

HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

The Publisher, Editor and Staff of HERALD wish our Muslim friends Selamat Hari Raya.

There will be no issue on March 29, 2026. Our next issue will be on April 5, 2026.

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Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

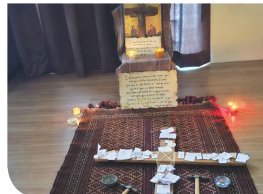
Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Romans 8:8-9



Caritas formation calls Church to holistic ministry

■ P5



Strengthening family unity in Christ

■ P6



Meet Me at the Well A Lenten youth camp experience

■ P16

Neglect YOUTH

ROME: Failing to invest in young people risks endangering the future itself, Cardinal Pietro Parolin has warned, urging institutions and the Church to give the younger generation a stronger voice in shaping the world ahead.

The Vatican Secretary of State noted that decisions taken today will largely determine the future of young people, yet they are often absent from the spaces where those decisions are made.

“Too often it is only older generations who sit at the negotiating tables,” Cardinal Parolin said. “Young people must be given greater space in institutions, because solutions can also come from them.”

Speaking at the fourth edition of the Cathedra of Hospitality forum held at Fraternal Domus in Sacrofano near Rome recently, the Cardinal highlighted the growing pressures facing young people today.

At the same time, he acknowledged that many young people struggle with a deep sense of inadequacy in the face of mounting expectations.

Many experience deep frustration when asked to shoulder responsibilities for which they feel unprepared, while others retreat into the virtual world to escape rising expectations.

“They don’t feel up to it,” he said, describing the sense of inadequacy many young people carry today.

The answer, Cardinal Parolin suggested, lies not only in creating opportunities but



lose the FUTURE

also in offering genuine love, guidance and accompaniment.

“Young people need to know they are loved freely,” he said. “They must encounter a God who does not demand perfection, but who loves and values us beyond what we achieve.”

He also pointed to broader global trends shaping the future of societies, including migration and declining birth rates. Many young people today hesitate to start families because they fear instability and hardship in

the years ahead.

“When a child is perceived as a burden or a limitation to personal freedom, the path to new life is closed,” he warned.

At the same time, Cardinal Parolin stressed the importance of helping young people develop a strong Christian identity. The transmission of values once shared by family, school and parish has weakened, he observed.

“Today there is no longer convergence of action among these entities,” he said, noting

that digital influences increasingly shape young people’s outlook. “All it takes is for young people to pick up a phone to experience a reality we do not know.”

For the Church, he said, the path forward requires a twofold approach: listening attentively to young people and accompanying them through their struggles.

“As Catholics, we must open ourselves to listening to them,” Cardinal Parolin said. “Only then can we truly open ourselves to them and their peers.” **Vatican News**

Perjalanan Salib brings call for peace

SHAH ALAM: The *Perjalanan Salib* in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur made its way to the Church of the Divine Mercy earlier this month, where it served as a powerful ‘Cross for Peace’.

The *Perjalanan Salib* is a spiritual journey of the Malaysian Church, bringing the faithful together under the sign of the Cross as they prepare for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC) 2026. As the cross moves from parish to parish, communities gather for prayer, reflection and dialogue ahead of the national gathering this September.

As part of its six-day programme, CDM parish hosted a Salib for Peace dialogue on March 7 featuring speakers from two nations currently experiencing the devastating impact of war — Ukraine and Palestine. The session also brought together representatives

from several interfaith communities, including the Sikh, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and Bahá’í traditions.

Ulyana Shchurko, a lecturer from Ukraine, joined the dialogue virtually, offering a first-hand account of the resilience of the Ukrainian people amid ongoing conflict. She spoke about the daily realities of living in a war zone and the psychological toll of prolonged aggression.

The second speaker, Nasser Abdul Karim, a former Ambassador Media Representative of Palestine, shared perspectives on the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinian people. He called for greater solidarity and deeper understanding of their struggle for justice and peace.

The dialogue concluded with a call to action, reminding participants that the pursuit



of peace is not limited to global policies but begins with individuals — through education, advocacy and fostering empathy within their own communities.

After the session, CDM’s parish priest, Fr George Harrison, invited participants to write personal prayers for peace. These were placed in a dedicated petition box during a guided tour of the venue.

The event concluded with fellowship over

lunch and a commemorative group photo, leaving participants with a renewed commitment to be instruments of peace in a troubled world.

The peace dialogue at the Church of the Divine Mercy, demonstrated how parishes can use the *Perjalanan Salib* as a platform to reflect on global suffering and the Church’s call to be a sign of peace. **Mathilda Ignathia**

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Women at the heart of the Church

The Vatican recently released a synodal report on women's participation in the life of the Church, calling for broader opportunities for women in leadership, governance, evangelisation and administration. Published on March 10, the 75-page document reflects on the gifts and charisms women bring to the Church's mission. One cannot help but wish it had appeared slightly earlier — it would have served as a fitting tribute to International Women's Day, celebrated just two days before on March 8.

Prepared by one of the study groups of the Synod on Synodality, the report invites the global Church to recognise more fully the contributions of women and to create new spaces where their leadership and gifts can flourish.

While the document addresses the universal Church, its message is also reflected in the lived experience of local Churches around the world, including here in Malaysia.

At its heart, the synodal report affirms a simple truth: the mission of the Church begins with Baptism. Every baptised person shares in the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel and building up the Body of Christ. While ordained ministry remains central to the sacramental life of the Church, the Church's mission is enriched by the charisms of the entire People of God.

Among these gifts, the contributions of women have always been significant.

Scripture offers powerful examples. The Virgin Mary stands as the supreme model of discipleship. Though not part of the Church's hierarchical structure, her faith and openness

to God's will made possible the Incarnation. Her life reminds us that influence in the Church is measured not only by position but by faithfulness to God's call.

The Gospel tells us that Mary Magdalene was entrusted by the Risen Christ to announce the Resurrection to the apostles, making her the first herald of Easter.

These examples remind us that the role of women in the Church is not a modern development but one woven into the story of salvation.

Across the centuries, women have shaped the life and mission of the Church. Saints such as Catherine of Siena, Joan of Arc and Elizabeth Ann Seton influenced the Church through courage and deep faith, while figures like Maria Montessori and Dorothy Day demonstrated how Christian conviction could inspire education, social reform and service to the poor.

This reality is also visible in the life of the Church in Malaysia today.

In parishes across the country, women play an essential role in passing on the faith, strengthening communities and sustaining the daily life of the Church. Many serve as catechists, pastoral workers, educators and organisers of charitable outreach, while others contribute through parish administration and social ministries.

Women today also hold important leadership responsibilities within parish structures. In many parishes, they serve as chairpersons of Parish Pastoral Councils (PPC) and Parish Coordinating Councils (PCC), helping guide

pastoral planning, coordinate ministries and work closely with parish priests in shaping parish life.

Many women also serve in diocesan commissions, pastoral offices and national Church organisations, contributing their expertise to the wider mission of the Church.

In many respects, the Malaysian Church already reflects the collaborative spirit encouraged by the synodal report — a Church where ordained ministers and lay faithful work together in service of the Gospel. This spirit reflects the heart of synodality: a Church that walks together, listens to one another and discerns the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The report also notes that attitudes shaped by clericalism can sometimes limit the participation or voices of the laity, including women. Wherever such attitudes persist, they risk narrowing the richness of the Church's shared mission. The Church flourishes when the gifts of all its members are recognised and welcomed.

Affirming the role of women is therefore not about following social trends or responding to external pressures. It is about recognising the work of the Holy Spirit, who distributes charisms generously among the faithful for the good of the entire community.

Where the gifts of women are welcomed and nurtured, the Church does not lose anything of its identity; it becomes more fully itself — stronger in faith and more credible in its witness to the Gospel.

Patricia Pereira

From tomb to life

The readings today carry a powerful and deeply human theme: the movement from death to life. They speak not only of physical death but also of the many forms of lifelessness that quietly creep into our lives — despair, fatigue, disappointment, and the quiet resignation that sometimes settles in the human heart.

In the first reading from Ezekiel (37:12–14), the prophet speaks to a people who feel their future has ended. Israel is in exile, their land lost and their hopes shattered. They see themselves as a nation buried. Yet God speaks a startling promise: “I will open your graves and have you rise from them... I will put My spirit within you, and you shall live.”

This vision is not simply about the end of life but the restoration of hope. God tells His people that even when circumstances appear irreversibly broken, He is still capable of breathing life where none seems possible.

We experience similar moments. There are seasons when dreams collapse, relationships fracture, or plans fall apart. At such times, we may feel spiritually buried beneath disappointment or fatigue. Ezekiel reminds us that God is not intimidated by our graves. What appears final to us is not final to Him.

St Paul deepens this insight in the Letter to the Romans (8:8–11). He speaks of two ways of living: life according to the flesh and life according to the Spirit. The flesh represents a life limited by fear and human weakness. The Spirit, however, opens us to a different reality — the life of God dwelling within us.

Paul makes a remarkable claim: “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you... He will give life to your mortal bodies also.” The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is already at work within believers. Resurrection, therefore, is not only a future promise but a present power

transforming our lives.

The Gospel from John (11:1–45) brings these themes to their most dramatic expression in the story of the raising of Lazarus.

When Jesus arrives in Bethany, Lazarus has been dead for four days. The grief of Martha and Mary is palpable. Martha greets Jesus with words that echo the pain many feel in moments of loss: “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” Hidden within this statement is both faith and disappointment. We often find ourselves in Martha's position — believing in God yet struggling when His timing does not align with our expectations.

Jesus responds with one of the most powerful declarations in the Gospel: “I am the resurrection and the life.” He does not merely promise resurrection; He reveals Himself as its source.

Then comes the deeply moving verse: “Jesus wept.” The Son of God, who knows He will raise Lazarus, still enters fully into human sorrow. He does not stand distant from suffering but shares in it.

Standing before the tomb, Jesus calls out: “Lazarus, come out!” And Lazarus emerges, still wrapped in burial cloths.

This moment is not merely a miracle. It points toward Christ's own resurrection and carries a personal message for every believer.

In the Church's Lenten journey, this Gospel holds special significance because it accompanies the Third Scrutiny of those preparing for Baptism at Easter. The Scrutinies are moments of prayer and spiritual examination for the elect, asking God to free them from whatever binds them and to strengthen them with His grace. Just as Lazarus is called out of the tomb, the catechumens are invited to leave behind the darkness of sin and step into the new life that Christ offers.

Yet the message is not only for them. In

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr George Packiasamy

5th Sunday of Lent (A)

Readings: Ezekiel 37: 12–14;

Romans 8:8–11;

Gospel: John 11:1–45

many ways, the Scrutinies are also for the entire community. Lent invites all of us to look honestly at our lives and recognise the stones that still seal parts of our hearts.

Each of us has places in life that resemble Lazarus' tomb — areas where hope seems sealed away behind heavy stones. Perhaps it is a broken relationship, a persistent fear, a habit that feels impossible to overcome, or a dream quietly buried long ago.

But the Gospel reminds us that Christ still stands before our tombs and calls us by name: “Come out.”

His call is not merely about escaping death but about stepping into fuller life. When Lazarus emerges, Jesus tells those around him, “Unbind him, and let him go.” Resurrection begins with Christ's call, but the community helps remove the wrappings that still hold a person back.

As we draw closer to Holy Week, the raising of Lazarus becomes a powerful sign of what lies ahead. Soon Jesus Himself will enter a tomb — and that tomb, too, will not remain closed.

The God who promises to open graves, the Spirit who dwells within us, and the Christ who calls Lazarus forth all proclaim the same truth: death does not have the final word.

Where the world sees endings, God brings new life. And even now, in the quiet places of our hearts, we may hear that same voice calling: “Come out.”

Archbishop urges Church to think beyond MPC

Patricia Pereira

KUALA LUMPUR: “We cannot lose our youth today. If we lose our youth today, we risk losing our Church tomorrow — and with it, our faith.”

This concern was voiced by Archbishop Julian Leow during the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Pastoral Team (KLAPT) meeting held on March 7.

Referring to reports presented by the various commissions and districts — many of which outlined initiatives and planned activities for young people — the archbishop expressed appreciation for these efforts. At the same time, he emphasised the need to ensure that young people remain at the heart of the Church’s life and mission.

The meeting, the first for 2026, was held at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre. Members of the KLAPT include clergy and lay coordinators from the 10 commissions, district senators and lay representatives from the eight districts of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, as well as the director of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute.

KLAPT, which meets three times a year, serves as a pastoral body tasked with

implementing the vision and mission of the archdiocese. Working in a role similar to a Parish Coordinating Council at the diocesan level, the team helps carry out pastoral initiatives and directions discerned by the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (KLAPC). Its functions include evaluating past plans of action, refining future priorities, and coordinating activities and programmes in a spirit of communication, cooperation and collaboration.

During the meeting, Archbishop Julian also gave a brief overview of the upcoming Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC), scheduled to be held in September. He noted that it will be the first time all nine dioceses in Peninsular and East Malaysia come together for such a gathering.

“We will come together to celebrate, listen and walk together,” he said, adding that discussions during the convention will centre on four key areas: Family, Ecology, Church and Society.

However, the archbishop urged members to look beyond the convention itself and reflect on the challenges facing the Church today and in the years ahead. Among the issues raised were the impact of artificial intelligence, the need to pass on the faith in an increasingly digital world, and the importance of strengthening interreligious dialogue.

“AI can process information and perform many mechanical tasks, but it cannot hand



down faith,” he said, encouraging members to think about how the Church can continue forming disciples in a rapidly changing world. He also reminded the team not to focus solely on the local Church but to consider the broader context of the Church in Malaysia, Asia and the global community.

Another point raised during the meeting was the growing trend of young adults delaying marriage. Fr David Arulanatham, coordinator for the Commission for Doctrine and Faith and parish priest of the Church of St Anne, Port Klang, noted that many Catholics in their 30s appeared hesitant about marriage, often citing demanding careers and limited opportunities to meet potential partners.

Among the suggestions discussed were initiatives that could help Catholic singles connect, including the possibility of an archdiocesan initiative similar to the Catholic Singles Dating Hub in the Penang Diocese, as well as the idea of a Catholic dating app.

Archbishop Julian acknowledged that the trend could have long-term implications for

the life of the Church. With fewer Catholic families being formed, it could eventually affect vocations to the priesthood. He pointed out that many of the clergy in the archdiocese are already in their 50s and 60s, highlighting the need to nurture both family life and future vocations.

He encouraged the various commissions to reflect on how they could respond to these emerging pastoral concerns and urged members to come prepared at future meetings not merely to present reports, but to share ideas and possible solutions.

Among the upcoming initiatives planned at the district level this year are a Marian rally, a multilingual Life in the Spirit Seminar, safeguarding sessions in four languages, Corpus Christi celebration, youth rallies and ecumenical activities.



The two-and-a-half-hour meeting concluded on a positive note, with members encouraged to continue working together in a spirit of shared responsibility as the archdiocese responds to the evolving pastoral needs of the faithful.

PENANG DIOCESE
Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis


- March & April**
- 22 Council of Priests at 10.00am
 - 24 Chrism Mass – Church of Divine Mercy, Sg Ara, Penang at 8.00pm
 - 24-25 Clergy Monthly Recollection
 - 26/3-5/4 Masses for Holy Week and Easter – Church of Our Lady of Fatima of the Holy Rosary, Kota Bahru, Kelantan

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE
Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

- March & April**
- 24 Chrism Mass – Church of St Peter, Melaka at 7.00pm
 - 24-25 Clergy Month Recollection – Good Shepherd Seminary, Melaka
 - 26 Meeting – MJD Young People’s Network (MJDYPN), GSS Melaka
 - 27 Meeting – Melaka Vicariate Pastoral Council, Good Shepherd Seminary Melaka
 - 28 Meeting – South Johor Vicariate Pastoral Council, MAJODI Centre
 - 2/4 Maundy Thursday – Church of St Joseph, Plentong
 - 3/4 Good Friday Service (English) – Church of St Joseph, Plentong
 - 4/4 Easter Vigil (BM) – Church of St Joseph, Plentong, MAJODI Hall, MAJODI Centre

Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #264



Welcome dear friends,

The Pilgrim Cross, the Malaysia Pastoral Convention Cross arrived at the Church of St Joseph, Plentong. It will be venerated in the parish from March 7-28.

The Penitential services, the Palm Sunday Masses and the Holy Week programmes are on your noticeboards and websites.

