teh, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang**

"If we become good storytellers, our students will be able to understand both the simple and complex truths of the Catholic faith. Storytelling is a powerful way to make the faith relatable and memorable. To become truly effective Evangelising Catechists, we need humility — the willingness to acknowledge our gaps and continue learning." **Christopher Gopal, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang**



Michael Xavier stressing that catechists are co-missionaries.

Hindu ash on my Catholic forehead

It was 1963, and I was just six years old. Three of my siblings and I had the run of the compound outside our estate bungalow in Segamat, Johor.

That day, we were playing police and thief with our Hindu neighbours' children when an itinerant holy man - a *sadhu* clad in a saffron *dhoti* - meekly strolled into our game.

He carried a silver tray holding a figurine of a Hindu deity, some holy ash (*vibuthi* or *thinoor* in Tamil), and fresh *Nanthiavattu Puu* (Crape Jasmine flower).

The Hindu children ran to him excitedly, as if he were Santa Claus, while my siblings and I watched as he blessed them, pressing *vibuthi* onto their foreheads.

Then, he turned toward us, smiling invitingly. Our friends urged us to receive the ash, but we hesitated until someone cajoled, "Take the ash. Ghosts won't disturb you if you have it on your forehead."

That was all the encouragement we needed. The thought of being protected from ghosts convinced us, and much to the *sadhu's* delight, we received the blessing. But as soon as he left, we dashed into our courtyard for a drink of water - only to be met with an unexpected rebuke.

The rebuke

There stood my eldest sister, Anne, our de facto guardian at the time. Seeing the ash on our foreheads, she went ballistic. "Who told you to put that ash on your forehead? You've defiled yourselves!" she cried. "We are Christians - Catholics, no less!"

Her scolding was relentless. "Go wash your faces, kneel at the altar, and beg God for forgiveness!" she commanded, her voice carrying the stern authority of a Mother Superior.

And then came the final decree: "Confess this sin to the priest on Sunday, you pagans!"

Not knowing what sin we had committed, we hurriedly brushed off the *vibuthi*, dashed to the bathroom, and scrubbed our faces clean. Even our little Hindu friends, sensing the gravity of the situation, quickly wiped off the ash own their foreheads and bolted for dear life.

We then surrendered to our penance - kneeling at the altar, rosaries in hand.

I was confused and hurt. It was my first lesson in the differences between religions.

That day, I learned that Hindus and Christians - and especially Catholics - belonged to different Gods. We could play together, share meals, and be friends, but when it came to warding off ghosts, our Gods had different weapons: the Hindu God had *vibuthi*, and the Christian God had holy water.

What a rude awakening for a six-year-old to stumble upon such an early lesson in comparative religion.

When my father arrived home from work, he was surprised to see us kneeling at the altar as daily rosary time is only at 7.00pm. Before he could say anything, Anne presented her case, like



Joe's Jottings

JOSEPH MASILAMANY

a DPP — she justified our punishment.

Being a staunch and strict Catholic, my father's reaction was always unpredictable. We braced ourselves for what we thought would be the grandest caning of our lives. But to our astonishment, he simply gestured for us to stand up.

"They are too young to understand these things ... Perhaps they will when they grow older," he said to no one in particular.

Case dismissed!

What a joyful reprieve for us little beings caught in this unexpected clash of religions. Eventually, when we gathered as a family and recall the *vibuthi* incident, we laughed at our childhood panic—along with big sister Anne, who has since passed on.

A Shift in Perspective from Rome

Ironically, while this *vibuthi* incident was playing out in our little world, a much larger dialogue about faith and inclusivity was unfolding in Rome.

In 1962, Pope John XXIII convened an assembly of bishops -what would become the Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II. His reason? In his own words, "to let some fresh air into the Church."

By fresh air, the Pope meant that certain aspects of Church life needed a renewal. He saw the need for the Church to resonate with the changing modern world and embrace a spirit of openness and dialogue.

When the Council concluded in 1965,

it produced 16 decrees, declarations, constitutions, and doctrinal teachings. One of them was particularly relevant to us Catholics living in a multiracial, multi-religious society - *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church with Non-Christian Religions.

