

Regional bishops set for *ad limina* visit

KUALA LUMPUR: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei (CBCMSB) will undertake their *ad limina* visit to Rome from May 18 to 23.

During the visit, the bishops are scheduled to meet the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, on Friday, May 22. They will also hold a series of meetings with various Dicasteries and Pontifical Offices, as part of the week-long programme.

"The *ad limina Apostolorum* visits represent the highest expression of communion between bishops of local Churches and the Bishop of Rome, together with his closest collaborators in the Roman Curia," according to the Final Document of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 2024.

Held approximately every five years, the visit requires diocesan bishops from around the world to undertake a pilgrimage to the Tombs of Saints Peter and Paul, meet the Pope, and present a report on the spiritual and administrative state of their dioceses.

This obligation is set out in Canon Law. Canon 399 §1 states: "Every five years a diocesan bishop is bound to make a report to the Supreme Pontiff on the state of the diocese entrusted to him, according to the form and time determined by the Apostolic See." Canon 400 §1 further provides: "Unless the Apostolic See has established otherwise, during the year in which he is bound to submit a report to the Supreme Pontiff, a diocesan bishop is to go to Rome to venerate the tombs of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul and to present himself to the Roman Pontiff."

The last *ad limina* visit of the CBCMSB took place in February 2018 and was led by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, who was then Bishop of Penang and President of the Conference. A total of 14 bishops from Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei — including two emeritus archbishops, one cardinal, four archbishops and seven bishops — participated in the visit, during which they met the Holy

Father, Pope Francis.

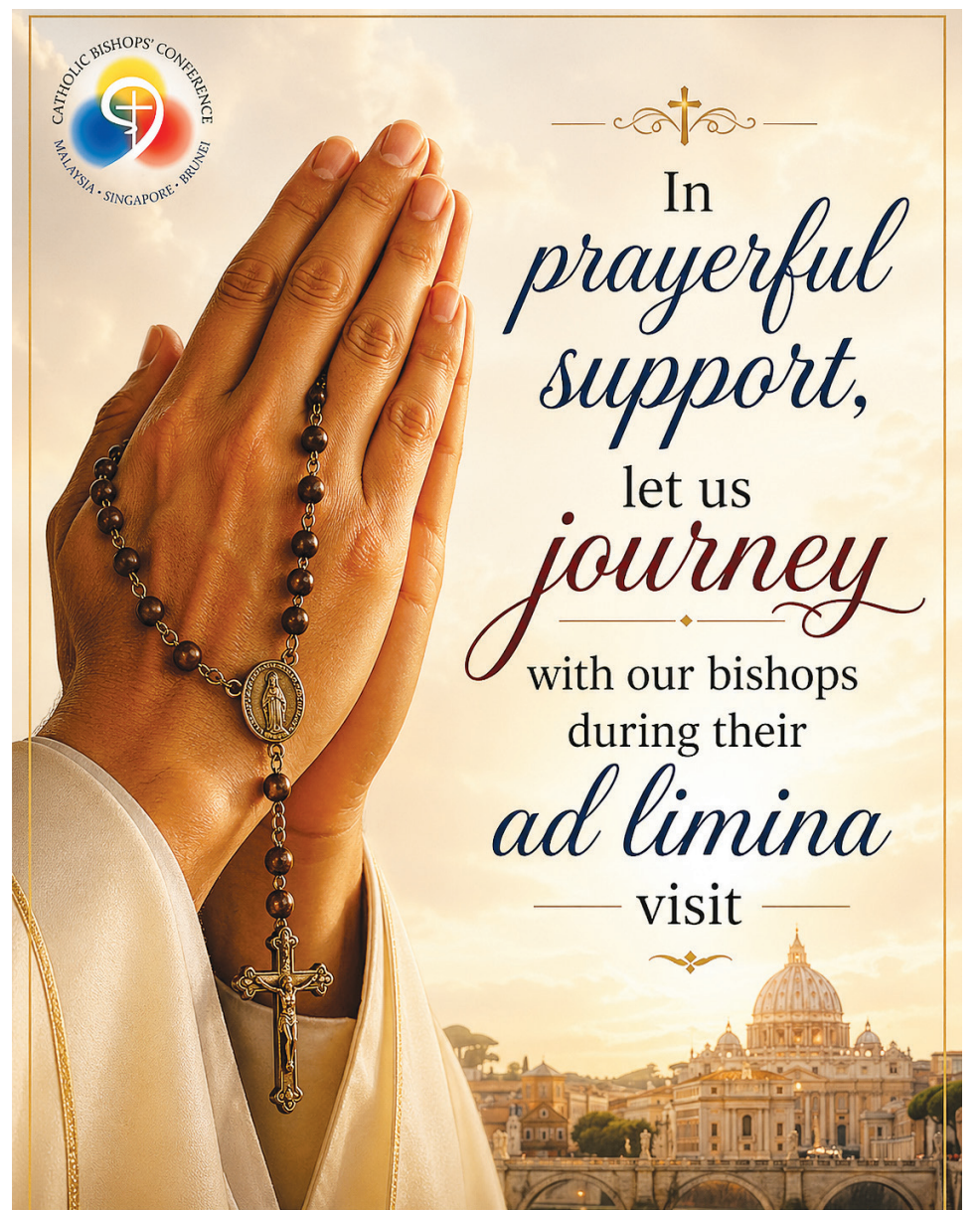
In accordance with Canon Law, the subsequent visit was due in 2023. However, the global COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the schedule, resulting in its postponement. Further delays followed due to the ill health of Pope Francis, who prioritised apostolic journeys during this period. His 12-day, four-nation visit to Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Singapore was his longest apostolic journey prior to his passing on April 21, 2025.