The Chrism Mass will take place on March 24 at 7.00pm at the Church of St Peter, Melaka.

The diocesan Charis team together with evangelist Paul Thomas and team, will be conducting *Reigniting the Charisms* weekends at MAJODI Centre, Church of the Immaculate Conception Johor Bahru, Church of St Louis, Kluang and Church of St Francis Xavier, Melaka.

Local Takes! Can we allow the good in us to break forth?
The *Ramadan* bazaars are a feast for the senses. Yet there are complaints of profiteering, sub-standard spreads and cases of maggots in the food.
Bahasa Tanjong is unique to Penang, and it’s a heritage language of mixed cultures. Where there’s no fear of one another, no attempts at social engineering and no national policy on one culture, spontaneous harmonising takes place. More charged for corruption and money laundering. More aspiring to be the next PM at the next Elections. I wonder if it is to further themselves or further the nation?
More worrying signs: blatant taking the law into one’s hands, vigilantism, road rage and religious provocations - and yet no

policing, no prompt action. The National Unity minister has urged the police to take decisive action against those involved in three recent incidents seen as a threat to Malaysia’s racial and religious harmony.

The Church Reads Signs: Spiritual or Unspiritual?
Chesterton said: “Take away the supernatural, and what remains is the unnatural” (cf. Heretics, VI). Man is not made to live closed in on himself, but in a living relationship with God. When that relationship is obscured or weakened, life begins to fall into disorder from within. The unnatural is not only the scandalous; it is enough to live without God in daily life, leaving Him out of the criteria and decisions with which we face existence.
To the priests: Pope Leo said no to AI homilies, no to accumulating followers or ‘likes’, no to search for validation on social media.
The Chosen enters the Guinness World Record for becoming the series translated into the most languages (86 languages)

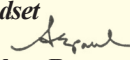
A Thought for The Week: Pleasing God
A man had a great desire to please God and he prayed day and night. “I want you to go and push that large stone”, he heard. Inspired, the man ran to find the boulder and started pushing it. He pushed and pushed, but nothing happened. He stayed at it all day long. The following day he continued to push. Nothing happened. Did the same, but the stone did not move at all. For three months he kept at the task.
Finally, he got tired and stopped pushing.

That night he had another dream, and he heard the voice saying: “Why did you stop pushing the stone?” “Nothing happened and the boulder is still there,” answered the man.
“Nothing happened? Look at you! You have become so much more focused and stronger. You built up your muscles. You are a changed man now! Pushing has transformed you! Besides, I did not tell you to move the stone. I just told you to push it. When the time comes, I’ll move it Myself!”
The lesson from the push: Hardships make you stronger. It changes you. It is not for you to move it. God intervenes. P.U.S.H. means Push Until Something Happens.

QnQ: Q asks: Like can know like?
We know that for communion between individuals to be possible there has to be likeness; only when we have something substantial in common with another person can we truly relate to them, can we be one in mind and soul.
Having something like the Divine within us allows us to know the Divine, as the prevalent idea in early thought was that only ‘like can know like’.

The Spirit @ work: Spiritual maturity isn’t knowing Scripture. It’s obeying it under pressure. *Joanna Beck*

Something to tickle you: The strongest are gentle. The smartest are quiet. The wealthiest are simple. The happiest are private. Real power doesn’t need to prove itself. *ceomindset*


Bishop Bernard Paul



Women reflect on the alabaster jar

Jennifer Fernandez

KUALA LUMPUR: The Women Ministry of the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) organised a Day of Prayer for Lent recently at the Cahayasuara auditorium, drawing 62 participants for a day of reflection, prayer, and spiritual renewal.

The retreat, titled *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar: Break Open, Pour, Be Loved*, was led by Sr Angelin Gnanapiragasam, FMDM, *pic*, who guided participants through a deeply reflective exploration of the Gospel story found in Luke 7:36–50, and echoed in all four Gospels. The day began at 9.00am and continued

until 3.00pm.

In the Gospel narrative, the unnamed woman who approaches Jesus with an alabaster jar of expensive perfume becomes a powerful symbol of repentance, courage, and extravagant love. Though unnamed, Jesus declares that her act of devotion will be remembered wherever the Gospel is proclaimed. Sr Angelin reflected on how this woman's bold act of anointing Jesus was not merely about the breaking of a jar, but about the breaking open of the human heart.

"The broken vessel was not just the alabaster jar," Sr Angelin explained during the session. "It was

the woman herself — her pride, her pain, her shame, and her past."

Participants were invited to consider their own "alabaster jar" — the hidden burdens, fears, regrets, and attachments that prevent them from fully surrendering to Christ.

The retreat centred around three spiritual movements symbolised by the woman's actions:

Break Open — The alabaster jar had to be broken before the perfume could be poured out. This breaking symbolises repentance, humility, and the courage to confront one's own brokenness before God.

Pour Out — The woman did not offer something small or convenient. She poured out what was most pre-

cious to her. In the same way, Christians are called to offer their whole lives to God—not merely leftovers or moments of convenience.

Be Loved — At the heart of the story is the profound truth that God's love comes first. As Scripture reminds us: "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The woman's act of devotion was not an attempt to earn forgiveness, but a response to the grace she had already received.

The Gospel also presents a contrast between the Pharisee Simon and the woman. While Simon judged her by her past, Jesus saw her through the lens of love and faith. Through His words — "Your sins are forgiven... your faith has saved you; go in peace" — Jesus redefined her identity, not by her past mistakes but by her love and trust in Him.

This transformation from shame to freedom became a central reflection during the retreat. Participants were reminded that the journey of Lent is not merely about sacrifice or penance, but about restoring a relationship with God.

Throughout the day, Sr Angelin encouraged participants to see Lent as a grace-filled period of return — a time to examine the state of one's heart and remove the bar-

riers that prevent us from accepting God's forgiveness and love. Often, the greatest obstacle to experiencing God's mercy is not our sin, but our inability to believe that we are truly loved and forgiven.

"Lent is a grace period," Sr Angelin shared. "It is an invitation to return home to the Father."

Through moments of silence, prayer, and heartfelt sharing, participants reflected on how repentance can lead to freedom, healing, and a renewed sense of purpose in Christ.

As the day concluded, many participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to pause, reflect, and reconnect with God during this sacred season. The story of the woman with the alabaster jar reminds us that true worship involves vulnerability, humility, and the willingness to surrender one's whole life to God. Her journey — from shame to acceptance, from fear to courage, and from brokenness to freedom, mirrors the journey every believer is invited to take during Lent.

Ultimately, the message of the day was clear: Lent is not merely about giving something up. It is about breaking open our hearts, pouring out our lives in love for Christ, and allowing ourselves to be fully loved and transformed by Him.



Some of the women at the day of prayer in conjunction with International Women's Day.

Discovering a fresh perspective on Lent

SEGAMAT: About thirty parishioners of the Church of St Philip were treated to a renewed, unique and novel way to embrace the season of Lent.

In his signature style of blatant candour tempered with jolly jesting, the facilitator, Martin Jalleh, endeared himself to the participants, imparting his message in an ingenuous, practical and unambiguous manner, one that the motley assembly could readily relate to.

Clearly, everyone was deeply impressed with his total abandonment of the normal construal of the hackneyed celebration of Lent.

Aligning tightly to the theme, *Live Simply, Love Deeply, Give Freely*, Martin took pains to explain the simple tools available to get closer to God and in the process, painted an entirely distinct but unique perception of how one can visibly resonate with the Lenten period.

For instance, Ash Wednesday was described succinctly as not a despairing to death, but rather the death of despair, obviously an entry into the realm of hope.

Martin underscored that the fruitful finale of the Lenten period depended not on a regimen of stringent fasting, abstinence and penance, but more importantly, on the instinctive makeover of the mindset.

Along with the existing multiple perceptions of the parable of the Prodigal Son, Martin jogged the minds of participants with yet another one, when he suggested that perhaps it should be the 'prodigal father' instead of the prodigal son. He simply based his rationale on the definition of 'prodigal'. He cited the Heavenly Father's reckless forgiveness, His extravagant and unconditional love and His lavish grace and blessings for the sinner. How profound and thought-provoking!

Participants were also schooled in the meaning of the word 'Lent', which means forty in Latin, denoting the forty days Jesus spent fasting in the desert. The colour purple, too, is significant in Lent, because as Shakespeare mentioned (in *Midsummer Night's Dream*), purple is the colour of love's wound.

Moving on, Martin mentioned that the focus of Lent is God's inimitable love, mercy and compassion. He posed the case of Peter and Judas, both of whom betrayed Jesus. But Peter kept his focus on Jesus and went on to become synonymous with Christendom, while Judas died in despair.

Martin also touched on the spirituality of gratitude by quoting St Augustine, "Late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient, O Beauty so new. Too late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside myself..."

In summing up, *Live Simply, Love Deeply and Give Freely*, Martin's exhortation was to exercise a deliberate reduction of worldly wants and to maintain a steady focus on God.

He urged those present to be satisfied with what suffices and to avoid surfeits.

Finally, he urged all to remember what St Vincent de Paul said on simplicity, "God communicates with the simple" and "Simplicity is the virtue I love most". **Philip Packium**



A time of renewal at OLL

KLANG: Parishioners of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL), gathered for a Lenten retreat on March 8. The retreat was conducted by Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis and provided a meaningful time of prayer, reflection and spiritual renewal during the Lenten season.

During the retreat, Fr Selva reminded participants that Lent is a time of grace and a call to repentance. He encouraged everyone to prepare their hearts for Easter through prayer, fasting, and acts of charity. Participants were also invited to reflect on their attitudes and behaviours and to return to God with sincere hearts.

Fr Selva also spoke about the importance of encountering Christ in the poor, the marginalised and those in need. He reminded everyone that Lent is not only about personal sacrifice but also about showing genuine compassion and serving others.

One of the highlights of the retreat was a guided meditation on the Gospel passage of Jesus and the two thieves on the cross (Luke 23:33–43). Participants were invited to imagine themselves in the scene and reflect on the different attitudes of the two criminals, one who rejected Jesus and the other who humbly asked for mercy. The reflection reminded everyone of God's mercy and forgiveness.

As the retreat took place on International Women's Day, the parish also took the opportunity to honour the women present. A simple cake-cutting ceremony was held to appreciate the contributions of women in the Church, families and society.

The retreat concluded with a joyful time of fellowship among the participants. Appreciation was extended to the seniors for their generosity in preparing the refreshments. **Nesa Dhevasahayam**



Caritas formation calls Church to holistic ministry

Dr June Joseph

PENANG: Clergy, pastoral leaders, religious, and lay representatives from across the Diocese of Penang gathered at the Msgr Aloysius Spirituality Centre on March 7 for a formation programme on Integral Human Development. Organised by Caritas Malaysia, the full-day event explored how the Church can move beyond short-term relief towards a more holistic and transformative approach to ministry — one that responds to the spiritual, social, economic, and ecological dimensions of human life through care, community support, and advocacy for human dignity and justice.

Fr Fabian Dicom, director of Caritas Malaysia, opened the formation with the words of Luke 4:18-19: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to bring good news to the poor... to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” He reminded participants that these words describe the mission of Jesus and invite every baptised Christian to share in it. For parish Caritas teams, they offer a guiding lens for translating

the Gospel into concrete acts of encounter, healing, justice, and hope within their communities.

Political scientist, Dr Francis Loh, presented an overview of the social realities affecting communities across Malaysia. Drawing on decades of research and civic engagement, he highlighted how poverty, migration, fragile family structures, and environmental degradation are deeply interconnected. Participants were encouraged to look beyond immediate needs and reflect on the structural causes that often trap migrant workers, low-income families, and indigenous communities in cycles of hardship.

An online diocesan survey conducted ahead of the event identified four key parish concerns: fragile social cohesion and livelihoods, rising economic vulnerability, migration and displacement, and ecological suffering. These findings underscored the interconnected nature of many social challenges. For instance, development that disrupts forests and land used by Orang Asli communities can undermine livelihoods and food sources, eventually leading to migration and displacement. Partici-

pants were reminded that ministry in such contexts requires an integrated and holistic response.

The formation also introduced Catholic Social Teaching (CST) as a framework for responding to these realities. Participants reflected on key Church documents, including *Rerum Novarum* on labour rights and human dignity, and Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si’*, *Fratelli Tutti* and *Evangeliium Gaudium*, which highlight ecological responsibility, global solidarity, and justice-centred evangelisation.

They also explored the core principles of CST, including human dignity, the preferential option for the poor, solidarity, participation, subsidiarity, care for creation, and the promotion of peace. One delegate, Dr Jude from the Church of St Michael, Ipoh, noted that integrating CST into parish life is often the “missing link”: while charity addresses immediate needs, CST helps communities understand the deeper causes of injustice and respond in ways that are more sustainable and transformative.

Participants later reflected on the Church’s vision of Integral Human Development as a response to human suffering that promotes dignity



and hope. They considered realities encountered in ministry — families facing financial hardship, migrants living with uncertainty, social tensions, and environmental challenges. These struggles, participants observed, are often interconnected. Integral Human Development therefore, calls the Church to accompany people in a holistic way, caring for the whole person — their material needs, relationships, spiritual life, and dignity.

Participants were also introduced to the See-Judge-Act methodology, a pastoral approach that translates faith into action by first seeing and listening to people’s realities, discerning them in the light of the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching, and acting to restore dignity and promote justice.

Working in groups, they applied this method to case studies involving migrant workers, urban poverty, refugee children’s access to education, development affecting Orang Asli communities, rural youth migration, and environmental challenges such as flooding. The discussions encour-

aged participants to move beyond basic assistance towards responses that include accompaniment, advocacy, community initiatives, and care for creation.

Several insights emerged for parishes moving forward: the need for holistic outreach, greater youth involvement in social and ecological initiatives, sustainable parish programmes supported by trained leaders, stronger advocacy for human dignity and justice, and deeper ecological awareness. Caritas Malaysia also plans to establish Communities of Practice (CoP) to enable parishes to share experiences and develop sustainable responses.

The day concluded with a moment of silent reflection, inviting participants to discern how they might see, judge, and act more intentionally in their own parish contexts. The formation ended with the Focolare-inspired hymn *Walk on Holy Ground*, reminding participants that the Church’s mission is to walk courageously with those on the margins while caring for our common home.

Sandakan parishioners deliver flood aid to Paitan

SANDAKAN: In this Lenten season, as the Church reflects on compassion, sacrifice, and love for our neighbour, parishioners of St Mary’s Cathedral responded generously to a call to share the light of Christ with those in need.

Following a request for assistance from Fr Arthur John of the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA), Paitan Mission, the parish Caritas team mobilised together with parishioners and members of the community to assist families affected by the recent floods in Paitan.

Aid was collected in the form of clothing for adults and children, food supplies, drinking water, and other essential daily necessities, including items for mothers and babies. These simple yet meaningful acts of kindness brought hope and reminded the affected families that they were not alone in their struggles.

On the morning of March 7, vol-



unteers gathered early at the parish hall of St Mary’s Cathedral to sort and load the donated items. Days earlier, volunteers had also assisted in sorting clothing and preparing food supplies donated by generous benefactors for the affected families. The mission saw an encouraging response from parishioners and volunteers, with approximately 25 vehicles joining the convoy to transport relief supplies.

Before the convoy began its jour-

ney, the parish priest, Fr David A. Garaman, led an opening prayer and imparted a sending-off blessing to all volunteers and drivers, praying for their safety and for the success of the mission.

The convoy departed from the cathedral and arrived at SFA, Sukang, Paitan at about 11.00am where the aid supplies were safely unloaded and received for distribution to the affected communities.

The humanitarian outreach was



coordinated by Caritas of St Mary’s Cathedral with strong support from parishioners, volunteers, and donors who contributed generously, both directly and indirectly, to make the effort possible.

Speaking before the convoy departed, the organisers expressed their gratitude to everyone involved. The mission reflected the spirit of Christian charity and solidarity, bringing not only material assistance but also hope and

encouragement to communities in need.

Caritas of St Mary’s Cathedral extends its sincere appreciation to all volunteers, drivers, donors, and parish communities who supported the initiative.

As the Church continues its journey through Lent, this outreach stands as a reminder that the faithful are called to live out their faith through compassion, solidarity, and service to others.