Paraphrased, it stated: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is 'true and holy' in non-Christian religions. Any discrimination based on race, colour, religion, or social condition is 'foreign' to the mind of Christ."

One of the most significant changes to emerge from *Nostra Aetate* was the quiet disappearance of the unpalatable term "pagan" from Catholic discourse. It was replaced with the more inclusive and charitable phrase: people of other faiths.

Looking back, I can't help but reflect on how much perspectives have changed. That day in 1963, *vibuthi* had been enough to get us into trouble. But today, with the wisdom of age and a broader understanding of faith issued by Mother Church, I understand better.

After all, as *Nostra Aetate* taught us — truth and holiness exist in many places, not just in our own. Indeed, we Christians are called to encounter Jesus in unfamiliar places and with unfamiliar cultures!

The writer is a passionate advocate of interfaith dialogue and a socialist at heart. A veteran journalist, Joseph Masilamany delights in telling a story or two. He can be reached at WhatsApp: 01125160892 or josephmasilamany6505@gmail.com.

Sowing the seeds of religious tolerance

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all — Roman 12:18

A few years ago, a close relative of a different faith asked if she and her family members could remain outside the church during a memorial service. Her reasoning was what if someone took photos of her family and posted online, they would get into trouble for stepping into a church.

I understood her fear, as over the years, there had been many instances where allegations of proselytising had been rife.

Even now, interfaith dialogues have also been treaded upon carefully to avoid misunderstandings which could lead to serious issues or end up being politicised by certain parties.

Religious tension is a complex and evolving issue worldwide, often influenced by political, social, and cultural factors.

Growing up in Malaysia, these were never an issue despite the fact that we live in a multi-racial and religious society and many Malaysian families have embraced new family members who share different beliefs.

As Christians we are often reminded that when sharing our faith, we should do so with respect and humility, not hostility. We are called to live peacefully, avoid judgment, and treat others with dignity. These principles can be applied to how we treat people of other religions, even when we don't

share their beliefs.

The Bible does not explicitly speak about "other religions" in the modern sense, but it offers strong principles about respecting others, loving neighbours, and avoiding judgment, which can be applied to interreligious respect. This is grounded in both the dignity of the human person and the search for truth.

We believe that every person is made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27), which forms the basis for respecting others, including those of different faiths.

Sadly, there is not much being done through our present education system to teach our young to respect other religions to nurture empathy, curiosity, and a sense of shared humanity.

Hence, it is vital that we teach our children from young by embracing practical, age-appropriate strategies — rooted in Catholic values and general principles of education to help them grow in religious respect.

It must be impressed upon our young ones that every person is made in the image of God and that God loves all people, regardless of religion or culture. God made everyone special. Even if people pray differently or go to different churches or temples, we should treat them with kindness and respect.

While some parents might shun the notion of stepping into a temple, mosque or other churches, children should be allowed to be educated on

world religions or stories that show diverse faiths and cultures. We should also expose our children to different cultural and religious festivals in a respectful way and take them to visit cultural fairs or museums. They should also learn how others celebrate holidays like Deepavali, Eid, or Lunar New Year.

We should emphasise on the common values among the various religions ie family, peace, charity, and prayer. Children learn most from what adults do, so speak respectfully about people of other faiths. We should also avoid stereotypes or jokes about religion.

If a child hears prejudice, explain gently why it's wrong.

If your child hears someone say something unkind about another religion, you can say:

"Some people don't understand others, but we believe in treating everyone with respect, like Jesus did."

We can help our children see that respecting others is part of their own faith, as Jesus taught us all - "Love your neighbour as yourself". Often, pray together for peace and unity among all people.

We should always include children when attending interfaith events hosted by our parish or community, set an example by volunteering with organisations that include people of various backgrounds and support causes that promote religious tolerance and peace.

To teach children to respect other

religions we should model respect in our own words and actions, teach shared values like love, kindness and justice, encourage curiosity instead of fear and always tie lessons back to Jesus' commandment of love and the Church's teachings.