Following the election of Pope Leo XIV as the 267th Pope, the Vatican resumed *ad limina* visits beginning January 2026. The CBCMSB Secretariat was formally notified by the Apostolic Nunciature to Malaysia on May 28, 2025, in line with the requirement to provide one year's notice, allowing bishops sufficient time to prepare their quinquennial reports.

For the 2026 visit, a total of 10 bishops from this region — comprising one emeritus archbishop, two cardinals, three archbishops and four bishops — will meet Pope Leo XIV and heads of various dicasteries of the Roman Curia. These sessions will include presentations and discussions on the pastoral, administrative and missionary life of their respective dioceses.

A key focus of the visit will be the sharing of developments in the implementation phase of the Synod on Synodality, initiated by Pope Francis in 2021. The meeting with the Synod General Secretariat, led by Cardinal Mario Grech, will provide an opportunity for the bishops to reflect on the synodal journey of the Church in Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, where the Catholic communities, though small in number, continue to grow in vitality.

During the visit, Cardinal Sebastian Francis is also scheduled to visit his titular church, *Santa Maria Causa Nostrae Laetitiae* (Church of Holy Mary, Cause of Our Joy). He is expected to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation on Pentecost Sunday for confirmands of the parish, which is also preparing a group of approximately 300 youths to participate in World Youth Day 2027 in Seoul. The group is expected to visit



Malaysia after the WYD event.

As the bishops undertake this *ad limina* visit, the faithful are encouraged to keep them in prayer, seeking a fruitful and grace-filled encounter as the Church in Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei continues to journey in commun-

ion with the universal Church and the Holy Father. The laity are also urged to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, especially in light of the ageing clergy, mindful of the words of Scripture: "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few" (Mt 9:37).

Prayer for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026)

Lord God,
You call us to walk together as Your People,
drawn into the life of communion
of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Guide us as we prepare for
the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026.

Teach us to listen deeply,
to discern faithfully,
and to trust where You are leading us.

We place before You the four areas we are
discerning together.

Bless our families,
that they may be places of love,
faith, forgiveness, and hope.

Renew our Church,
that we may grow in communion,
participation, and joyful witness
to the Gospel.