MERLIMAU, Melaka: The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) Conference of St James, in collaboration with a group of Catholics from Kuala Lumpur, organised a Lenten outreach programme bringing hope and joy to ten underprivileged families in and around Merlimau.

The programme was held at the Chapel of St James on March 7, with about 20 “Friends in Need” (FINs) representing the ten families in attendance.

The event began with a prayer

session in the chapel, followed by a reflection on almsgiving, one of the three key Lenten practices. Participants were reminded that almsgiving goes beyond monetary assistance. It calls on Catholics to genuinely care for the poor by making themselves available to meet and encounter them, bringing the love of God to those who are struggling.

“As Catholics, caring for the poor must become part and parcel

of our daily living as Christians,” participants were reminded during the reflection.

During the fellowship, several FINs shared stories of their life struggles and personal experiences. Their openness created a moment of vulnerability and connection, fostering a warm and inclusive atmosphere where everyone felt welcomed and valued.

The programme continued with a balloon game held at the adja-

cent canteen area, bringing much laughter and excitement.

The highlight of the outreach was the distribution of essential supplies to the ten families. A total of 460kgs of provisions, comprising 31 different types of food items, were distributed. The families also received pillows and storybooks.

The recipients expressed heartfelt gratitude for the assistance, noting that the food supplies

would help ease some of their living expenses.

The FINs, consisting of both Catholic and Hindu families, gave thanks as they returned home, touched by the kindness and generosity shown to them.

The outreach programme was carried out with the blessing of Fr Alexuchelvam Mariasosai, chapel administrator of the Chapel of St James, who encouraged the faithful to continue reaching out to those who are poor and marginalised in society. **Bernard Anthony**

Lenten outreach in Merlimau

An afternoon of joy and compassion

SHAH ALAM: What began as a response to Archbishop Julian Leow's Lenten call became a joyful afternoon of fellowship when several Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) from the Church of the Divine Mercy visited the Diamond Children's Home recently.

In line with this year's diocesan Lenten theme, *In the One, we are one*, volunteers from the BECs of St Faustina, St Gabriel North, St Gabriel South, St Jude, St Mary, St Paul and St Matthew travelled to Port Klang on March 1 to spend time with 19 children at the home.

"We are one body, shaped by the One who formed us," Archbishop Julian had reminded the faithful. "Our unity in Christ goes far deeper than our differences."

That spirit was clearly visible as children and volunteers shared an afternoon filled with laughter and companionship. Clown and Bumble Bee performances entertained the children, ice-cream treats cooled the

warm day, and a Hawaiian-themed dinner turned a simple meal into a celebration.

Beyond the activities, it was the gift of presence that mattered most — volunteers sitting with the children, listening to them and playing together, reminding them that they are seen and loved this Lenten season.

The BECs also presented funds to the home's founder, Madam Letchumee, to help purchase groceries as well as reference and activity books to support the children's learning and development.

"Your generosity and willingness to serve truly made a difference — the happiness on the children's faces said it all," shared one volunteer on behalf of the team.

The outreach continued the following week. On March 8, the BECs returned for a second activity — a hands-on experience at a food truck initiative. The children stepped into the role of "small chefs," learning how a food truck operates before enjoying chicken



The members from the BECs with the staff and children of Diamond Home.

burgers, fries and drinks together.

"Our intention is to continue serving this home beyond a one-off activity, building a sustainable relationship with them," said one BEC representative. "We hope this initiative reflects our Lenten theme, 'In the One, we are one.'"

The outreach is a reminder that Lent is not only about personal sacrifice, but also about deepening our bonds with one another as the Body of Christ. As one volunteer reflected, "Let us continue to journey together in faith and service. Praise God for this opportunity to share His love." **Josephine Mary Dawson**



Participants nailing their 'sins' to the cross.

Strengthening family unity in Christ

Dr Francis Leong

KUANTAN: A three-day Lenten spiritual formation programme was organised by the Family Life Ministry of the Church of St Thomas the Apostle in collaboration with the Family Life Commission of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

The programme, themed *In the One, We are One!*, brought together approximately 50 parishioners, including both youth and senior members of the community.

The initiative received the full endorsement and support of the parish priest, Fr George Packiasamy, and provided participants with a meaningful opportunity for spiritual renewal and reflection during the Lenten season.

The sessions were led by a dedicated six-member team from the Archdiocesan Family

Life Commission, with Alvin Teoh serving as the main presenter. The first session started on Friday evening, March 6, right after the Stations of the Cross and Eucharistic celebration, creating a meaningful start to the event. The remaining sessions continued the next day and wrapped up on Sunday, in a spirit of community and growth.

Over three days, the participants engaged in prayer, reflection, sharing, and fellowship. These sessions fostered an environment in which families rediscovered the virtue of unity rooted in Christ. This experience reinforced the concept that maintaining a connection to Jesus enhances our relationships with one another. Additionally, the formation provided a space for renewal, healing, and the fortification of relationships, both within families and the broader parish community.

A special highlight of this formation pro-

gramme was the para-liturgy we experienced at the end of the second day. Before that, Alvin guided everyone through an examination of conscience, inspired by the seven cardinal sins. After some thoughtful reflection, each person wrote down their sins on a piece of paper, which they then placed individually on a wooden cross, symbolising release and hope. Afterwards, team members prayed individually with the participants, offering healing and inner peace. To deepen their connection, the participants each chose a quote from the saints and a Bible verse at random, inviting them to discover God's message tailored just for them.

As we continue our Lenten journey, may the spirit of this formation remain alive in our hearts. Let us remember that unity within our families and the Church begins with love, forgiveness, and a shared faith.

Journey to healing and renewal

PENANG: More than 120 parishioners gathered at St Faustina Hall, Church of Divine Mercy on March 7 for a Lenten recollection led by parish priest, Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap. Organised in conjunction with the 800th anniversary of the Transitus of St Francis of Assisi, the session invited participants to reflect on self-awareness, healing, and spiritual renewal.

Fr Michael began with a simple yet powerful observation: many people move through life unaware of the roles they unconsciously play before others. Often, individuals repeat patterns of behaviour as coping mechanisms or fall into self-denial without realising it. For him, awareness is at the heart of authentic spiritual growth, especially during Lent.

The recollection opened with the hymn *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace*, setting a reflective tone for the gathering. Through prayer, reflection and discussion, participants were encouraged to recognise their weaknesses and become more attentive to their inner lives.

Fr Michael began by speaking about St Francis of Assisi. He noted that Pope Leo XIV has proclaimed a special Year of St Francis from January 10, 2026, to January 10, 2027, marking the 800th anniversary of the saint's passage into eternal life. During this period,

the faithful may obtain a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions.

Turning to the Lenten journey, Fr Michael reflected on Jesus in the wilderness. Like Christ who withdrew into the desert, believers are called to create space for silence and solitude. Such moments allow individuals to step back from the busyness of life, examine their spiritual condition, and recognise the struggles of pain, loneliness and emptiness within them.

He pointed to the parable of the Prodigal Son as a reminder that transformation begins with awareness. Only when the son realised his condition did he decide to return home.

Fr Michael also spoke candidly about the hidden wounds many people carry. Not all scars are visible, he said, and many are rooted in childhood experiences or family relationships. These unresolved wounds can shape behaviour and affect relationships later in life.

"We cannot change the past," he explained, "but we can learn from it and allow it to guide how we move forward."

Self-awareness, he noted, involves asking honest questions: Where is this reaction coming from? Why does this situation affect me so deeply? When have I experienced this before? Such reflection helps people recognise the difference between the "false self" built through

defence mechanisms and the "true self" that emerges through healing and growth.

Fr Michael summarised the process simply: awareness leads to acceptance, and acceptance leads to action. He also used the vivid analogy of "hugging the cactus" to describe how unresolved emotional wounds can continue to hurt individuals and strain relationships if they are not addressed.

Participants were invited to reflect on questions about guilt, shame and painful childhood memories. Through discussion, many acknowledged that unresolved developmental experiences can affect relationships, but also recognised that transformation is possible.

The recollection concluded with the Gospel story of the Woman at the Well. Fr Michael highlighted how the woman's encounter with Jesus moved her, from isolation and shame to healing and renewal. After receiving the "living water," she returned to her community transformed and eager to share the good news.

Quoting Psalm 147:3, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds", Fr Michael reminded participants that Christ desires to heal every form of pain, whether physical, emotional or spiritual.

Several parishioners shared how the session impacted them. Regina Albert said she was encouraged to let go of past hurts and be more



Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap

mindful about whom she confides in. Thomas Devass noted that the recollection helped him reflect more carefully on how he responds to situations. Paul Gan appreciated the emphasis on self-awareness, acknowledging that present behaviour is often shaped by past experiences and that the journey towards healing requires patience and courage.

The recollection concluded with a final blessing from Fr Michael, leaving participants with a renewed understanding that Lent is not merely a season of sacrifice but an invitation to deeper awareness, healing and spiritual renewal. **Anna Khor**

PENANG: The Catholic Singles Dating Hub (CSDH) of the Diocese of Penang will hold its ninth gathering from April 17–19 at Domus St Anne, Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam.



Supported by the Penang Diocesan Family Life Commission (PDFLC), this stay-in programme invites Catholic singles aged 26–40 to pause from the rhythm of daily life and enter into a weekend of faith, fellowship, and joyful encounter. In a spirit of openness and prayer, participants are encouraged to build meaningful friendships, deepen their faith, and perhaps, discern the beautiful possibility of a shared journey in the vocation of marriage.

Deacon Lazarus Jonathan, spiritual advisor of CSDH, reminds us that in today's fast-paced world, marriage is often no longer a priority for many young people, as careers, education and financial concerns take centre stage. Yet for Catholics, marriage remains a sacred vocation — a calling that reflects God's love and plan for humanity. Through faith-filled talks

An invitation to Catholic singles

and interactive activities, participants will be encouraged to open their hearts to God's guidance as they seek a suitable Catholic partner and grow towards the vocation of marriage.

Deacon Lazarus, who will share a series of faith-centred modules with participants, highlights five reasons why marriage remains essential. First, marriage forms the foundation of family life and marks the beginning of a shared journey. Second, it unites a man and woman as a team who support, uplift and encourage one another. Third, marriage fosters purity and commitment. Fourth, it strengthens parenting and family life, where children can flourish within a stable and loving home. Finally, marriage mirrors the unconditional love that God shows to humanity.

The programme will be led by the husband-and-wife team, Bart Cheah and Angie Tan, heads of the Penang Diocesan Family Life Commission (PDFLC), together with core team

members Maria Alphonse, Christine Ng and Theresa. Participants will be warmly accompanied and guided through a thoughtfully designed programme featuring icebreakers, speed dating, relationship-focused inputs, as well as experiential sessions such as art therapy and social dancing.

Theresa, the overall coordinator, shared that the CSDH programme began in 2018 with the aim of supporting Catholic singles discerning the vocation of Holy Matrimony. By God's grace, 25 couples have already found their life partners through this platform. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with many describing the programme as a safe, respectful and Christ-centred environment. Confidentiality is also taken seriously, with all personal information carefully safeguarded.

Many participants have shared grace-filled experiences. Jennifer said attending CSDH was truly life-changing. "It wasn't just about meeting people. It was about growing in faith. I met someone very special, and I truly believe God brought

us together."

David offered simple yet meaningful advice for those seeking a life partner: focus on the kind of person you are drawn to and reflect on what they might be seeking in a partner. "Work on becoming that person," he said, encouraging singles to keep an open mind and heart to the opportunities God presents.

Ethaniel shared that he initially attended the programme at his mother's insistence, but by God's grace, it became the place where he met his wife. The moment that left the deepest impression on him was the opening icebreaker session, where participants gathered and introduced themselves. That simple beginning opened the door to conversations and friendships that eventually blossomed into love and marriage.

Mary recalled that, from a young age, she had longed to start a family and become a mother. After years of prayer and several relationships that did not work out, she had reached a point of surrender. When her mother mentioned the Catholic dating

event in Penang, she hesitated but eventually registered with an open heart. To her amazement, she met the man who would become her husband. What surprised her even more was that they had been living in the same condominium in Kuala Lumpur but only met in Penang. As they journeyed together — through prayer, church life, the challenges of the pandemic and career changes — one truth became clear: God's plan was always greater, and His timing, though mysterious, was perfect.

Mark and Adeline also shared their journey. During the programme, they enjoyed learning how to place God at the centre of their relationship, practising dining etiquette and participating in formal dance sessions. Although they did not immediately connect, the experience laid a meaningful foundation. On the final day, Mark gathered the courage to ask for Adeline's number. After three years of long-distance courtship, and by God's grace, they were married.

For enquiries or to register, please contact Theresa at 017-578 8192 or Maria at 019-480 6281, or email catholicdatinghub@gmail.com

Voices of courage inspire at district Lenten gathering

SEREMBAN: Stories of courage, resilience and faith filled the hall during the District Lenten Campaign held on March 8 at the Church of the Visitation. Organised by the Women Ministry of the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD), the gathering brought together parishioners and members of the wider community for a morning of listening, reflection and inspiration.

Held with the support of parish priest, Fr Xavier Andrew, and parish ministry leaders, the programme carried the theme *Highlighting Their Abilities, Hearing Their Stories*. Through personal testimonies and professional insights, speakers invited participants to look beyond limitations and recognise the dignity and gifts present in every person.

Geraldine Shalini John opened the session with her sharing, *Strength through Silence: My Journey as a Deaf Woman*. Reflecting on her experience of living with deafness, she spoke about the resilience required to navigate daily life and the quiet strength that emerges through perseverance.

Teresa Chong Hui Chen followed with *Motherhood without Sound: The Joys and Struggles of Raising a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults)*. Growing up between the Deaf and hearing communities, she shared how communication, empathy and family bonds shaped her understanding of inclusion and belonging.

Anne Ramona offered an inspiring reflection titled *Beyond Disability: The Journey of Building a Business through Strength and Self-*



Geraldine John signing her session.

Reliance. Despite the challenges posed by physical disability, she spoke about transforming obstacles into opportunities through determination and creativity. "Limitations are not dead ends," she reminded the audience. "They are windows of opportunity to see and do things in a new way."

From a parent's perspective, Desiree Kaur shared her journey of raising an autistic child, reflecting on the patience, love and advocacy required to support neurodivergent children and their families.

The programme also highlighted the importance of empowerment and opportunity. Sutha Balachandran of Touch Community Society spoke on equipping persons with disabilities with practical skills that enable them to lead independent lives. Ivy Philip from EmployAble addressed the employment landscape for neurodivergent adults in Malaysia, encouraging organisations to take meaningful steps towards creating inclusive workplaces.

For many present, the stories shared were both moving and enlightening. AOHD volunteer Jennifer Fernandez noted that the testimonies were a reminder that ability is never defined by limitations but by the strength of the human spirit.

Agnes Fernandez from the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe said the session inspired her to reflect on how small acts of kindness — offering time, friendship or a listening ear — can make a difference in the lives of those with special needs.

After the talks, participants visited a bazaar featuring religious items, books and crafts.

In many ways, the gathering reflected the deeper spirit of Lent — a time to open hearts with compassion and recognise Christ in one another. Through stories of hope and perseverance, the campaign reminded participants that building an inclusive community begins with listening, understanding and walking together.

Call for new entrance hymns for Mass

KUALA LUMPUR: The Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Liturgy Commission – Liturgy Music Committee is inviting composers, musicians, and church choirs to participate in a special initiative to compose Entrance Hymns for Mass.

This initiative aims to encourage the creation of liturgical music that reflects the beauty, dignity, and prayerful spirit of the Eucharistic celebration. Sacred music plays an important role in the liturgy, particularly during the Entrance procession, when the gathered community begins the celebration by uniting their voices in praise and worship.

To introduce the project and guide interested participants, the Liturgy Music Committee held an online briefing on March 10. During the session, the objectives of the hymn composition initiative were presented, along with the guidelines for submission. Participants were also given an overview of the liturgical requirements of an Entrance hymn, including its theological content, suitability for congregational singing, and its role in accompanying the opening procession of the Mass.

Those who were unable to attend the live briefing are still

welcome to participate. A recording of the session has been made available, allowing interested composers to review the information and better understand the expectations for the composition.

The hymn composition project is open to individuals and groups with a passion for sacred music and liturgical ministry. Composers are encouraged to submit original works that are prayerful, rooted in Scripture, and musically accessible so that they can be readily sung by parish communities.