By fostering religious tolerance in children, we build a future rooted in understanding, respect, and unity. Teaching them to appreciate diverse beliefs and traditions not only strengthens their moral compass but also enriches their worldview.

As they grow, their ability to engage in meaningful dialogue and embrace differences will shape a more compassionate and inclusive society. The seeds of tolerance we plant today will blossom into a world where harmony outweighs division and kindness prevails.

Regina William is an ex-journalist turned head of communications, now full-time grandmother to three children aged between six and two, crisscrossing the globe to play the role. She can be reached at regina.william1223@gmail.com



From the Other Side

REGINA WILLIAM



Fr Ron Rolheiser

God as holy, but also as playful, witty, and erotic

God is the object of all desire, no matter how earthy and unholy our desire might seem. Everything we desire is inside of God. Both Jesus and the Psalms tell us this.

God is the object of all desire and only in God will our deepest longings be satisfied. We express this in our prayers, perhaps without ever being conscious of what we are saying: My soul longs for you in the night. You, Lord, alone, can fill my heart. We say those words, but is it really God that we long for in the night and ache for in our desires? Do we really believe that God is the object of our desires?

When we look at what's beautiful, full of life, attractive, sexually alluring, and pleasurable on earth, do we really think and believe that this is contained in an infinitely richer way inside of God and inside the life into which God invites us? Do we really believe that the joys of heaven will surpass the pleasures of earth and that, already in this world, the joys of virtue are superior to the sensations of sin?

It is not easy to believe this because we struggle congenitally with turning our conscious attention toward God. Often, we find religious practice and prayer more of a disruption to life than an entry into it, more a duty than a joy, more an asceticism than a pleasure, and more as



Freepik/p.vctr

something that takes us away from real life than as something that helps us enter its depths.

Moreover, if we are honest, we must admit that we often harbour a secret envy of those who recklessly plumb sacred energy for their own pleasure. Many of us doggedly do our duty in committing ourselves to something higher; but, like the older brother of the Prodigal Son, too often serve God out of obligation and are bitter about the fact that many others do not. This side of eternity, virtue often envies sin, and (full disclosure) this is particularly true regarding sexuality.

Partly this is natural and a sign of health, given the brute fact of our physicality and the weight of the present moment. These naturally impose themselves on us in a way that can make the things of God and spirit seem abstract and unreal. That's simply the human condition and God, no doubt, understands. Only in certain graced, mystical moments are we affectively above this.

Thus, it can be helpful to more explicitly tease out something we progress in faith but struggle to actually believe, namely, that all that we find attractive, beautiful, irresistible, erotic, and pleasurable here on earth is found even more fully inside of its author, God.

If we believe that God is the author of all that is good, then God is better looking than any movie star, more intelligent than the brightest scientist or philosopher, wittier and funnier than the best comedian, more creative than any artist, writer, or innovator, more sophisticated than the most-learned person on earth, more exuberant and playful than any child, more dynamic than any rock star, and, not least, more erotic and sexually attractive than any person on earth.

We don't ordinarily think about God this way, but the truth of that is given in Scripture and is codified in Christian dogma where, in essence, we are taught that God is one, true, good, and beautiful and is the author and ultimate source of all that is one, good, true, and beautiful.

Which means that God is also witty, playful, and erotic. Everything that is alluring on earth is inside of God.

But knowing that does not take away the power of earthly things to allure, nor should it. Countless things can overwhelm us: a beautiful person, a sunset, a piece of music, a work of art, youthful exuberance, a child's playfulness, a baby's innocence, someone's wit, feelings of intimacy, feelings of nostalgia, a glass of wine on the right evening, a stirring in our sexuality, or, most deeply of all, an inchoate sense of the uniqueness and preciousness of human life itself.

We need to honour these things and thank God for the gift, even as we make ourselves aware that all of this is found more-richly inside of God and that we lose nothing when virtue, religion, or commitment ask us to sacrifice these things for something higher. Jesus, Himself, promises that whatever we give up for the sake of what is higher will be given back to us a hundredfold.