Open our hearts to the cry of creation,
that we may care for the earth
with reverence, responsibility,
and gratitude.

Guide our life in society,
that we may seek justice, promote peace,
and stand in solidarity with the poor and
the vulnerable.

As pastoral pathways emerge
from our discernment,
may they enrich and strengthen
our local faith communities.

With Mary, Mother of the Church,
who pondered Your Word and walked in
faith, teach us to walk together in hope.

Keep us rooted in Christ,
attentive to one another,
and open to the work of
Your Holy Spirit.

May this Convention
help us live more faithfully
as one Catholic Church of Malaysia,
serving in this land we love.

Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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**EDITOR**

Patricia Pereira
editor1@herald.com.my

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Sandra Ann Inbaraj
sandra@herald.com.my

**JOURNALIST**

Christina Lazaroo
christina@herald.com.my

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

Amanda Mah
amanda@herald.com.my

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

Kevin Francis
kevin@herald.com.my

**BAHASA MALAYSIA**

Melania Liza Magnus
liza@herald.com.my

**MANDARIN**

Adelina Wong
yin4482@gmail.com

**TAMIL**

Perzeus James
tamil@herald.com.my

**ADMIN ASSISTANT**

Rachael Sharma
admin@herald.com.my

ADVERTISEMENT/SUBSCRIPTION
advertisement@herald.com.my

MEMORIAM

memoriam@herald.com.my

LETTERS

letterseditor@herald.com.my

Social Media

www.heraldmalaysia.com



@heraldmalaysia



heraldmalaysia
Herald Snapshot



@heraldsnapshot

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The courage to be an imperfect mother

There is a certain script the world has written about mothers — and we have repeated it so often that it has begun to sound like truth. Mothers are strong. Mothers are resilient. Mothers are tireless, selfless, endlessly patient. Mothers, we say, are superwomen.

I was reminded of this recently while watching a Mother's Day advertisement from India. The storyline was simple but telling: an advertising agency was tasked with creating a campaign to celebrate mothers. One by one, executives presented their ideas — polished, clever, and familiar. Each concept portrayed mothers as heroic figures who could do everything, hold everything together, and never falter. The conclusion seemed obvious: mothers would be cast as superwomen.

Until one junior executive quietly challenged the narrative.

"It's okay for a mother to be tired," she said.

"It's okay for a mother to make mistakes.

"It's okay for a mother to feel overwhelmed... to feel guilty... to not have it all together."

In that gentle and almost hesitant voice, something deeply human broke through. In that moment, something shifted. Because what she offered was not simply a better campaign, but a truer one. It was a more compassionate reflection of what so many mothers carry silently in their hearts.

We live in a world that celebrates strength, but often misunderstands it. In placing mothers on a pedestal, we may unintentionally place a heavy burden on their shoulders. There is an unspoken

expectation that they must be everything for everyone, all the time. They are expected to give without running dry, to love without limits, and to hold everything together, even when they themselves feel as though they are falling apart.

But motherhood was never meant to be a performance. It is a vocation lived in the quiet, in-between moments of daily life. It is found in the soft hum of a lullaby sung through exhaustion. It is found in hurried mornings when everything feels chaotic and nothing seems to go right. It is found in whispered prayers at the end of a long day when there are no more words left. It is found in hidden sacrifices, in tears wiped away before anyone notices, and in the courage to begin again the next day.

Motherhood is not only present in moments of triumph. It is also present in moments of doubt, in moments of uncertainty, and in moments when a mother sits quietly and wonders if she is enough. And perhaps that is where its deepest beauty lies.

What makes a mother extraordinary is not her ability to be everything, but her willingness to keep loving even when she feels she has little left to give. It is seen in her presence, her persistence, and her quiet and faithful commitment to love, day after day.

To the mother who lies awake at night worrying if she has done enough, you have. To the mother who carries guilt over the moments she could not be everything, grace gently fills those spaces. To the mother who feels tired in a way words cannot fully explain, your weariness

is not failure. It is love poured out again and again.