Through this initiative, the archdiocese hopes to foster creativity among local composers while enriching the Church's repertoire of liturgical music for use in parishes. The project also reflects the Church's commitment to nurturing sacred music that deepens the prayer life of the faithful and enhances the communal celebration of the Eucharist.

Submissions for the Entrance Hymn Composition for Mass will be accepted until June 30, 2026.

For further information or submission details, interested participants may contact the organisers via email at liturgy@archkl.org.

To access the briefings, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/EntHymn>

Hymn Composition For Mass
Entrance

To know more go to:
<https://tinyurl.com/EntHymn>

Organised by the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Liturgy Commission Liturgy Music Committee

email: liturgy@archkl.org
Closing Date: June 30, 2026

Building a supportive faith community for mental health

Dr Mark David and Karoline Thiba

KUALA LUMPUR: Recognising the growing importance of mental health in today's fast-paced world, the Family Life Mental Health Ministry of the Church of the Good Shepherd recently organised two community events aimed at promoting awareness, compassion, and support within faith communities.

The first event, a talk titled *Mental Health and Our Shared Community: A Talk on Faith, Compassion and Collective Care*, was held on

February 15 and attended by about 70 participants.

The session was delivered by Christine Maryanna Gabriel, a licensed marriage and family therapist, lecturer, and mental health advocate. During the talk, she highlighted the role faith communities can play in supporting individuals facing mental health challenges.

Christine emphasised that the Church is called to be a place of refuge where individuals can find encouragement, healing, and understanding. Participants were invited to reflect on how simple acts

of kindness, empathy, and attentive listening can positively impact someone's emotional and mental well-being, particularly during the season of Lent.

Continuing the initiative, a Mental Health Awareness Workshop was conducted on Feb 28, also facilitated by Christine Gabriel. The interactive session attracted around 35 participants, including youth and young adults, and focused on building a deeper understanding of emotional well-being and healthy relationships.

Inspired by the Scripture passage



Christine Maryanna Gabriel giving a session on mental health.

Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them," the workshop encouraged participants to explore ways of offering and seeking support within a faith community.

Participants were also introduced to practical ways to recognise signs of mental health challenges and respond with compassion and sensitivity.

The events saw participation from members of various language groups and ministries within the parish. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Youth Ministry led the sessions in Praise and Worship, while the parish priest, Fr Mitchel

Anthony Joseph, offered words of encouragement and motivation to the participants.

Organisers noted that the strong participation reflected the parish's commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment where mental health can be openly discussed.

Both events concluded with a fellowship gathering, providing participants with an opportunity to connect and strengthen relationships within the parish community.

The next event by the ministry will focus on teens and youth, scheduled in May and September this year.



Health care is about 'staying' with the suffering

SINGAPORE: The nurse was praying in the hospital chapel when a rather demanding and ungrateful patient that she had been caring for also came in. This was during the COVID pandemic, and although social distancing was the norm, the patient approached the nurse, grabbed her hand, and, to her amazement, said, "Thank you for caring for me. Thank you for bearing with me."

That poignant moment changed the nurse's attitude towards health-care completely and made her realise that "health care was not just about being cured, but it was about 'staying'. Staying at the bedside. Staying with the suffering. Staying at the foot of the cross."

Franciscan Friar William Lee shared this incident during a Mass to mark the 65th anniversary of Mount Alvernia Hospital, founded by nuns from the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM).



Mount Alvernia Hospital's leaders lighting candles symbolising how Christ's light accompanies the hospital's mission. (Photo/Christopher Khoo)

The hospital is the only Catholic hospital in Singapore.

Referring to the day's Gospel reading in which the mother of James and John asked Jesus to give them positions of worldly greatness, he noted that for the Catholic hospital, "greatness" was not about status but about service.

"Greatness here looks like this.

Cleaning a wound gently, listening patiently to a frightened patient, sitting quietly with a dying person, and offering a smile, even if it's at 3.00 am," he told some 90-hospital staff and visitors gathered in the chapel on March 4.

"As we give thanks for 65 years, may we renew the founding vision of the FMDM Sisters: simplicity, humility, compassion and joyful service. And may this hospital continue to be not only a place of medical excellence, but a place where the Gospel is lived quietly, bedside by bedside," said Friar Lee.

The Mass also saw the hospital's leadership team lighting candles given to them, symbolising how Christ's light accompanies the hospital's mission in its care for the sick and the suffering.

The celebration continued after Mass with the elderly FMDM nuns, some in wheelchairs, cutting the 65th anniversary cake and taking part in a singing session together with hospital staff.

Mount Alvernia Hospital is the only not-for-profit general acute tertiary care private hospital in



Elderly nuns from the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood taking part in a singing session during the 65th anniversary celebration of Mount Alvernia Hospital. (Photo/Christopher Khoo)

Singapore. With 340 beds, it is supported by over 370 on-campus specialist doctors and 1,480 accredited doctors. Dedicated clinical pastoral care forms part of the hospital's holistic care for patients and their families, regardless of background or belief.

The hospital traces its roots to 1949 when three young FMDM nuns, who were professionally trained in healthcare, arrived in Singapore from Surrey, England. They came at the request of the British colonial government who were short on medical facilities and professionals, and facing a post-war population that was exceedingly undernourished and suffering from tropical diseases.

The Sisters were posted to a local hospital and quickly set about caring for tuberculosis patients. They also cared for lepers at another institution and established a nursing school in 1950.

By the early 1950s, tuberculosis in Singapore had been greatly reduced and the Sisters felt it was time to meet the needs of the people in a different way. Their vision: a well-

planned, professionally managed hospital where every patient would be offered comfort, solace and the best possible medical care.

Pooling their salaries as government nurses, they started a building fund and began canvassing for donations, often going door-to-door.

By October 1956, the Sisters managed to raise enough to acquire a seven-acre parcel of land along a hilly stretch of Thomson Road. Construction began in 1957, and in 1961, the 60-bed Mount Alvernia Hospital received its first patients.

The hospital was entirely staffed by nuns who played the roles of nurse, midwife, physiotherapist, laboratory technician, pharmacy dispenser, radiographer, cook and even, ambulance driver. In 1987 the Sisters handed over the running of the hospital to a lay management team.

Over the years, many distinguished visitors have visited the hospital. They included Mother Teresa and Singapore's first prime minister Lee Kuan Yew. **Christopher Khoo**

Christopher is a Singapore-based freelance journalist and educator.

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Pope: Be educators in hospitality

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV has encouraged Christians to become “educators in hospitality,” urging communities to create environments where young people feel welcomed, listened to and valued.

Addressing participants of the fourth edition of the *Cathedra of Hospitality* gathering at the Vatican on March 12, the Pope said hospitality lies at the heart of the Church’s mission and is essential for building communion among people.

The cultural and educational event, held in Sacrofano, a town north of Rome, was organised by several movements and Third Sector organisations in collaboration with the Pontifical Lateran University. This year’s meeting focused on the theme “Youth and the Church: Hospitality that fosters belonging.”

In his remarks, the Pope reflected on the importance of welcoming young people in a world undergoing rapid cultural and social changes.

“Young people, who are naturally the future of society and of the Church, already constitute its living and generative present,” Pope Leo said.

He noted that the questions and concerns

raised by the younger generation invite the Church to renew its relationships and pastoral approaches.

“Welcoming young people means first of all listening to their voices, meeting their gaze and recognising that the Spirit continues to act in their lives and languages,” the Pope said.

He highlighted two key elements that illuminate the Christian meaning of hospitality: presence and care.

According to the Pope, every person grows within social communities such as the family, parish, school, university and workplace. These environments, he said, play a vital role in shaping identity and fostering relationships.

“To be present in the lives of others means sharing time, experiences and meaning, offering stable points of reference in which others can recognise themselves and grow,” he said.

Pope Leo pointed to the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth as a model for Christian hospitality. Reflecting on the Gospel account in which Mary and Joseph search anxiously for the young Jesus in Jerusalem, he said the story reminds



Pope Leo XIV addresses participants in the “*Cathedra of Hospitality*”. (Vatican Media)

believers that genuine presence requires constant attentiveness and care.

In the life of faith, he added, people sometimes take the presence of Christ for granted until they feel a sense of loss. Yet this moment can become an invitation to seek the Lord anew with trust and openness.

“When this happens, we are called to look at the world with new eyes filled with hope,” the Pope said.

He also highlighted St Joseph as a model of attentive care. Joseph’s quiet fidelity in

safeguarding the Holy Family, the Pope said, demonstrates that authentic welcome involves responsibility for the wellbeing of others.

“To care means to stand beside the other with attention, to respect their choices and to take responsibility for them,” he explained.

Concluding his address, Pope Leo XIV thanked those involved in promoting hospitality within communities and encouraged them to continue fostering spaces of fraternity and goodness. **Vatican News**



Bishop Pius Moon Chang-woo of Jeju in South Korea rolls the ‘Dice for Peace’ during the Sunday Mass on March 8, 2026. (Photo/Catholic Times of Korea)

Korean Catholics ‘roll dice’ for love, peace

SEOUL: Catholics in South Korea’s Jeju Diocese have begun using what they call “Dice for Peace” to determine weekly actions seeking to spread love and establish peace.

The diocese on the nation’s largest island, famed for tourist attractions including unique marine life and volcanic landscapes, has distributed dice to each parish since the end of February.

Catholics are encouraged to use them as tools to practice the Gospel spirit in their daily lives.

During the announcement at the end of the Sunday Mass, a Catholic representing the community rolls the dice to determine a weekly action phrase.

Instead of numbers the dice contains six sentences:

- Let’s love one another
- Let’s forgive mistakes

- Let’s listen to others
- Let’s love everyone
- Let’s love first
- Let’s love the person next to me now

After the rolling is complete, Catholics make a vow to practice the phrase in their lives throughout the week and to share it with others.

The congregation then sings it together, accepting it as a guide for their lives for the week.

Afterward, families, small groups, district meetings, and youth and student gatherings share their experiences of practicing the phrase and encourage one another. The following week’s Mass naturally brings a reflection on the past week’s experiences.

On March 8, Bishop Pius Moon Chang-woo of Jeju made a pastoral visit to the Namwon Parish in Seogwipo. The prelate personally rolled the dice during the Mass

and selected an action phrase with the congregation.

“Setting a practice phrase and reciting it together is not a simple event, but a promise that the community will live the week with the same attitude of the gospel,” said a local Catholic.

“If the process of setting a practice and reflecting on that life is repeated, peace will gradually become established as a culture of the community,” he added.

The diocese plans to make this practice not a one-time event but an ongoing endeavour.

Catholics will share the practice phrases at Sunday Mass, share their experiences in small groups and district meetings, and expand the practice into everyday life. They are expected to encourage youth, children, and adolescents to engage in similar practices, naturally accumulating experiences of learning and living in peace. **ucanews.com**

Northeast India Church prepares for Mission 2033

INDIA: Leaders of the Catholic Church in northeastern India gathered in Guwahati, Assam, on March 11–12 for a strategic meeting to adapt and implement the National Pastoral Plan 2033 in the region.

Held at the North East Diocesan Social Service Society, the meeting brought together archbishops, bishops, religious major superiors, priests, nuns and lay leaders from across the region.

Opening the meeting, Archbishop John Moolachira of Guwahati, president of the regional council, said preparations for the 2033 vision were already underway. Since 2024, each of the region’s 15 dioceses has been developing a nine-year action plan aligned with the national pastoral vision.

“The purpose of this meeting is to develop concrete action plans to reach the unreached and bring the Gospel to every level of society while implementing the National Pastoral Plan 2033 in the context of Northeast India,” he said.

Salesian Bishop George Pallipparambil of Miao, chairman of the region’s Proclamation Commission, urged the Church to re-focus on its core mission of evangelisation.

“We have discussed many topics over the

years, but it is time to reorient ourselves to the one mission that defines us as Christians — evangelisation,” he said.

Speaking on the theme *Mission 2033 for the Northeast Region*, Manoj Sunny, Jesus International Coordinator and Global 33, highlighted what he described as “Gospel poverty” in India, noting that nearly 1.37 billion people have yet to hear or accept Christ.

Quoting the missionary vision proposed by the late Pope Francis, he said, “Depriving people of the joy of the Gospel is the greatest injustice we can do to them.”

Sunny proposed four priorities for the Church in the coming years: building a synodal Church in mission, empowering the laity to proclaim the Gospel, developing a youth-focused Church, and addressing practical challenges such as time, convenience

and financial limitations.

Fr Stephen Alathara, deputy secretary general of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (Latin Rite), commended the Church in northeastern India for its missionary commitment, noting that the Pastoral Plan 2033 emerged from extensive grassroots consultations.

Fr Cyril Victor Joseph, coordinator of the CCBI Media Apostolate, highlighted the importance of digital evangelisation, particularly through the native languages and dialects of the region.

“Digital media has become a culture that shapes human interaction and offers new opportunities for the Church to live out the vision of a synodal community,” he said.

The meeting concluded with the launch of ‘Digi Word,’ a digital initiative of the Claretian Missionaries in Northeast India.

Spearheaded by Fr John Thurackal, secretary of the regional council’s Bible Commission, the platform provides daily Scripture readings and reflections, devotional hymns, Bible quizzes and catechetical resources, while integrating with social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. **Matters India**



(RVA photo)



The renewal that transformed parish life

Richard Chia

Those who remember the Catholic Church of the 1960s and early 1970s remember three things very clearly: the sound of Latin prayers, the priest standing at the altar with his back to the congregation, and a church filled with quiet devotion.

The Mass was celebrated entirely in Latin. The faithful followed as best they could, reciting familiar prayers they had memorised — the *Pater Noster* and the *Ave Maria* — often without fully understanding the words being spoken.

The atmosphere of those liturgies was marked by a solemn stillness. The ringing of the sanctuary bell signalled the most sacred moments of the Mass. The faint scent of incense lingered in the air. Some parishioners followed the prayers from small missals, while others simply knelt in silent devotion, trusting in the rhythm of a ritual that had remained largely unchanged for generations.

In some parishes, many worshippers even remained outside the church building during Mass. Several factors contributed to this practice. Church buildings were often smaller than the congregations they served, particularly during feast days. In tropical climates,

Before the Mass was celebrated in languages people understood — before lay readers proclaimed the Word and parish pastoral councils guided community life — the Malaysian Church underwent a historic period of renewal. In this 10th instalment of our series, we revisit the Aggiornamento of 1976 and explore how it set in motion changes that would reshape parish life for generations.

standing outside could feel more comfortable than being inside a crowded church. For others, it reflected a devotional mindset of the time — the belief that simply “hearing Mass” fulfilled one’s obligation, even if one was not actively participating in the liturgy.

This curious custom eventually gave rise to the ironic expression “outstanding Catholics” — those literally standing outside the church while the Mass was being celebrated within.

Today, the scene is very different. The priest faces the congregation. The prayers and readings are proclaimed in languages people understand. Lay readers proclaim the Word of God, choirs lead the faithful in song, and parish pastoral councils help guide the life of the parish community.

For younger Catholics, these realities seem entirely ordinary. Yet they are the fruit of a profound journey of transformation that reshaped the Church in Malaysia.

The *Aggiornamento* itself was not intended

to be a brief conference or administrative meeting. It lasted an entire month because it sought to do something deeper — to help priests reflect on their vocation and pastoral responsibilities in the light of the Council’s vision. The programme included prayer, theological reflection, liturgical study and open discussions about the realities of parish life in Malaysia.

When the priests returned to their parishes, they carried with them a challenging mission: to translate that vision into the everyday life of their communities.

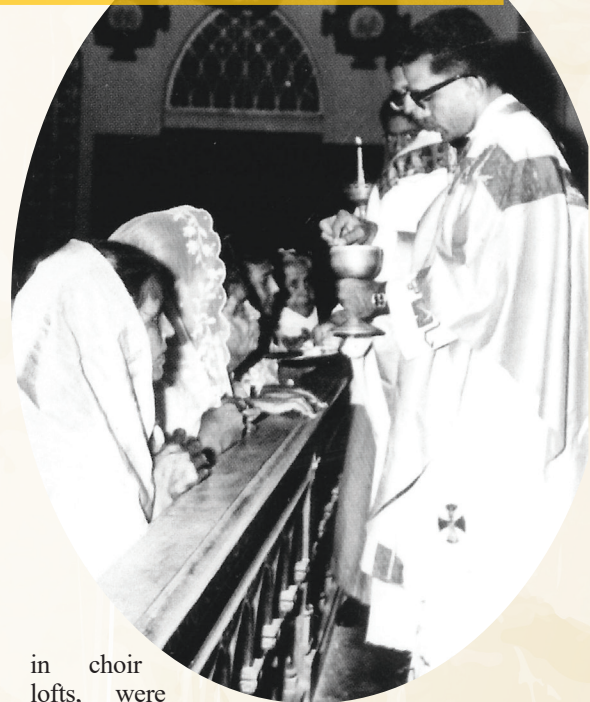
The weeks and months that followed would quietly set in motion changes that would reshape parish life for generations to come.