Knowing this, we can live our lives enjoying fully what is earthy and earthly. The beauties and pleasures of this life are a gift from God, meant to be enjoyed. Moreover, by being aware of their source, we can then also be free enough to accept the very real limits that life puts on our desires. Better still, we need not fear death since what we will lose will be eclipsed a hundredfold by what we gain.

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

Imagine for a moment a craftsman working with a delicate piece of wood, stone, or metal. He doesn't do it in a hurry; every chisel stroke, every precise cut, every polish is carefully considered and executed. It requires time, deep dedication, and, above all, a huge dose of patience. In the fast-paced and often unpredictable world of modern work, where immediacy and multitasking are the norm, patience emerges as a fundamental and increasingly essential virtue. It is that intrinsic capacity that allows us to face unexpected challenges, inevitable delays, errors (both our own and those of others), and long and complex processes with a calm, serene, and persevering mind.

Patience in the workplace should not be confused with passive resignation or inaction. On the contrary, it is an active confident, and purposeful expectation, understanding that some significant results require time to mature, for processes to be completed, or for solutions to emerge. Impatience, on the other hand, is often a primary source of stress, leading to frustration, hasty or poorly thought-out decisions, and the creation of a tense and unproductive work environment. An impatient work environment can become toxic, affecting



Patience: The Virtue of the Good Craftsman (and the Good Employee)

everyone's well-being.

A patient worker is one who, when faced with an unexpected obstacle or a complicated problem, does not despair or give up easily. They can remain calm under pressure, analyse the situation objectively rather than

**Workplace stress?
Discover how patience
makes you an expert at
managing challenges**

panicking, and find creative and well-thought-out solutions rather than reacting impulsively. Remain calm when a project is delayed, when a client is difficult, or when a colleague makes a mistake, understanding that these situations are

an inherent part of work life and require a measured and thoughtful response.

Furthermore, patience allows you to see the bigger picture, understanding that small setbacks or slow stages are a natural part of the process toward a larger goal and that perseverance, combined with calm, is key to achieving great things. This virtue helps you develop remarkable emotional resilience, improve your problem-solving skills, give yourself time to think, and maintain a positive and constructive attitude, even in the most difficult and stressful moments. It is the ability to "hold your own" without losing your temper or your perspective.

Cultivating patience also helps you better manage expectations, both your own and those of others, and understand that not everything can be achieved instantly, that quality often takes time, and that perfection is a journey, not a destination. So, the next time you feel impatience creeping in, take a deep breath, trust the process, cultivate that inner calm, and you'll see how patience becomes your best ally on the path to professional success, greater job satisfaction, and, oddly enough, a calmer and less stressful life. **Javier Ferrer García, Exaudi**

Little Catholics' corner

Dear children,
When Jesus went back to Heaven, He didn't want to leave us all alone, so He gave Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist. First, He gave Himself to the Apostles at the Last Supper and today, He gives Himself to us in Holy Communion.
Normally when we eat something,

it gets absorbed into our body. But receiving Jesus in Holy Communion does something different. It makes us more into Jesus' Body!
It brings our soul closer to God and closer to all the other people in the Church. That's what "Communion" means.
When we go to Communion in a

state of grace we can get so much more grace from God. Our venial (small) sins can be taken away and we can get more strength to do His will. In fact, the time that your prayers are the most powerful is right after you receive Holy Communion, when Jesus is right inside you.

He is your closest friend and only wants what is good for you. When you go to Communion, remember Who you just received and don't forget to thank Him for coming to you!

Love
Aunty Eliz

UNSCRAMBLE THE STORY: FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH

How well do you know the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fish?

Put the numbers from 1 to 6 in the boxes in the right order.