Perhaps this Mother's Day, what mothers need most is not another reminder of how strong they are, but the quiet assurance that they are allowed to rest. They are allowed to breathe. They are allowed to be held, just as they have held so many others. They are allowed to be human. They are allowed to be imperfect. They are allowed to be enough.

When we free mothers from the illusion of perfection, we begin to see something far more sacred, which is their humanity. And in that humanity, love takes on its most tender and truthful form.

So today, we do not celebrate mothers because they are superwomen. We celebrate them because they are real. We celebrate them because they show up even on the hardest days. We celebrate them because they love even when it costs them something. We celebrate them because they choose, again and again, to give of themselves in ways the world may never fully see.

To every mother, whether biological, spiritual, adoptive, or one who nurtures others in quiet and unseen ways, thank you. Thank you for your courage, your tenderness, and your steadfast and enduring love.

And above all, know this. You do not have to be perfect to be enough.

Happy Mother's Day.

Patricia Pereira

Heirs of the Spirit, heirs of His grace

The second reading this Sunday offers one of the clearest directives in Scripture on how we are to evangelise and witness to our faith. It reminds us that evangelisation is not optional, but flows from our identity as Christians (cf. *Ad Gentes* nos. 23 & 35). To be Christian is not something we practise only on Sundays; it shapes our entire way of life, as Pope Benedict XVI reminded us (General Audience, November 14, 2012). This is the life Christ calls us to — and the life the Church prepares us for, as we approach Pentecost.

On the birth of the Church

We often think of Pentecost as the "birthday" of the Church — when the Holy Spirit descended and Peter, whom Christ commanded to "feed My lambs" (John 21:17), preached boldly, leading to the conversion of 3,000. Yet the Church Fathers remind us that the Church was truly born when Christ's side was pierced on the Cross. St John Chrysostom speaks of the outpouring of Blood and Water as the Church's birth, a teaching echoed by St Augustine and affirmed in the Catechism (CCC 766).

Why reflect on this during Easter? Because we proclaim a crucified Christ (cf. 1 Cor 1:23), and it is through His suffering that we are made holy (cf. Heb 10:10). Without His sacrifice, our mission would be impossible. The Church's birth from His wounded side reveals that hope is not separate from suffering, but emerges through it — culminating in the Resurrection.

Before Pentecost comes a period of waiting. The signs of wind and fire may seem more compelling than quiet anticipation, yet God often works through such moments. In the desert wanderings of Israel, in the lives of Sarah and Elizabeth, and in Advent, waiting becomes a time of purification and deeper understanding. So too, this prepares us to receive the Holy Spirit more fully.

Imitating Christ

Returning to the second reading, we see that to imitate Christ (cf. Heb 12:2) entails both suffering and a firm conviction of the truth. To give a defence of our faith "with courtesy and respect" reflects how Jesus responded during His trials, fulfilling Isaiah's image of the lamb led to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7).

We may never stand before courts like Christ or the early saints such as Stephen, Peter, and Paul. The First Letter of Peter was written in such a context, but ours may be different. Yet we are not exempt from witness. Christian spirituality speaks of a "white martyrdom" — the daily offering of our struggles, heartaches, and sacrifices as we take up our cross (cf. Luke 9:23). In this way, even in ordinary life, we give a reason for the hope we carry.

Suffering, in itself, can seem meaningless. It finds purpose only when united with the redemptive suffering of Christ (CCC 1505). Then it becomes a path to communion — drawing us closer to God and to one another, fostering a deeper solidarity that embraces all as one human family (cf. *Fratelli Tutti* 50).

You in Me and I in you

Jesus promises "another" Advocate, implying that the first is Himself. The Holy Spirit enables our *capax Dei* — our capacity for God — drawing us into that profound union where He is in us and we in Him. Through this, we become *alter Christus*, another Christ, strengthened to endure trials and temptations.