Visible changes

Across many churches, renovation works began. The sanctuary altar was turned to face the congregation, symbolising a liturgy celebrated with the people rather than apart from them. Altar rails (*right pic*) that once separated the sanctuary from the faithful during Communion were gradually removed.

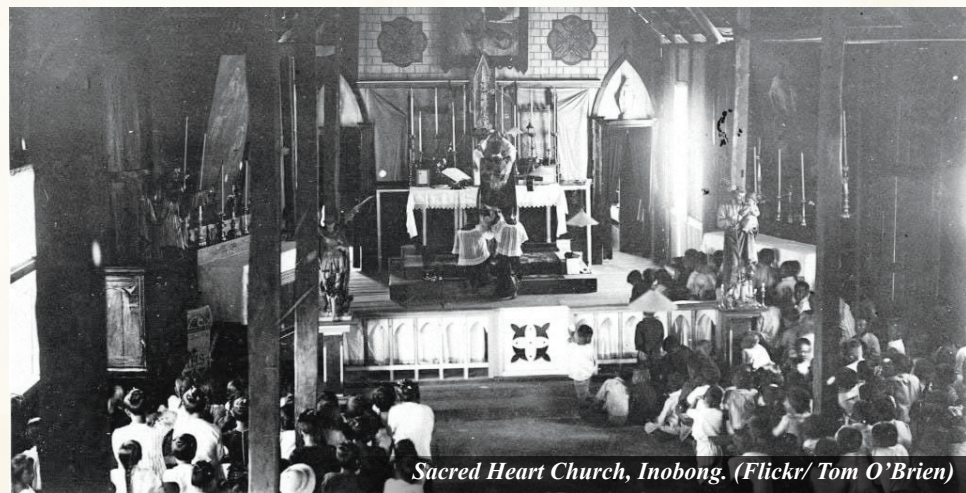
For many Catholics, the removal of the altar rail became one of the most striking symbols of change. For generations, the rail had marked a clear boundary between the sanctuary and the congregation. Its removal reflected a renewed understanding that the Eucharistic celebration was not something performed by the priest alone, but a sacred act in which the whole community of believers participated.

In older churches built in the early 1900s, elevated commentator stands were dismantled and replaced with lecterns at ground level. Choirs and organists, once positioned high



in choir lofts, were brought down to be closer to the congregation. Musical instruments such as the piano, organ and guitar gradually became part of the liturgy, bringing a renewed warmth and vitality to worship. Many older parishioners remember those early changes with a mixture of curiosity and uncertainty. One parishioner later recalled, “The first time the priest faced us during Mass, it felt strange. We were not used to it. But slowly we began to realise that we were meant to be part of the celebration, not just silent observers.”

Behind these visible changes, another transformation was unfolding.



Sacred Heart Church, Inobong. (Flickr/ Tom O'Brien)

Internal Transformations

Liturgical texts that had long been celebrated in Latin were gradually translated into English and other vernacular languages so that the faithful could better understand and participate in the Mass. Each translation required careful review and official approval before it could be used.

When the first vernacular celebrations of the Mass began, many parishioners experienced something entirely new. For the first time, they could hear the readings, prayers and responses in a language they understood. What had once sounded distant and mysterious suddenly felt familiar and accessible.

An elderly parishioner remembered that moment vividly. “For the first time, I could follow the prayers and understand what the priest was saying. It felt like the Mass was speaking directly to us.”

The renewal also brought new life to congregational singing. When the *Sing Your Praise to God* hymn book was eventually introduced, it quickly became a familiar com-

panion in many parishes across Malaysia and Singapore. First published in the years following the liturgical renewal of Vatican II, the collection brought together traditional hymns, contemporary compositions and locally adapted pieces suitable for the different seasons of the Church year.

For many Catholics, it was their first experience of holding a hymn book and actively joining in the singing during Mass. Parishioners soon became familiar with its coloured sections, learning to locate hymns appropriate for the Entrance, Offertory and Communion, as well as for the different liturgical seasons.

Another parishioner remembered those early days with a smile: “Sometimes someone would start the hymn and the rest of us would try to follow. We didn’t always get the tune right, but we sang with enthusiasm.”

Yet the most important transformation was not in buildings or structures — it was among the people themselves.

Parish priests began inviting laypersons to step forward into ministries that had previously been unfamiliar

to many Catholics. Lectors, commentators and choir members had to be formed and trained. Catechists were needed to teach the faith to children outside the Catholic school system.

What had once been largely the responsibility of religious brothers and sisters now required a much broader participation of the laity. Parish priests found themselves recruiting and forming an entire generation of volunteers willing to serve the Church. Across many dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia, formation sessions were organised to help lay ministers better understand Scripture, the sacraments, the liturgy and the traditions of the Church.

Structural changes also took place within parish administration. The traditional Parish Councils gradually evolved into Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs), reflecting a deeper emphasis on pastoral planning rather than organisational management.

In earlier years, parish councils often consisted of thirty or more representatives from various parish societies, groups and clubs. Meetings were lengthy, with updates from every organisation, and discussions sometimes resembled the management meetings of a secular institution.

The Parish Pastoral Council introduced a more focused approach. Its primary task was to discern the pastoral needs of the parish community. Membership was streamlined to include representatives from official

ministries, language communities and Basic Christian Communities (BCCs).

While the PPC focused on pastoral planning and vision, the responsibility for implementing initiatives was entrusted to the Parish Coordinating Council. This new structure helped parishes move from discussion to more effective pastoral action.

As these changes unfolded, the response of the faithful also began to shift. The Mass became something Catholics participated in rather than merely observed. Parish life grew more vibrant as lay people increasingly recognised their role in the life and mission of the Church.

Today, many Catholics may no longer remember the adjustments and uncertainties that accompanied those early years of change. Yet the call for greater participation, shared responsibility and attentive listening among the People of God — so central to the *Aggiornamento* of 1976 — continues to resonate strongly with the Church’s present journey of synodality.

Those who remember the Church of the past may still recall the quiet Latin prayers and the distance between altar and congregation. But the changes that followed helped awaken a deeper truth — that the Church is most alive when her people do not merely watch from the sidelines, but recognise themselves as participants in the mission of Christ.



Let me share a recent personal story. People had been saying that she — let's call her Ann — had become stubborn and difficult to manage. Ann is living with dementia. Curious, I decided to spend two full days with her on my own. Those two days taught me more than I am sure any AI ever could.

In the morning, she is alert and happy to join activities. Around 1.00pm, she becomes anxious and asks for her husband, whom she now calls “granddad.” Yet when I gently engage her in familiar tasks, she settles. By the time he arrives, she is often pleasantly surprised to see him.

During afternoon nap time, she grows restless. She does not understand why everyone is lying down and doing nothing. She repeatedly asks to go home. But when I invite her to help fold *kim chua* (a Taoist ritual paper offering), she focuses quietly and stops insisting on leaving. She simply needs something meaningful to do.

In the late afternoon, she shows little interest in group games and becomes easily distracted. Yet when we fold clothes together, she is calm and content once more.

I realised then that the problem is not her behaviour. The problem is our expectations.

We want people to fit into our schedules and routines. But everyone is different. She is not being difficult — she is showing us what helps her feel safe and purposeful.

Why do we become frustrated when someone does not participate in pre-planned activities? Certainly, people living with dementia need engagement. But each of us finds meaning in our own way. Some enjoy sitting in the garden with a cup of coffee in the morning; others cannot start the day without reading the newspaper. Some bathe first thing in the morning; others prefer an afternoon shower. Some nap; some listen to soft music.

Why do we forget this basic truth when it comes to dementia? People are still people. They remain unique individuals. If someone



Dancing with Dementia
Dr Cecilia Chan

The hidden truth beyond the stubborn old lady

does not enjoy throwing a ball back and forth for twenty minutes, why is that a problem? Honestly, I do not find that particularly exciting myself.

I certainly hope I would not be labelled “stubborn” or “difficult” if I refused to participate in throwing balls, should I one day have dementia.

Care is not about changing the person. It is about changing our approach.

The current narrative surrounding dementia is heartbreaking. We have medicalised people's attempts to communicate unmet needs and labelled them as “behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia” (BPSD). Too often, this leads us to seek a medical solution — usually medication — which may create further complications.

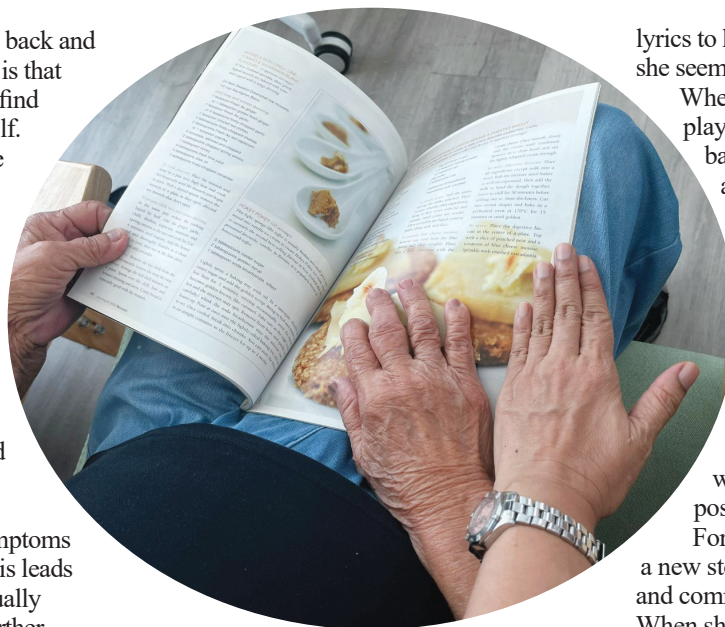
Why do we expect people living with dementia to behave in ways we deem socially acceptable? It is akin to expecting someone who is paraplegic to walk, or someone on renal dialysis to urinate.

When a person can no longer use language clearly to express the need for a walk, to search for a misplaced item, or to say they are cold, hungry, tired, or bored, we call these attempts “symptoms.” But they are still communicating, in their own ways.

Search the word “dementia” online, and you are bombarded with images of despair — forlorn older adults staring into nothingness, faces fading into blankness, heads dissolving into emptiness. The message is clear: doomed, socially dead, erased.

But is that the real story?

When language fails us, behaviour becomes



our voice. So why do we judge people living with dementia by the very behaviours that may be their only remaining form of expression?

Labels limit curiosity. When we reduce a person to their symptoms, we stop being interested in who they are.

I sometimes wonder whether our collective fear of dementia stems less from the condition itself and more from how we treat those who live with it. If we begin to see dementia as a disability rather than a tragedy — and adjust our support to focus on strengths instead of losses — perhaps we would fear it less.

A friend once told me she was devastated by her mother's diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. She felt angry — angry that it would erode her mother's dignity, angry that her life would become meaningless. She was heartbroken that her mother had forgotten the

lyrics to her favourite song and frustrated that she seemed uninterested in “anything.”

When I spent time with her mother, I played her favourite song softly in the background while we worked on a twelve-piece puzzle. She could not sing the lyrics, but she could hum. She followed the rhythm. We hummed together as we completed the puzzle. The second time the song played, she began to whistle. By the third time, fragments of the lyrics returned and flowed through.

When we shift our focus from what is lost to what remains, possibilities emerge.

For my friend's mother, this became a new story — a story of connection and communication in a different form. When she smiled and hugged me after our time together, I saw hope. That moment challenged the narrative that dementia strips away meaning and dignity.

Perhaps we need a new dementia story — one rooted not in despair, but in hope, joy, and meaning. A story that embraces human diversity rather than fears it. A story that restores connection instead of reinforcing isolation.

They are still here, reaching out to us in their own unique ways. We have a choice: learn their new language or turn away. Dementia does not discriminate; one day, we may be the ones living with it. How would we want to be treated then? It is a question that deserves our deepest reflection.

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

We are currently in the third month of 2026. At the turn of the year, many made New Year resolutions. Resolutions are often attempts to bring about transformative positive change in our lives. These resolutions are also often attempts to bring forth new beginnings.

Change and New Beginnings

Many individuals seek to make change. Positive change requires regular introspection and reflection. According to Prochaska and DiClemente's *Stages of Change*, change begins when one contemplates or thinks about change. This stage of contemplation is followed by the stages of preparation and action to bring about change.

Maintenance of change is the next stage in this cycle. Trying to maintain change can be challenging and can result in relapse. Relapse can be disheartening. This Stages of Change model, though, identifies relapse as a momentary lapse and encourages those who have relapsed to keep on trying to execute and maintain change.

The reminder to make positive change comes during periods of grace, such as the season of Lent. We are called to repent and change for the better. The Gospel reading for the third Sunday of Lent is one of the best stories of repentance and positive change (John 4: 1 – 42). The Samaritan woman who went to draw water from the well encountered Jesus. Jesus was unconditional in offering her new life, despite the animosity between Jews and Samaritans. This powerful encounter stirred in her the need to change. She was able to begin anew, leaving behind her sinful old life. She then invited others to encounter

New beginnings

Jesus so that they, too, could experience Jesus in a powerful, life-changing way.

The early Christians, too, experienced God in a powerful way, resulting in changed lives (Acts of the Apostles). These encounters with God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit continue to this day. Christians who share their testimonies about their encounters with God often testify to positive change transforming their lives.

Mental wellness and new beginnings

People who walk into consultation rooms of psychiatrists and psychotherapists often carry with them mental pain and suffering. This pain and suffering can originate from current and past negative experiences. They seek to erase this mental anguish and yearn for new beginnings.

Psychotherapy is a treatment strategy that assists in the alleviation of this suffering. A holistic approach is best, incorporating a biological/physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual approach. This approach addresses health issues across all five domains. An important aspect of this approach is to enhance social support. Social support can be sourced from current healthy relationships or new supportive relationships. This holistic approach also allows for the utilisation of prayer, the holy Scriptures, and support from faith-based communities to enhance mental wellness.

People who achieve mental wellness after suffering from mental health issues describe this new, healthy mental state as beginning a

new life. There is a transition from poor mental health to good mental health. It is important to adapt to this transition and thus maintain good mental health. Maintenance treatment is often necessary to maintain mental wellness.

Let me illustrate the above in a case study.

Jane (not her real name) was suffering from anxiety and depression. She had automatic negative thoughts, anxious and depressed mood, and physical symptoms like stomach discomfort and gastric reflux, tension headaches, and palpitations. She was also finding it difficult to work and to interact with others. Other than medication, she was treated with psychological, cognitive, and behavioural therapies. Her faith in God also allowed the inclusion of prayer into the treatment plan. She is currently symptom-free, and able to function socially, and occupationally, well. She now lives a new and healthy life.

I would like to reiterate that common mental disorders, namely anxiety disorders and depressive disorders, are treatable, and people suffering from these disorders can regain mental wellness with proper treatment.

Divorce and new beginnings

Jill (not her real name), a Catholic lady, attempted suicide by taking an overdose of medication after she found out that her husband had been unfaithful to her.



Informed Opinion
Dr Xavier V. Pereira

She sought treatment from a psychiatrist who was also a psychotherapist. Individual psychotherapy and marital therapy were initiated. Initially, there were attempts by both parties to repair their relationship but eventually, they divorced because of irreconcilable differences. Jill remarried after three years and now lives a new and happy life with her current husband.