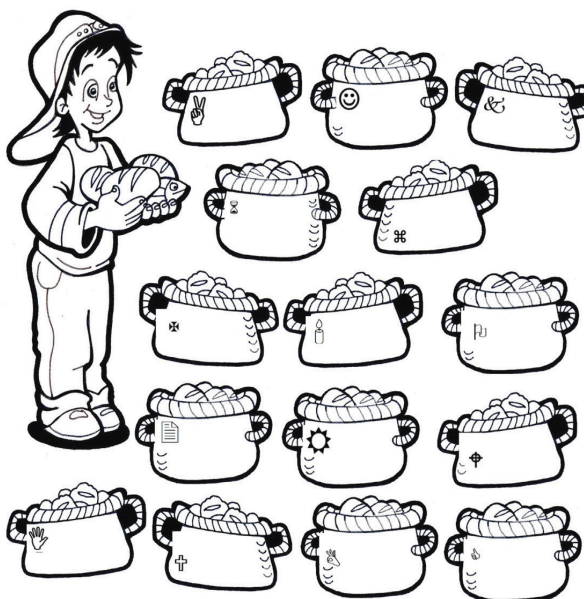
When Jesus fed the crowd of five thousand with five loaves and two fish, He was giving an example of how He could feed everyone with His Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

Jesus Feeds the Multitudes (Luke 9:11-17)

LET'S COLOUR



Can you decode the symbols below to read the excerpt from the Bible?



- ✋ gave
- ✚ thanks and
- ✋ Taking
- ☺ the five
- & loaves
- ⌚ and the
- 👁️ and
- 👉 looking up
- 📖 to
- ☀️ heaven
- ✚ He
- ⌘ two
- 🐟 fish
- ✋ broke
- 👉 them.

Luke 9: 16



MJCCD 1: Faith Unshaken

Aloysius Irenaeus Dukson

PLENTONG: *Faith Unshaken – Serving and Inspiring* was the theme of the first Malacca Johore Catholic Campus Day (MJCCD 1). Originally planned five years ago, the programme faced delays due to the global pandemic. However, in 2025, through the joint efforts of the Malacca Johore Diocesan Young People Network (MJDYPN) and Campus In Action (C.I.A), MJCCD 1 was finally brought to life.

The event took place over two days and one night at Majodi Centre, Plentong, gathering 77 Catholic students from various campuses across Melaka and Johor (UTM, UiTM, MMU, UTaM, UTHM, and various Polytechnics).

Strengthening Student Relationships with Jesus

The participants shared that the programme enlightened them through God’s calling and inspired them to become beacons of hope for others as they serve on their campuses within their respective communities. They expressed that faith must remain firm and unwavering, especially in times of service, always grounded in trust in God’s plan.

Faith – The Foundation of our Hope

Fr Paul Sia reflected on Hebrews 11:1: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Drawing on the examples of Noah and Abraham, it highlighted

their deep trust in God — a trust that students today should emulate, particularly as they face challenges in university life. With sincere effort and prayer, these challenges can lead to growth and fruitful outcomes.

Hope and an Unshaken Faith

MJCCD 1 stands as a meaningful milestone for both the C.I.A and Christian Fellowship/Catholic Student Society communities, encouraging them to remain steadfast in their campus ministry work. Through humility and joy, students are reminded to continue serving faithfully wherever they are.

Ultimately, with *Faith Unshaken* as the central theme, may we continue to grow in faith, remain firm in our service, be guided by the Holy Spirit, and nurture communities rooted in God’s enduring love.



Young missionaries inspire youth to fully trust God



The youth mingle with the missionaries, Lorette, Justin and Ania.



CHERAS: The Youth Meet & Mingle session brought together around 30 youth for an afternoon of encounter with young missionaries who have answered God’s extraordinary call. Held at the Parish House of the Church of St Francis of Assisi, the session aimed to create a space where the Pentecost Rally youth participants could connect, be inspired by real-life missionary testimonies, and reflect on how God might be calling them to live out their faith more deeply.

The session began with an ice-breaking activity where everyone got to know each other. It was a great way to set the tone before we moved on to the sharing session.

We were blessed to hear from three missionaries — Lorette Sylvia Jude (from Malaysia), Justin (from Taiwan), and Ania (from Poland) — who are currently serving with the KASIH House of Missionaries. They each shared powerful testimonies about how God reached out to them in unexpected ways.