While this term is often associated with the ministerial priesthood, it applies, in a real sense, to all the baptised. By virtue of our Baptism and faith, Christ lives in us (cf. Gal 2:20). In becoming another Christ, we become a path for others to encounter Him, instruments of grace who continue His work. This mission is inseparable from Christ's own, sustained by

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Bro Leon Gautier

6th Sunday of Easter (A)

Readings: Acts of the Apostles 8:5-8, 14-17;
1 Peter 3:15-18;
Gospel: John 14:15-21

the Holy Spirit — the same Spirit who gave the Apostles the courage to witness, even unto death.

"You in Me, and I in you" assures us that Jesus never abandons us. Yet this assurance also calls us to live the Gospel authentically, for "woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16). It is demanding, yet hopeful. In our workplaces, schools, communities, and homes — where Christ may not be readily seen — we are called to make Him visible, for through His Incarnation, He lives and unites Himself to us (CCC 521).

To be conformed to the mysteries of Your mighty love

This line from the Prayer over the Offerings of this Sunday's Mass, captures the heart of our calling: to be conformed to Trinitarian love so that we may share it with others.

We are always ready to give a reason for our hope with courtesy and respect, because of the Spirit within us. This witness is expressed not only in words, but in how we live. We see this in Philip's mission (Acts 8:5-6), which brought great rejoicing. Likewise, we embrace suffering and endure life's trials with patience for the sake of Christ and His Church (cf. St Augustine, Sermon 328.7).

To be heirs of the Holy Spirit does not promise a life free from hardship. Rather, it assures us that we remain in union with Christ, able to endure all things in love (cf. Phil 4:13; 1 Cor 13:7), and that we are sent as His witnesses (Acts 1:8), bearing fruit for the Kingdom (John 15:5).



DIOCESE OF PENANG

PKK/BDN/2026/05/232

Notifications and Updates

1. Diocesan Celebration of Pesta Kaamatan, Gawai and Kesyukuran 2026

Wishing a joyous celebration of praise and thanksgiving to all celebrating the harvest festival of *Pesta Kaamatan* (Sabah) and *Hari Gawai* (Sarawak). The diocesan celebration took place on May 2 at the Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam.

2. Sisters of the Infant Jesus Community

Sr Francisca Chong has been recently transferred to the community house in Bukit Mertajam after being in Johor Bahru for the past 13 years. Together in this community are Sr Elizabeth Wong who is the animator of this community while co-ordinating the life of all the Sisters in Penang including communities in Light Street Penang, Waterfall; Sr Maureen Chew who stays in Tingkat Besi, Penang; Sr Lily Bong who gives spiritual direction to some individuals and conducts retreats and Sr Lucy Cheng who sees to the community services. Let us continue to pray for their mission.

3. Feast of St Anne and St Joachim 2026

The Novena and Feast of St Anne and St Joachim this year will begin from July 17 and

culminate on July 26. Let us pray for all pilgrims, volunteers, celebrants and confessors as we experience a meaningful and grace-filled celebration through the intercession of St Anne and St Joachim. The programme for the Feast is available in the various languages. <https://1nk.dev/ogepbuz>

4. Ad Limina Visit 2026, Vatican City, Rome

I wish to share with you that I will be away from May 16 to 27 for the *Ad Limina* Visit which is the Bishops' Visit to the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, the tombs of the Apostles Peter & Paul and the offices of the Holy See, together with the members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei (CBCMSB). Please keep us in your prayers.

The visit *ad limina Apostolorum* by all the bishops who, in communion with the Apostolic See, has a very definitive purpose: that is, the strengthening of their own responsibility as successors of the Apostles and of their hierarchical communion with the successor of Peter. The point of reference is a visit to the tombs of St Peter and Paul, pastors and pillars of the Roman Church. The *ad limina* visit is an

important moment in the exercise of the Holy Father's pastoral ministry; whereby the Holy Father receives the bishops of the various arch/dioceses and discusses with them questions concerning their ecclesial mission.