Marital conflict can be classified into 3 stages. The first stage is the negotiation stage, in which

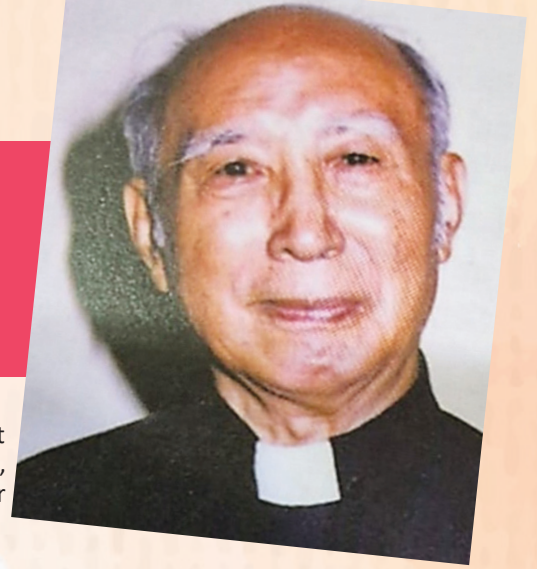
both parties are willing to work towards a resolution of the conflict. When the couple does not make progress in resolving the conflict, they may reach an impasse. The objective of marital therapy in the impasse stage is to assist the couple to return to the negotiation stage. When it is not possible to resolve the conflict and the differences are irreconcilable, the couple may reach the dissolution stage, resulting in separation and divorce.

Divorced Catholics often must endure a long wait for their marriage to be annulled. Many divorced Catholics want to begin a new life with a suitable partner. Some have gone ahead with civil marriages and are living new and happy lives.

Dr Xavier V. Pereira is a medical doctor, psychiatrist, and an internationally certified psychotherapist. In the Catholic Church he serves as the chair of the Catholic Counsellors, Therapists, Psychologists, and Psychiatrists of Malaysia (CCTPPM).

China priests in Sabah

Exile, mission and the witness of Fr Tobias Chi



Joseph Tek Choon Yee

History sometimes carried Catholic priests far from their homeland. When communism rose in China, churches were restricted, seminaries closed and many priests were imprisoned or expelled. Faced with the painful choice of abandoning their priesthood or leaving their homeland, some chose to carry their vocation elsewhere. In Sabah, these displaced missionaries became spiritual fathers to a new community, helping to nurture and shape the young Church far from the homes they had left behind.

When Sabah became home

Scattered across Southeast Asia, a small but remarkable group of China-born priests found their way to North Borneo. They arrived not as pioneers chasing opportunity, but as men shaped by loss, carrying formation, faith and a quiet determination to serve wherever they were sent.

They entered a young local Church still finding its footing, navigating post-war reconstruction, colonial transition and deep cultural diversity. The Mill Hill Missionaries had laid strong foundations of evangelisation, education and parish life. Alongside them came these Chinese priests — trained in China, Macau and Hong Kong — bringing not only sacramental ministry, but linguistic sensitivity and deep pastoral instinct.

Among them were Fr John Tsung (1918–1993), Fr Peter Ma (1925–2013), Fr Aloysius Tung (1926–2016) and Fr Tobias Chi (1924–2010). With the exception of Fr Ma, who later died in New York, the rest would spend their lives and eventually die on Sabahan soil. That detail matters. This was not temporary mission work. Sabah became home.

These priests were not mere sacramental functionaries. They learned the land and its people, travelled rough roads, sat at kitchen tables, listened to grief spoken haltingly and celebrated joy expressed quietly. They served parishes, taught Scripture, formed catechists, accompanied families and carried the invisible weight of souls.

Their ability to minister in Mandarin and Chinese dialects was invaluable to the growing Chinese Catholic community in Sabah. Yet their deeper gift lay elsewhere: they learned how to belong. They did not hover above the community; they entered it. In a Church shaped by linguistic and cultural plurality, they became bridges of communion, helping Chinese Catholic life take root within Sabah's wider ecclesial tapestry.

Fr Tobias Chi Shu Chang: A shepherd who stayed

It is within this lineage of exile turned mission, displacement turned pastoral presence — that the life of the late Fr Tobias Chi must be remembered as an example. I related to him most clearly through my own encounters with him during his years at the Cathedral of St Mary, Sandakan in the early 1990s. I knew him by presence — by seeing him at work, at prayer, on mission, quietly visionary.

Tobias Chi was born in the small village of Yenki, Manchuria,

on August 18, 1924, and ordained quietly in a Macau chapel on Aug 14, 1954, Fr Tobias' priesthood began far from home. None of his family could be present. Yet the missionaries carried the news back to his village, telling his mother that her son was now a priest. His father had passed on. She wept in quiet joy. From that tender, unseen beginning, Fr Tobias was posted to North Borneo, arriving on Oct 8, 1954.

For 56 years, he walked patiently with the people of Sabah — not as one who passed through, but as a shepherd who stayed, serving faithfully. His priestly journey carried him across Sabah, from early ministry in Kudat, Lahad Datu, Tenom, Tanjung Aru, and Beaufort between 1954 and 1970, to Sacred Heart, Kota Kinabalu (1970–1983), St Mary's, Sandakan (1984–1999) and finally St Peter's, Kudat (2000–2004).

15 years at St Mary's, Sandakan

Those who knew Fr Tobias as Rector remember a line that became legendary in parish life: "No preparation, no celebration!" It was more than a slogan. It was his pastoral philosophy. Sharon Ho and Magdalene Chu remembered that behind every feast day and liturgy lay careful planning, prayerful preparation and shared responsibility. Little wonder that celebrations at St Mary's were not only beautiful, but deeply participated — a parish taught to prepare its heart before lifting its voice.

When Fr Tobias arrived at the parish in October 1984, he did not inherit a blank canvas. The parish was already alive. What he brought was discernment — a pastoral instinct for what needed strengthening, gathering and gentle renewal.

He did not rush change. He listened first, observing how people prayed, gathered and struggled to belong in a parish growing in size, diversity and complexity. Evangelisation was his early priority, understood not as persuasion but as invitation. Talks for seekers led naturally, in 1985, to the establishment of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), anchoring the parish in patient accompaniment. By 1987, evangelisation grew more creative through the Good Tidings Concert and *Good Tidings Magazine*, drawing together parish groups, language communities, youth and families. Evangelisation, for him, was something the parish learned to do together.

Unity, he knew, required structure that listened. In 1986, he convened the first Annual Delegates Assembly, gathering representatives from every parish group to reflect, discern and elect Parish Council leaders. It was pastoral inclusion — authority shared wisely, not withdrawn.

Among his most significant initiatives were Chinese and Bahasa Malaysia Sunday Masses. Communities grew in confidence and participation as faith found expression in the language of the heart. Three language coordinating committees — English, BM and Chinese — were formed not to divide, but to help the parish breathe together.

His care extended to children and families. He strengthened Sunday School, introduced Children's Liturgy of the Word,

and built a Baptismal font for immersion, restoring fuller sacramental expression.

He welcomed movements of renewal — the Charismatic Renewal, the Neo-Catechumenal Way, and marriage and family ministries — not as programmes to manage, but as pathways into deeper communion. Accompany the people and trust the Spirit to work.

At 60 when many slow down, he began learning computers, Chinese programmes and digital publishing, producing bulletins in English, Chinese and BM. Communication was renewed through redesigned three-language bulletins and the column "Word and I", turning announcements into catechesis and readers into participants.

The parish landscape evolved in service of faith. The once-criticised hillside Grotto became a beloved prayer space, especially during the Feast of the Assumption, when outdoor Eucharistic celebrations allowed theology to breathe under open skies.

The parish also grew outward: a kindergarten in 1990; St Mark's Church and the St Joseph's Multi-Purpose Hall in 1993; St Paul's Church in Ulu Dusun in 1995. He opened the Sibuga Cemetery, renovated St Joseph's for its silver jubilee, and relocated St Mary's Bandar and St Mary's Convent schools in 1998 — securing facilities for future generations.

Yet parishioners remember most not what he built, but how he related. He invited them for coffee, listened patiently, encouraged generously, offered advice gently and affirmed quietly. Leadership, for him, was exercised as much in conversations as in councils.

Throughout these 15 years at St Mary's — the longest chapter of his missionary life — he led steadily. He trusted people, respected culture and language, formed faith patiently, and built only what served pastoral life. When he was transferred to St Peter's Parish, Kudat on Nov 24, 1999, St Mary's did not simply lose a rector. It released a shepherd who had taught the parish how to walk together.

Fr Tobias once described parish growth as young plants sprouting after rainfall. And perhaps that is the best image of him. He was not the plant, nor the fruit, but the rain. And to those who walk after him, his life leaves a simple lesson: "no preparation, no celebration" and perhaps also this: no surrender, no peace. What he left behind was more than buildings or programmes. He left something rarer — a parish formed by preparation, rooted in communion and taught how to celebrate.

A parishioner, Raymond Jim, recalled a line from Fr Tobias that landed heavily: "Priests have no time to cry." On the surface, it sounded almost dry, even wry. Beneath it lay the hidden cost of pastoral life — the grief absorbed daily, the burdens carried quietly, the need to keep going because others depended on you.

Home at last

Fr Tobias celebrated his Golden Jubilee of priesthood on August 14, 2004, marking 50 years of faithful service at the altar and among the people he loved. He became the first resident of Vianney Home for retired priests. There, he entered a quieter season of priestly life marked by prayer and presence.

In his final months, illness confined him to his bed. He slipped quietly into a coma and died peacefully on Sept 11, 2010, at the age of 86. As Sharon Ho later recalled, on the following morning the Church proclaimed a Responsorial Psalm of rare and tender fittingness: "I will leave this place and go to my Father." It was not planned. It did not need to be. It simply was a final benediction, spoken without words.

A life that had journeyed from China to exile with other China priests, from loneliness to mission, from parish to parish across Sabah, now completed its final passage with the same quiet trust that had marked his priesthood. Not in noise. Not in spectacle. But in peace. And so, we take comfort in believing that Fr Tobias has indeed returned to the Father he served so faithfully — received not as a stranger, but as a son who has come home.

From mustard seeds to missiles: Two different kingdoms



**Sunday
Observer**
Anil Netto

Picture this scene: a group of Christian pastors at the Oval Office with their hands on the US president's shoulders, praying for him during the second week of the US-Israel war on Iran.

They prayed for "wisdom from heaven to flood his heart" and for divine protection for the president and his troops.

But how does that square with the suffering of millions of ordinary people affected by this war. Especially for the 168 schoolgirls who lost their lives in a bomb strike on their school.

This is not the Christianity of the Gospels.

This war was initiated by Israel and the US in blatant violation of international law. It follows a disturbing pattern of certain leaders disregarding international law in their neocolonial pursuit of naked greed. Today, it is Iran... Venezuela, Ecuador and Cuba who are facing the might of the Empire.

These are worldly wars, manipulating and abusing religion to covet resources (oil) and strategic positioning while trampling on the sovereignty of victim nations.

Is World War Three and 'Armageddon' looming? The risks of a widening war in West Asia are growing by the day.

Unfortunately, it is too easy for many Christians to take sides. Those behind the US and Israel are influenced by Christian Zionism and support for Israel as the 'chosen nation'.

Some leaders find it easy to make use of religion as a cover for blatant greed and power. In this case, it is Christianity that is being 'abused' and manipulated in the quest for power and territory.

This war is the latest manifestation of the present world order of neoliberalism. In this world order, greed, profits, strategic conquests and market share reign supreme, contributing to the inequalities in our world. All at the expense of ordinary people and the planet.

Driving this war is the US elite's fear of losing the Empire. The unspoken fear is that China will soon surpass the US as the world's most powerful nation. The US cannot stomach this, hence its drive to control oil, which its rivals need.

The US Empire is in decline, with the dollar losing its edge as the global currency. Its economy is largely based on the Military-Industrial-Media-Big Tech-Big Pharma complex, while ordinary Americans struggle.

In the Roman Empire, debauchery and moral decadence contributed to its decline: ostentatious luxury, sexual excess, sadistic cruelty and macabre parties. Witness the public spectacles and gladiatorial contests that pitted beasts against persecuted people, gladiators against each other....

Little has changed. UN experts have found that the 'Epstein Files' contain disturbing and credible evidence of "systematic and large-scale sexual abuse, trafficking and exploitation of women and girls".

"So grave is the scale, nature, systematic character and transnational reach of these atrocities against women and girls, that a number of them may reasonably meet the legal threshold of crimes against humanity," they said in February.

The files reveal a startling network of influential, overlapping and converging interests: top politicians, bankers, a Big Tech CEO, celebrities, even a 'spiritual guru'.

As the late, irreverent comedian George Carlin once observed, "It's a big club, and you (that's us, ordinary people) ain't in it."

These elite personalities and multi-billionaires are among the beneficiaries of the neoliberal world order. The real, if unspoken, scandal is how vast amounts of public wealth has been transferred to fewer and fewer hands, widening global inequalities.

In contrast, Jesus never spoke in favour of war, let alone wars of aggression to seize control of oil and territory. Contrast the US-Israeli strikes with the kingdom of God that Jesus spoke about. The difference couldn't be more stark.

Whereas the war on Iran is about seizing control of territories and resources, the kingdom of Jesus is more mysterious, even mystical. It spreads and grows silently but rapidly, like a mustard seed.

The Greek word for kingdom is *basileia* while the Aramaic (Jesus' language) is *malkuta*. Though the origins of these words are from the word king (*basileus* in Greek and *malka* in Aramaic), the words for kingdom in Greek and Aramaic carry a feminine nuance.

So when people in the First Century heard the term 'kingdom', it didn't convey the idea of a world under masculine, imperial overlord rule.

Instead, it carried a more 'feminine' tone – a vibrant, generative energy, a 'presence' (in this case, divine), a dynamic, evolving ongoing process. Much like how that mustard seed was growing.

Undoubtedly, Jesus had a different kind of kingdom in mind – so unlike the macho proponents of war, who want to expand their masculine earthly kingdoms, based on greed, territorial conquest and imperial power.

Maybe we need some wisdom to discern the nature of this kingdom. (Again, the Greek word for Wisdom is *Sophia*, another feminine term.)

The question I often wondered about... where exactly is this 'kingdom'? Among us (outside us), in the world around us? Or within us (inside us)? The Gospels are somewhat ambiguous, depending on the context of who the listener was.

The best analogy I came across is that this feminine-sounding kingdom is like Wi-Fi. It is around us. But our mobile phones (our inner self) will not be able to access the internet

unless we have a connection (communion). We need to connect our device (our 'being' and the divine light or breath within us) to the Wi-Fi (kingdom all around us).

The challenge then is to integrate our true selves with the 'kingdom' (a more gender-neutral term would be "reign of God"). We need to integrate ourselves deeper into the kingdom around us – uniting the divine breath, the light within us, with the breath and light of the Spirit. In this way, the light within us can shine brightly 'on a hill' for others to see.

But what is this 'kingdom' like and where to find it? It can be found whenever we spread love, compassion, justice and ecological harmony. It can be found where we reach out to the poor or visit a sick, older person who is starved of human contact. It can be found when we question the unjust structures of the world.

We need to integrate ourselves with all of Creation. This also means doing what we can to protect our ecosystems from everything that threatens our forests, rivers, hills and seas, and all the living creatures within them.

Jesus' personal challenge to us is to seek first this 'invisible' kingdom around us.... Not the greed-driven, warring kingdoms of this world.

How far will the war in Iran spread? Maybe that's the wrong question. The real question is which of these two kingdoms will prevail.

So let's not be passive onlookers. Instead, let's tap into the divine energy reverberating in the kingdom of the Gospels and do our own bit to transform the world around us.

Anil is a freelance writer and activist based in Penang. He believes we are all called to build the kingdom of God in this world.

Our good Lord, in His greatness and all-encompassing wisdom, created us as humans – man and woman – and then, compared us to ... sheep. Like, what?

It's true. The Bible has more than 500 metaphors that represent humans as sheep, who are not ... err ... too competent in the brains department. My guess from that good chuckle you might be stifling down there, is that your mind has conjured up images of people you could easily assign to that role, but do remember that Isaiah 53:6 says, "We ALL, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way."

Jesus absolutely had very good reason to make this comparison. Tell me honestly, which one of us hasn't needed rescuing once in a while by our Good Shepherd?

1. Sheep need direction

Seriously, they're not very bright, and without direction, they can cause grave harm to themselves. There is a pastoral tale about a farmer who once tied a length of string across the exit of his barn just before his sheep shuffled out to pasture. The sheep, confronted with the string, just jumped over it. After a few minutes, the farmer decided to cut the string. The sheep still kept jumping over the imaginary string!

Funny, yes. But we can be that way every so often. Sometimes, we follow people and trends blindly, and we go astray. Then we bleat for the Good Shepherd to come and get us out of the thickets and brambles. Tell me that isn't true!