Lorette, Justin, and Ania’s stories reminded me of the importance of returning to the roots of our faith. Listening to how they responded to God’s call made me reflect on how often we take our relationship with Him for granted. What amazed me most was that they had once lived the lives many of us dream of — pursuing careers like architecture and music,

with good salaries and stable jobs. Yet, they chose to let go of worldly success to serve Christ and spread His word through talks, service, and trust.

One thing that deeply moved me was their unwavering commitment to God. While many of us are busy with studies or work and weighed down by personal struggles, these missionaries showed complete trust in God — to provide, protect, and lead. It gave me a clearer picture of what it means to be a true disciple.

Justin, for example, had a strong musical background and used to write and produce music. After being invited to a spiritual seminar by a friend, his life changed dramatically. He received the gift of tongues and could suddenly speak English, through which he felt God’s clear call to become a missionary.

This session left me with a few powerful takeaways. First, we are reminded to place our full trust in God’s plans, even when things feel uncertain. Second, we need to nurture our relationship with Him — starting with small steps like volunteering at church events and growing from there. And finally, we are called to guide and encourage the younger generation by sharing our experiences and helping them see how God works in our lives.

Faustina Pier

Crime prevention and sentencing: A wake-up call for youth!

KEDAH: A vital awareness talk titled *Crime Prevention and the Sentences If Convicted* was held recently at the Pastoral Centre of Christ the King Church, Sungai Petani. The event aimed to educate youths on the harsh realities and legal consequences of engaging in criminal activities.

Organised by the Prison Ministry of Christ the King (CTK) Church, the session

was attended by students from Form 1 to Form 5, along with their catechism teachers and parents.

A distinguished panel of officers from IPD Kuala Muda led the talk, covering a wide range of critical topics, including:

- Drug abuse and its severe penalties;
- School fights and bullying, and the legal implications involved;



Members of the Prison Ministry and the IPD Kuala Muda officers.

- Commercial crimes such as online scams;
- Theft of motorcycles and cars, and house break-ins;
- Use of the Volunteer Smartphone Patrol (VSP) app for crime reporting and prevention.

The officers emphasised that many crimes occur due to negligence and urged both students and their parents/guardians to stay vigilant, responsible, and respectful

of the law.

This talk not only served as an eye-opener but also as a timely call to action—encouraging young people to embrace a safe, law-abiding, and faith-guided way of life.

The Parish Prison Ministry (PDPM) extends its gratitude to Fr Victor Louis, parish priest, for his blessings and support, even while he was away at the Vatican during the event. **Lourdes Stanislaus Benjamin**



SERVE THE CHURCH WITH YOUR 3GS

JOHOR BAHRU: Twenty-six young Catholics received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 7, in a solemn celebration led by Bishop Bernard Paul and concelebrated by Fr Simon Yong SJ, parish priest, and Friar Sixtus Pitah Amit OFM, assistant parish priest.

In his homily, Bishop Bernard reflected deeply on the enduring power of the Holy Spirit, drawing from Scripture and the life of the early Church to highlight its relevance today. He referenced three key biblical moments: Jesus' promise that the Father would grant the Holy Spirit to those who ask, the disciples' call to wait and pray for the promised Spirit in Jerusalem, and Paul's encounter with the Corinthian believers who were only baptised with



Godparents laying their hands on the confirmands.

John's baptism. Upon receiving baptism in Jesus' name and the laying on of hands, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, and prophesied.

The bishop illustrated the various symbols of the Spirit, wind as a force of life and power, fire as purification and energy, and the dove for its gentleness and purity.

"Pentecost is not merely a story from the past," Bishop Bernard said. "The infilling of the Holy Spirit is for today. The same Spirit gives life, light, and lift to the Church. It is real — they heard, saw, felt, and spoke."

He explained how the Holy Spirit transforms believers inside and out, gathering people across nations, inspiring procla-

mation of God's wonders, and awakening love, devotion, and a thirst for spiritual life. "The Spirit teaches, reminds, and defends us," he affirmed.