2. Sheep need anointing

Psalm 23:5 "You anoint my head with oil". Did you know, sheep cannot even protect themselves from flies?! These pesky creatures buzz around the sheep's faces and lay eggs in



**Yours
'faith'fully**
Georgina Fernandez

We who are like sheep

their noses. The eggs in turn release worms that burrow up the nasal cavity and into the sheep's brains. The sheep then proceed to bang their heads about trying to get rid of the irritation, to no avail. This can kill them! So, to safeguard his sheep against these flies, the shepherd pours oil mixed with sulphur over their heads and anoints them. The oil prevents the flies from flying up into the sheep's nasal cavity and the sheep remains safe.

How many times have we run to our Saviour for His anointing? We can't do life without it! We need His protection, His presence, His grace and His strength, every minute of every day. How else do we protect ourselves from the constant buzzing of evil and challenges about us? We need anointing. For only anointing breaks the yoke of sin. In Mark 5:25-34 (also in Matthew 9:20-22 and Luke 8:43-48), the woman with the issue of blood wanted ONLY to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. Why? Because He was anointed! And that anointing was what she needed to heal her and break the yoke of her suffering. In Mark 5:21-43 (also in Matthew 9:18-26 and Luke 8:40-56), Jairus sought out Jesus urgently because his daughter was dying and only Jesus' anointing could save her! Same goes! We're the church. And we need His anointing. We're His sheep.

3. Sheep only recognise their Shepherd's voice
John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow me."

If you look at a field where large flocks of sheep stand grazing, you'll probably notice more than one shepherd around. Sometimes, as many as four or five shepherds bring their flocks to graze

in the same pasture. So how do the sheep know which one to go back with? Ah, watch when one of them calls out to his flock. Only the heads that belong to his flock rise up from their grazing and quietly follow him back home. They know their shepherd's voice. Also, they flee at voices that don't belong to their shepherd. They get rattled and disoriented when they don't hear his voice and they tend to get disoriented and feel lost.

Sound familiar? How often do we feel a sense of disquiet in our spirits when we don't hear His calm voice. 'Where are You Lord?'; 'I can't hear You Master.'; 'Where do I go from here, Father?'; 'See? We're Sheep!'

4. Sheep don't carry burdens

Psalm 55:22 "Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you."

Have you ever seen sheep carry loads on their backs? Like sticks or water bags or bales of hay? They don't. They can't. They'd be crushed! They're fragile, defenceless animals with delicate bodies. Their fragile, thin legs barely hold them upright and if they ever fall on their backs, they often can't get back up. Imagine if they had extra weight strapped to them!

And just like them, we aren't meant to carry heavy burdens either. That's why humanity spends a fortune on psychiatrists and counsellors. We can't carry heavy burdens by ourselves. We need listening ears and shoulders to cry on. We need our Saviour, who promises us that casting our heavy burdens on Him will surely bring us relief. He knows us. He created us.

5. Sheep lack discernment. (Yes, a little stupid)

Psalm 23:1-2 "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters."

Sheep get thirsty after all that walking and grazing. And they'll drink from any old puddle in the dirt, instead of waiting a few minutes to reach clean water. They lack discernment and judgement and, quite frankly, will settle for muddy water. They live in the moment and don't have much head for planning around clean water.

Lo! How many times have we done that?! 'Let's live in the moment'; 'Let's grab life by the horns'; 'Let's not concern ourselves too much with the future, for who has seen life 10 years down the road.' And then, 'Uh, oh! I should have saved for a rainy day,' OR 'Oh no, I didn't see that lay off coming' OR 'I should have thought twice before making that commitment'. Yikes! God knows we can be a little shortsighted in the discernment department. And that's why we need Him to lead us beside still waters. Not hot water that we more often than not find ourselves in. But clean, calm, still waters that only He can lead us to.

Conclusion:

I know it can sound a little offensive to be compared to a skittish animal such as a sheep. But the comparisons quite honestly ring true, don't you think? I am continually thankful that we have Jesus, our Good Shepherd, to tend to us when we bleat and cry out in times of trouble, needing rescuing from even our own selves and our foolish escapades. He knows I have had many of them.

Signing off until next time! Baa...Baa...

Georgina is a writer, home chef, wife and doggy mama. She is of Indian origin and has lived in Tanzania, Muscat, Mumbai and is now based in Kuala Lumpur. She is an ex-advertising creative director turned home chef and is the co-owner of Five & Two Fine Foods, with her husband, John. In her spare time, she loves to travel, play the keyboard and craft.



Fr Dr Clarence Devadass

Choosing to belong and remain

Parish life in a mobile world

What does it mean to belong to a parish today? For centuries, belonging to a parish was simple and unquestioned. Parish life was defined by geography. Where you lived determined where you worshipped, received the sacraments, and formed your spiritual identity. The parish church was usually within walking distance, and accessibility was the guiding principle. There was little choice involved. Good or bad, vibrant or struggling, that parish was yours. Over time, relationships were formed, shared histories developed, and a strong sense of connection naturally emerged because people stayed rooted in one place.

In that traditional model, the parish was not merely a building. It was the centre of religious, social, and communal life. Baptisms, marriages, funerals, feast days, and weekly worship all took place within the same sacred walls. Faith was lived in close proximity, and the parish became an extension of the neighbourhood itself. Belonging was assumed rather than chosen.

Today, however, that reality has shifted dramatically. As I now serve in an inner-city parish, there is a greater realisation that society is far more mobile than it once was. People move frequently for work, education, or family reasons. Transportation is easier and faster, and digital communication allows connections beyond physical boundaries. As a result, the once clear link between geography and parish membership has weakened. Many people, especially in urban areas, no longer attend the church closest to their home. Instead, they associate themselves with a parish for a wide variety of personal and

spiritual reasons.

Some are drawn by familiarity. Perhaps they grew up in a particular parish and continue to feel at home there even after moving away. Others seek a particular style of liturgy, preaching, or music that speaks to them more deeply, or a Mass time that fits the rhythm of their work and family life. Many look for a sense of belonging, warmth, and welcome that they may not have experienced elsewhere. For some, it is the strength of the community, the presence of active ministries, or opportunities for service that attract them. Increasingly, parish affiliation has become a matter of discernment rather than default.

One sees this in the experience of a young family who moved into a new neighbourhood and initially attended the parish closest to their home. While the liturgy was reverent, they struggled to connect. After visiting another parish a short drive away, they were welcomed warmly, invited to a community meal, and soon found themselves involved in faith formation and outreach. Over time, that parish became the place where their children learned to pray, where friendships were formed, and where faith took root. Though not the closest church, it became their spiritual home.

This shift raises an important question. What does it mean to belong to a parish today? Belonging must mean more than simply attending the nearest church or having one's name on a register. In a mobile and diverse society, parish membership calls for being rooted in something deeper, shared faith, mutual commitment, and active participation in a living community.

A parish today must be a spiritual home, not

just a physical location. It should be a place where people feel comfortable worshipping, where they are nourished by the Word and the sacraments, and where they are drawn closer to God through relationships with others. Community is no longer incidental. It is essential. People remain where they feel known, valued, and spiritually supported.

This does not mean that geography has no role to play. Local presence still matters, especially in times of crisis, service, and outreach. Parishes remain called to serve the people who live within their boundaries. However, geography alone can no longer sustain parish identity. In a world where people can go anywhere, the parish must offer a compelling reason to stay, to engage, and to belong.

In this renewed vision, belonging to a parish means more than showing up on Sundays. It means contributing one's gifts, supporting the life of the community, and walking together in faith. It means recognising that parish life is not about personal preference alone, but about building up the Body of Christ. A parish becomes a place where faith is lived collectively, where differences are held together by a shared desire to grow closer to God.

The question, then, is not whether the traditional geographical parish has lost its value, but how it can be enriched and transformed for our time. The parish of today must meet people where they are spiritually, emotionally, and socially, while still grounding them in a sense of place and purpose. Belonging is no longer assumed. It must be cultivated.

From a clergy perspective, this changing

understanding of parish belonging is both challenging and deeply hopeful. Priests and pastoral leaders increasingly encounter people who arrive not because they live nearby, but because they are searching for healing, meaning, or a place where their faith can grow. Many come carrying grief, questions, or a sense of spiritual disconnection. When they are met with patience, listening, and genuine welcome, something sacred happens. The parish becomes not a destination chosen for convenience, but a community that accompanies people where they are.

In an age of mobility and choice, the parish remains vital, but only if it is understood as more than a location. It is a community of faith, a spiritual family, and a sacred space where people encounter God together. This moment invites us to pause and reflect, to ponder more deeply what it truly means to belong to a parish, and how that belonging might shape not only where we worship, but how we live our faith together.

Today, more than ever, the parish is more than the church nearest our home; it is the community of people who accompany us, pray with us, and help us encounter God. It is the family of faith that welcomes us in our joys and sorrows, reminding us that we are never alone. It is the place where our gifts are shared, our burdens are lightened, and our hope is renewed. It is the living body of Christ, reaching beyond walls and boundaries, drawing us into communion with one another and with Him.

Fr Clarence serves as the parish priest of the Church of St Anthony and is also the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Reality's immune system

Thomas Moore, the author of *Care of the Soul*, teaches that our most important spiritual task is to listen to the promptings of our own soul. If listened to in honesty, it will guide us, protect us, and keep us healthy.

I heard him present this to an audience in a church setting and after he had finished his presentation, someone voiced this strong objection: "I'm a married man, what if my soul tells me to have an affair?" Moore responded to this effect: Your soul will never tell you that. *Your soul is your moral and spiritual immune system.* Just as your physical immune system will never prompt you to do things that are bad for your physical health, so too your soul will never prompt you to do things that are bad for your moral and spiritual health. Your soul, just like your body, has an immune system that protects your health.

What Moore says of the individual soul is also true for the soul of this world. Reality has an immune system, a moral arc, which protects our health and lets us know when it is violated.

This has various expressions. For example, Jesus teaches this clearly: *The measure you measure out is the measure that you will receive.* (Mark 4, 24) What's implied here is that reality has a moral structure, ultimately grounded on love that cannot be violated without consequence. It gives back

in kind, rewarding goodness with goodness and malice with malice. The air we breathe out is the air we will re-inhale (even true literally).

In Buddhism and Hinduism, this takes expression in what they call the *Law of Karma*. In street language, the *Law of Karma* teaches that *what goes around comes around*.

Reality is so structured that we always eventually reap the consequences of our own actions. When we act altruistically, good things will come to us, and when we act selfishly, we reap some unhappy consequences. In essence no one gets away with anything, and no virtuous deed goes unrewarded.

What both Jesus and the *Law of Karma* teach is that, just as our physical bodies have an immune system that guides and protects us and that can never be ignored or violated without consequence, reality too has an immune system, an inviolable moral structure, that cannot be ignored or violated without consequences. Ultimately, we reap what we sow, with no exceptions. Virtue is its own reward, sin its own punishment.

However, this doesn't always appear to be true on the surface of things. Sometimes it looks like sin is being rewarded and virtue is being punished. But that is mostly at the level of our emotions. Emotionally,

it's natural to envy the amoral. Nikos Kazantzakis puts this rather colourfully: "Virtue sits completely alone on the top of a desolate ledge."

Through her mind pass all the forbidden pleasure which she has never tasted – and she weeps!"

We see this kind of envy in the older brother of the Prodigal Son. He resents the fact that his younger brother gave himself over to sensuous hedonism, while he himself stayed the moral course. To him it seemed his younger brother had grasped life, while he, in timidity, had missed out on it.

However, his father's words to him are meant to dispel his (and our) envy of the amoral.

The Prodigal Father, God, tells the older brother not to envy his younger brother's promiscuity and hedonism. From outward appearance it may have looked like life, but in the father's words: *Your brother was dead!*

There is a moral arc inside all created reality, a moral immune system, that is meant to protect the universe and all of us in it. *Virtue is its own reward, sin its own punishment.*

Both the *Law of Karma* and Jesus assure us that *the measure you measure out is the measure that you will receive.* No good deed goes unrewarded and no selfish deed

enhances one's life.

I did my doctoral thesis on the proofs for the existence of God. I examined Thomas Aquinas' famous *Five Ways*, Anselm's intriguing *Ontological Argument*, Descartes' take on this, and numerous commentaries on these various arguments that attempt to prove the existence of God. In the end, I concluded that we cannot prove the existence of God, as one might prove a truth through a mathematical equation or a strict scientific hypothesis.

But this doesn't mean that these proofs aren't helpful. They work in another way. They point you to a certain way of living, namely, where you don't look to find the reality of God at the end of an equation, but where you look to experience the reality of God through living in an honest, moral way.

There's a moral arc inside all of reality, an immune system, that, I believe, is a clear proof for the existence of God, for it tells us that a personal, altruistic love lies at the basis of everything and it may never be violated.

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

LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER

Dear children,

God Promises New Life

In today's Old Testament reading, God promises His people that He will raise them from their graves. This means that God has power over death and wants to give His people life again.

Jesus Raises Lazarus

In the Gospel, Jesus performs a great miracle.

He raises His friend Lazarus from the dead.

This shows us that Jesus has power over death and that He cares deeply for His friends. At the end of time, God will raise everyone from the dead.

Why Doesn't God Like Death?

God did not create death in the beginning. Death came into the world because of sin. Even though all people must die, God wants to

give us new life — just as He gave Lazarus new life.

Something Worse Than Dying

Did you know there is something worse than dying? Sin is worse than dying. When someone commits a mortal sin, it destroys God's life in their soul.

Our bodies will rise again one day, but if we are not sorry for serious sins, our souls will be separated from God.

Preparing Our Hearts During Lent Lent is a special time to clean our hearts from sin.

One important way to do this is by going to Confession.

When we confess our sins, God forgives us and fills our souls again with His life and grace.

Then we are ready to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus at Easter!

Love
Aunty Eliz

Spot the Differences for Jesus Raised Lazarus From the Dead. Compare the picture on the top with the picture on bottom. Circle the 11 things that are different.

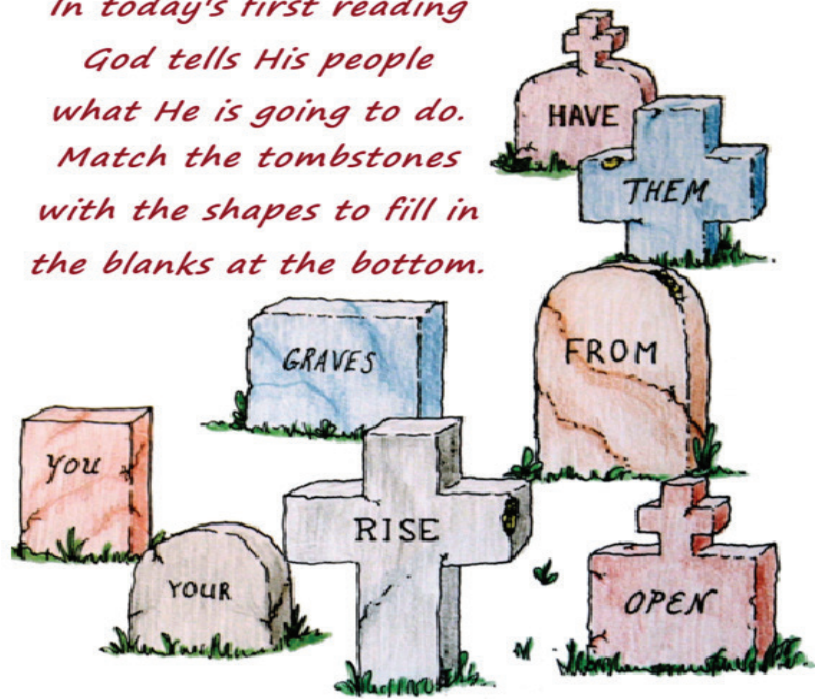
Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead



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

disciples surprise Bethany friends sisters
 Lazarus Martha stone linen risen
 alive Jesus wept dead tomb
 Mary cry sad

*In today's first reading
 God tells His people
 what He is going to do.
 Match the tombstones
 with the shapes to fill in
 the blanks at the bottom.*



I will
 and

YOUTH

Meet Me at the Well

a Lenten youth camp experience

Jennifer Junita Franklin

TAMPIN: A total of 120 young people came together from March 6–8 for a spiritually enriching youth camp titled *Meet Me at the Well*. Inspired by the Gospel encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), the camp invited participants to step away from the noise and busyness of daily life and experience a personal encounter with Christ — the One who offers the living water that quenches every thirst of the human heart.