Bishop Bernard also shared his own Holy Spirit experience at age 25: "He changed me. Opened my eyes to see the marvels of God and the 3Gs — Grace, Gratitude, Giving." He described this year's Ascension as a personal renewal, mirroring the disciples' waiting for the Spirit.

"It was Pentecost that transformed the Church in hiding into the Church in the world," he said. "Let the Holy Spirit touch lives with the 3Gs."

At the end of Mass, Fr Simon Yong congratulated the confirmands and reminded them that Confirmation is not a farewell ticket from Church life, but a call to greater involvement — serving both the Church and the world through the Spirit they have received.



Confirmands with Bishop Bernard Paul.

Success with purpose: SMIS students earn global recognition

KUALA LUMPUR: Four students from Stella Maris International School (SMIS) were recognised in the Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards 2024. This is an honour that acknowledges the top IGCSE performers around the world. These awards represent more than academic success; they speak to the determination, resilience, and genuine love of learning that shape the school's community.

Among this year's recognised students, Joel Mok Wen Xuan and Hayley Gan Shin Hui received Top in the World awards. Joel earned a perfect A* in Foreign Language (Mandarin Chinese) during the June 2024 exams—an accomplishment that required careful study and thoughtful insight beyond his native fluency. Hayley matched this with a flawless A* in Mathematics in November 2024, and was also honoured at SMIS with the



The students with their parents and school personnel.

Archbishop Dominic Vendargon Award, which recognises a student who shows excellence in academics, leadership, co-curricular activities, and character. Their achievements reflect not only talent but also humility, discipline, and a heartfelt

commitment to learning and growth.

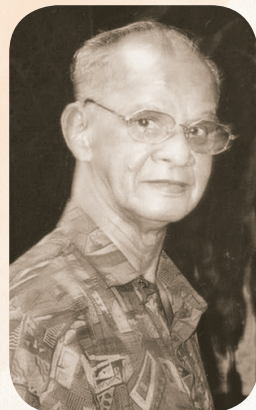
From the November 2024 cohort, Luke Joel Sta Maria and Ethan John Goh were also named Top in Malaysia for their outstanding results. Luke's A* in Economics revealed sharp thinking and

a genuine interest in understanding the world, complemented by his leadership and sporting contributions recognised through the Chairman Award at SMIS. Ethan's A* in Environmental Management showed both strong academic ability and a sincere concern for the environment. Their accomplishments highlight a balanced pursuit of knowledge, responsibility, and service — qualities deeply valued at SMIS.

These honours are not just individual milestones but reflections of a collective journey marked by perseverance and support within a community that values character as much as achievement. As these students continue their journeys, their accomplishments remind us all that true greatness is often humble — it may not call attention to itself, but it leaves a lasting and meaningful impression.

MEMORIAM

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Stephen James Murugasu



18TH ANNIVERSARY
26th June 2007

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." - 2 Tim. 4:7

Forever Missed, Forever Loved.

*Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord.
Let your perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul rest in peace.*

In Loving Memory of Andrew Muchandian s/o Ellan

23rd July 1931 - 27th June 2024



A year has passed since you went away,
But in our hearts, you forever stay.
A gentle soul, now in heaven's embrace,
A life well-lived, a boundless grace.
A husband's love, steadfast and true,
Rosline Panjawarnam's anchor, her morning dew.
Fatherly arms that held your 3 children tight and their spouses
guided by your light.
Grandchildren's and Great-grandson's laughter echoed through
the years, Each heart was touched by the love in you.
"For to us, you were a lamp set high,
A beacon that shone, a never-fading sky.
The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."
(Psalm 112:6)
Rest now, beloved, in God's sweet care,
Until we meet in the glory we'll share.

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1st Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Luke Atma Singh Lahre
Born: 5 May 1936
Departed: 21 June 2024

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want
(Psalm 23:1)

Sadly missed and forever remembered by Glen, Rod, Eric (late) and Iza.

8th Year Memorial

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7)



We know you can hear us way up in heaven because we talk through our hearts.

Dear Papa in heaven we miss you everyday and we know you miss us too.

No matter how old we get or how long you're gone, We hear you, Papa, up in heaven through the love in our heart.

Augustine Peter

Was called home to be with the Lord on **19 June 2017**

Absolve, we beseech thee O Lord, the soul of thy faithful servant, Augustine Peter, from every bond of sin that in the glory of thy resurrection, he may rise to a new and better life with thy Saints. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Dearly missed and fondly cherished by beloved

Wife: Rosa Peter

Sons:

Dato' Frances Peter William Peter

Daughters:

Matilda Peter Thessa Peter
Mary Rose Peter Flori Peter

Sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, great grandchildren, relatives & friends.

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MINOR BASILICA OF ST. ANNE

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**FEAST OF
ST. ANNE 2025**



Theme: Celebrating, Listening and Walking as Pilgrims of Hope

NOVENA & MASSES SCHEDULE

DATE	TIME			SUB-THEME
DAY 1 18 JULY 2025 FRIDAY	10:00 A.M. (E)*	3:00 P.M. (BM) 5:00 P.M. (T)	7:00 P.M. (E) 9:00 P.M. (M)	CALLED TOWARDS HARMONY
DAY 2 19 JULY 2025 SATURDAY	10:00 A.M. (E)*	3:00 P.M. (BM) 5:00 P.M. (T)	7:00 P.M. (E) 9:00 P.M. (M)	CALLED TO BE MERCIFUL
DAY 3 20 JULY 2025 SUNDAY	8:00 A.M. (T) 10:00 A.M. (E)	12:00 P.M. (M) 3:00 P.M. (BM) 5:00 P.M. (T)*	7:00 P.M. (E)* 9:00 P.M. (M)*	YOUTHS ARE CALLED TO BE HERALDS OF HOPE
DAY 4 21 JULY 2025 MONDAY	10:00 A.M. (E)*	3:00 P.M. (BM) 5:00 P.M. (T)	7:00 P.M. (E) 9:00 P.M. (M)	CALLED TO ACCOMPANY FAMILIES FACING CHALLENGES
DAY 5 22 JULY 2025 TUESDAY	10:00 A.M. (E)*	3:00 P.M. (BM) 5:00 P.M. (T)	7:00 P.M. (E) 9:00 P.M. (M)	CALLED TO SEE THE FACE OF JESUS IN EACH OTHER
DAY 6 23 JULY 2025 WEDNESDAY	10:00 A.M. (E)*	3:00 P.M. (BM) 5:00 P.M. (T)	7:00 P.M. (E) 9:00 P.M. (M)	CALLED TO BUILD GOD-CENTERED FAMILIES
DAY 7 24 JULY 2025 THURSDAY	10:00 A.M. (E)*	3:00 P.M. (BM) 5:00 P.M. (T)	7:00 P.M. (E) 9:00 P.M. (M)	CALLED TO STOP WASTING EARTH'S RESOURCES
DAY 8 25 JULY 2025 FRIDAY	10:00 A.M. (E)*	12:00 P.M. (K) 3:00 P.M. (BM) 5:00 P.M. (T)	7:00 P.M. (E) 9:00 P.M. (M)	CALLED TO VISIBLE COLLABORATION
DAY 9 26 JULY 2025 SATURDAY	7:00 A.M. (E)* 9:00 A.M. (M) 11:00 A.M. (T)	1:00 P.M. (BM)	7:00 P.M. (MULTI-LINGUAL, OPEN AIR) 8:30 P.M. PROCESSION	CELEBRATING, LISTENING AND WALKING AS PILGRIMS OF HOPE (FEAST OF STS. JOACHIM AND ANNE)
DAY 10 27 JULY 2025 SUNDAY	7:00 A.M. (T)* 9:00 A.M. (E) 11:00 A.M. (M)	1:00 P.M. (BM) 3:00 P.M. (T) 5:00 P.M. (E)*		CALLED FOR MUTUAL APPRECIATION - HONOURING AND VALUING THE GIFT OF THE ELDERLY (WORLD DAY OF GRANDPARENTS & THE ELDERLY)



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