Over the course of three days, the camp unfolded as a meaningful journey of faith. Through moments of prayer, reflection, service and joyful fellowship, the young participants discovered anew the invitation of Jesus to draw closer to Him. What began as a simple gathering soon became a powerful experience of renewal, friendship and spiritual awakening, reminding all who attended that Christ continues to meet His people, even today, at the wells of their lives.

Friday – A Journey Begins

The camp began on Friday afternoon as participants arrived at 4.00pm bringing with them excitement and anticipation for the days ahead. After tea and

dinner, everyone gathered at the entrance of the church for the opening ceremony. Each participant received a white or purple balloon, where purple symbolised the reflective spirit of the Lenten season and white represented purity and renewal in Christ. A short procession then followed to the church entrance where the opening ceremony took place. The ceremony was officiated by the parish priest of the Church of St John Vianney, Fr Albet Arockiasamy, together with Fr Michel Dass and Fr Gregory Chan. In a symbolic gesture of hope and surrender to God, the participants released their balloons into the evening sky before solemnly processing into the church.

During the procession, several youth reverently carried the Cross, the statue of Mother Mary and sacred relics into the church. The Cross symbolised the boundless love and sacrifice of Christ for humanity, while Mother Mary reminded everyone of her gentle intercession and motherly guidance leading us closer to her Son. The evening continued with the Way of the Cross, as youths walked prayerfully from station to station around the church compound. At each station, a few youths stood holding crosses representing the different stations, creating a powerful and moving atmosphere as participants reflected deeply on the Passion of Christ.

Later in the evening, Mass was celebrated by Frs Xavier Andrew, Albet Arockiasamy and Michel Dass, during which the youth were encouraged to open their

hearts to Christ to know they are deeply loved and to trust that growing in faith sometimes includes learning from mistakes. The night was further uplifted with a joyful praise and worship session led by the Cornerstone music ministry. At the end of the day, participants were brought to parishioners' homes for shower time and rest, experiencing the warmth and hospitality of the parish community.

Saturday – Faith Lived in Community

Saturday began early with breakfast before some participants departed for community outreach programmes in St Dominic Centre in Gemencheh, the Chapel of St Christopher in Gemas, the Chapel of St Joseph in Kuala Pilah, the Chapel of Mary Mother of God in Bahau, as well as the communities in Palong and GATCO, where they experienced the joy of serving and connecting with different communities. Those who remained attended the morning Mass celebrated by Fr Edwin Peter, after which they visited various BECs to experience the life of small Christian communities living out their faith.

At 2.00pm everyone gathered at the cemetery for an input session conducted by Fr Simon Agbo, where participants prayed for the souls of the faithful departed, remembering the communion of saints. The group then walked back to the church together in quiet reflection. In the afternoon,

participants enjoyed a time of fellowship and light activities that encouraged teamwork and camaraderie, filling the day with joy and laughter.

After dinner, the evening session began with a powerful talk on addiction by Fr Michel Dass, addressing challenges faced by many youth today, including peer pressure, social media influences and personal struggles. He guided the participants to reflect on the choices they make daily, encouraging them to turn to Christ for strength, to seek healthy support from family and community, and to embrace God's grace in overcoming obstacles and making positive decisions in their lives.

This was followed by a short but inspiring sharing by Archbishop Julian Leow, who encouraged the youths to remain steadfast in their faith, to trust in God's plan for their lives, and to let Christ guide them through every challenge they may face. He reminded them that even in moments of doubt or difficulty, God's love is constant and that by nurturing their relationship with Him, they could grow into compassionate, courageous and joyful witnesses of the Gospel in their families, schools, and communities. The day concluded with Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction, where participants spent quiet moments before the Blessed Sacrament, encountering Christ in prayer and silence.

• Continued on Pg 17



At youth Way of the Cross, bishop urges support for bullying victims



LEGAZPI CITY, Albay: A Catholic bishop urged young people to confront bullying by seeking support and finding 'wells' or places of comfort.

Speaking during Mass for the 17th Diocesan Youth Way of the Cross in Ligao City, Bishop Joel Baylon of Legazpi said sharing struggles with friends or family can soften the impact.

"Bullying is everywhere," Bishop Baylon said in his homily at the Divine Mercy Shrine and Monastery of the Carmelite Nuns of the Holy Trinity. "When facing it alone, it is painful."

Using the Samaritan woman as an example, he encouraged youth to identify personal spaces where they can reflect, pray,

and encounter Jesus.

"The wells that we go to are places where we find comfort and solace, where we can be ourselves," he told about 3,000 participants.

The bishop cautioned that some sources of comfort, such as the internet, may offer temporary pleasure but cannot bring one closer to God.

He also called on young Catholics to show compassion to peers rejected by society, urging them to share God's love and guidance.

Organised by the Legazpi Diocesan Commission on Youth, the annual event combines spiritual reflection with traditional devotional practices. **CBCPNews**

CAMPUS LINE ARCHKL LAUNCHED TO CONNECT CATHOLIC STUDENTS IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

KUALA LUMPUR: The Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur has introduced Campus Line ArchKL, a new initiative aimed at connecting Catholic students studying in institutions of higher learning across the archdiocese.

The platform serves as a simple registration channel where students can indicate the campus they are studying at and provide basic contact details. Through this information, the archdiocese hopes to better understand where Catholic students are located and how they can be accompanied during their tertiary years.

Once registered, students will be contacted by campus ministers who will help link them with campus-based initiatives, parish communities and fellow Catholic students.

The initiative is part of a broader effort by the Archdiocesan Single Adults and Youth Office (ASAYO KL) to strengthen pastoral outreach to young Catholics pursuing higher education.

Expansion of campus ministry team

In January 2026, the Archdiocesan Campus Ministry team under ASAYO KL was



expanded to strengthen outreach efforts and provide greater support for Catholic students across campuses.

The expanded team works alongside the existing ASAYO pastoral team to coordinate programmes and accompany students during their university years.

The team includes:

- Jacinta Fernandez, Coordinator: jacinta@asayokl.my
- Sr Michaelina Matin, SSFS: michaelina@asayokl.my
- Josephine Tan: josephine@asayokl.my
- Thessalonica Michael: thessalonica@asayokl.my
- Jeshua Raphael: jeshua@asayokl.my

Campus ministers appointed to support outreach include:

- Cassandra Jacklya: cassandraj@asayokl.my
- Jaclyn Tan: jaclyn@asayokl.my
- Carle Samson: carle@asayokl.my

Initial outreach underway

Following the launch of Campus Line ArchKL in March 2026, ASAYO KL has begun initial outreach and coordination across the archdiocese.

Among the early engagement initiatives is a Vocation Programme scheduled for April 2026, which will include campus-focused breakout sessions prioritising students from the KL Central, KL South and KL North districts.

Engagement efforts are also currently underway in several districts. In KL Central, coordination with campuses has begun, while the Petaling district is exploring plans for a district-level campus gathering targeted for September or October 2026.

Meanwhile, outreach in KL South is progressing through existing parish and youth ministry structures.

These early initiatives will help the ministry map the presence of Catholic students across campuses and identify opportunities to strengthen pastoral support.



Building a stronger campus network

Moving forward, the ministry plans to recruit Campus Animating Teams (CATs) in each district. These teams will help foster connections among Catholic students and facilitate communication across campuses.

District-level campus gatherings are also planned to help build community, identify student leaders and strengthen collaboration between campus initiatives and parish youth ministries.

Through these efforts, the archdiocese hopes to create a stronger network of support for Catholic students as they navigate their academic and faith journeys during their years in higher education.

• Continued from pg 16

Sunday – Sent Forth with Living Water

On Sunday morning, participants woke up at 7.00am prepared for the final day, and gathered for breakfast before the closing celebration. Adoration and confessions were held for the youths before Mass. The closing Mass began at 11.00am concelebrated by Frs Michel Dass, Albet Arockiasamy, Simon Agbo and Adrian Francis, bringing together participants, organisers and the parish community in thanksgiving for the blessings received throughout the camp. After Mass, everyone shared a joyful lunch before bidding farewell to one another. Soon after, the participants said their heartfelt "Sayonara," marking the end of a grace-filled weekend.

Throughout the camp, the chapel remained open 24 hours and was beautifully decorated according to the theme with a symbolic well, reminding participants of



the living water offered by Christ. A special highlight was the presence of the First Class Relic of St Carlo Acutis, known as the patron of young people, whose life continues to inspire young hearts to seek holiness even in the modern world. The camp also honoured St. John Vianney, the patron saint of the host parish, remembered for his deep faith and pastoral dedication.

Just like our Lenten theme this year,

"In the One, We Are One," participants felt a profound sense of unity and shared purpose in Christ. Over the course of the camp, barriers of age, background and personal differences melted away as the youths came together in prayer, reflection, service and joyful fellowship. Through processing together with the Cross, walking the Way of the Cross and serving the community, they experienced firsthand

what it means to be members of the Body of Christ, to be connected not by circumstance, but by faith, love and the living presence of Jesus.

Moments of quiet prayer at the chapel, laughter during fellowship and the shared experience of learning from the saints and clergy fostered a deep sense of belonging, reminding every participant that in Christ, they are never alone. The camp became a living testament to the power of unity in faith, where each heart, though unique was bound to the others through the One who calls us to love and serve.

The "Meet Me at the Well" youth camp was more than just a gathering of activities; it was a sacred encounter with Christ. Like the Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well, the 120 youth returned home with hearts renewed, friendships strengthened and a deeper desire to live their faith. As Scripture reminds us, "Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst." (John 4:14)

MEMORIAM

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In Loving Memory



John Ambrose Violet Ambrose
Departed 23rd May 1985 (41st Anniversary) Departed 23 Mar 2001 (25th Anniversary)



George Ignatius Ambrose
Departed 27 June 2021 (5th Anniversary)



Stella Read Prasad
Departed 5 Nov 2000 (25th Anniversary)



Joseph Dexter D'Reis
Departed 11 Oct 1998 (28th Anniversary)

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
May their souls rest in peace. Amen.

In Loving Memory of Moses Visuvasam

Began Eternal Life
31st March 2025

'The Lord appeared to me from afar saying, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have drawn you with loving-kindness.'
– Jeremiah 31:3

A life full of love and smiles, spreading the fragrance of virtue. He united everyone as a father of unity, A heart of gold, spreading kindness and helping hands. He is the father of our lives. Rest in Peace, our King of Love.

Deeply missed & remembered forever by Beloved Wife, Loving Children, Grandchildren, Siblings, Relatives and Loved Ones.

14th Anniversary In Cherished Memory of




Mary Sarojam Cherian
12-3-27 ~ 27-3-12

Precious beautiful mother, angel Angel all our lives By your walk of faith and love Suffering and compassion Patience and forbearance Giving and ever-forgiving Honesty, humility and simplicity You shine a blessed light. Beloved mother Faithful child of God Angel of the Lord Pray for us.

Your loving family.

7th Anniversary In Ever Loving Memory of




Yvonne Yeoh Siew Lay
Departed: 22-03-2019

You will always remain in our hearts. Always loved, Never forgotten.

Forever missed by Joseph, Michael and Marie Ong.

10th Year Anniversary In Loving Memory of




MADAM MARIAMMAH THOMAS

From the Lord :
29th Oct 1938
To the Lord:
2nd April 2016

In life we loved you dearly, In death we love you still, In our hearts we hold a place, That only you can fill.

Deeply loved and forever cherished by Children, Grandchildren and loved ones.

1ST YEAR ANNIVERSARY IN LOVING MEMORY OF




ANDREW ERICKSON PEREIRA (SURESH)
22 MAY 1960 – 16 MARCH 2025


Gone from our sight, but never from our hearts, One year ago, God called you to His heavenly garden. We cherish the memories of your love and the legacy of your faith. Rest in Eternal Peace.

Lovingly remembered by his beloved mother (Lucy Pereira), siblings (Prasana, Prem, Ramesh, Asha), in-laws, nephews & nieces.

27th ANNIVERSARY In Ever Loving Memory of Our beloved parents



Theresa Margaret
Born: 18-4-1926 Departed: 17-3-1999



Joseph Maniam
Born: 1-5-1919 Departed: 31-3-1999


Today, we recall 27 years ago when you both left us to a better place in a space of two weeks. Pappa couldn't wait to join you amma. Amma, Pappa, you planted the seed of love, faith, charity and above all the bond in us your children to be always together.

Today we live in the warmth of all the beautiful memories that you left with us that we continue with our children and grandchildren. You both are always in our hearts and minds. Deeply missed and cherished by your loving children, in-laws, grandchildren, great grandchildren and loved ones.

Seremban

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The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy before you and said, 'Destroy.'

Deuteronomy 33:27



IN EVER LOVING MEMORY
MICHAEL JOSEPH MASILAMANY
11 March 2016

Ten years have passed since you left us in silence, But your kindness still lingers – a soft echo in the air. You were gentle in ways unseen, your heart always open, your hands always ready to lift, to help, to hold. There were no grand gestures, just quiet acts of love – a warm smile, a listening ear, a steady presence. Now, a decade later, we carry your kindness within us, a flame that still burns, quiet and bright, as if you're still here, teaching us, even in absence – the power of simple love.

FUNDRAISING BUILD ME A SANCTUARY (EXODUS 25:8)

We are embarking on a journey to build a beautiful and welcoming space, the Church of the Holy Family in Ulu Tiram, Johor, that will serve as a cornerstone of our community for generations to come. Your generosity can make this dream a reality.



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Our church community is vibrant and growing, representing four languages and a shared commitment to faith. But our current building, situated near a river and school, is no longer adequate. Flooding, scheduling conflicts, and limited parking restrict our ability to fully serve our community. We envision a new building – a welcoming space with ample parking, classrooms for catechism, and a sanctuary large enough to accommodate our growing congregation. This is an opportunity to invest in our future and build a lasting legacy of faith. Your donation will make this vision a reality.



Fr. Ryan Innas
Project Chairman

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Fr. Martinian Lee
Assistant Chairman

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6 APRIL MONDAY

"Running from the Empty Tomb: Witnesses of Mercy in a Doubting World"

7:00 PM Holy Hour
8:00 PM Divine Mercy Novena
8:30 PM Mass

7 APRIL TUESDAY

"Called by Name: Sent Forth as Apostles of Mercy"

7:00 PM Holy Hour
8:00 PM Divine Mercy Novena
8:30 PM Mass

8 APRIL WEDNESDAY

"Hearts Burning, Eyes Opened: Sharing Mercy on the Road"

7:00 PM Holy Hour
8:00 PM Divine Mercy Novena
8:30 PM Mass

9 APRIL THURSDAY

"You Are Witnesses of These Things: Proclaiming Repentance and Mercy"

7:00 PM Holy Hour
8:00 PM Divine Mercy Novena
8:30 PM Mass

10 APRIL FRIDAY

"In His Name, Strength and Healing: Divine Mercy for the Sick and Elderly"

9:00 AM Holy Hour
10:00 AM Divine Mercy Novena
10:30 AM Mass (Anointing the Sick)

"From Failure to Mission: Fed by Mercy, Sent to Serve"

7:00 PM Holy Hour
8:00 PM Divine Mercy Novena
8:30 PM Mass
9:30 PM Divine Mercy Concert

11 APRIL SATURDAY

"Jesus' Special Messengers: Little Hearts Sharing Big Mercy"

9:00 AM Holy Hour
10:00 AM Divine Mercy Novena
10:30 AM Mass for Children

"Community of Mercy: Believing, Sharing, and Sending Forth"

5:00PM Divine Mercy Novena
6:00 PM Mass
Procession
Benediction

12 APRIL SUNDAY

"Community of Mercy: Believing, Sharing, and Sending Forth"


7:00 AM Divine Mercy Chaplet
7:30 AM Mass (Tamil)
9:30 AM Divine Mercy Chaplet
10:00 AM Mass (Mandarin)
11:30 AM Divine Mercy Chaplet
12:00 PM Mass (Bahasa Malaysia)
3:00 PM Divine Mercy Chaplet
3:30 PM Mass (English)



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Feast Day Highlights

- Mass for the Sick & Elderly
- Mass for Children
- Divine Mercy Merchandise
- Divine Mercy Concert
- Sweet Delights by Casa Maria (PIHDM)
- Refreshments after mass

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