5. Solemnity of Pentecost

As we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost, we are reminded of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles — an event that transformed fear into courage, uncertainty into faith, and division into unity. The same Spirit continues to move among us today, renewing the Church and guiding us in truth and love. Pentecost invites each of us to open our hearts anew to the presence of the Holy Spirit. In a world often marked by confusion and hardship, the Spirit strengthens us with wisdom, kindles in us the fire of hope, and calls us to be witnesses of Christ in our daily lives. Let us pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our families, our communities, and our world. May we be instruments of peace, bearers of compassion, and faithful servants of the Gospel. May the gifts of the Holy Spirit — wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord — *abide in you always.*

I will be celebrating the Solemnity of Pentecost at my parish in Rome, the titular church, *Parrocchia Santa Maria Causa Nostrae Laetitiae* (Parish of Mary Cause of Our Joy) on May 24 and will confer the Sacrament of Confirmation at this Mass. We will remain united in prayer and faith, as we recall with gratitude, the birthday of the Church.

6. Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church

This liturgical celebration which is celebrated annually on the Monday after Pentecost will be celebrated on May 25 this year. Sharing the official texts for this memorial. <https://1nk.dev/wupbtf2>

7. Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

On this day, let us celebrate a moment of prayer, the liturgical memorial of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the end of the Marian month, as we entrust to Mary our prayers for unity, reconciliation, hope and peace in the world, and in the hearts of every person.

Sebastian Francis
Cardinal Sebastian Francis

KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

May

- 12-13 Clergy Monthly Recollection
- 14 Meeting – Archdiocesan Finance
- 15 Meeting – Sri Seronok Board

PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

May

- 11 Meeting – Bro Ashley Stephen Chau, Seminarian Theology Year 5, Bishop's Office at 4.00pm
- 12 Council of Priests (COP), Stella Maris, Penang at 10.00am
- 12-13 Clergy Monthly Recollection – Stella Maris, Penang
- 13 Signing of Agreement between the Titular Roman Catholic Bishop of Penang and the Fr Josef Eugster, Holistic Development Association, Taiwan (R.O.C.) for the establishment of FJM Southeast Asia Wellness Centre in the Diocese of Penang at 4.00pm

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

May

- 12-13 Clergy Monthly Recollection – MAJODI Centre



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #271



Welcome dear friends,

From May 2 till June 8, the *Malaysia Pastoral Convention Salib* graces the Parish of St Francis Xavier, Melaka.

The *Tamil Synodal Pathways* for the Vicariate took place at St Theresa's Masai on May 1 from 9.00am-5.00pm.

The campus students gathered for *Malacca Johore Catholic Campus Day 2* at MAJODI from May 2 and 3.

The April 25 and 26 weekend ended with 400 plus youth celebrating the *63rd World Vocation Sunday* at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru.

At the same time, six couples participated in the second *Chinese ME Weekend*. The Word continues to be sown; it continues to spread.

Local Takes.

Politics without Conscience. Betraying the people's mandate again? Toppling state governments? Another attempt to dismantle the unity government. Maybe the minority government should remain as the legitimate government.

Scam posts including fake accounts and impersonation materials had surged sharply as AI misuse escalated, commented MCMC.

Admissions into higher education institutions must remain merit-based, *free from politics*, says Zambry. Sometimes it is too good to be true.

Sarawak has strengthened its *commitment to interfaith* unity and harmony with the opening of the Unit For Other Religions (Unifor) Complex. They see a Malaysian Malaysia.

Reading the Signs: Being Credible

Pope Leo leads opinion polls for his moral credibility and has become the *most popular public figure* in the public arena. *TIME* magazine lists the Pope

among the 100 most influential people in the world.

Gallup Studies find a **sharp increase in faith** among young men, aged 18 to 29. 42 per cent of these men say "religion is very important" in their lives. Note that two years earlier it was 28 per cent.

A Thought for the Week: The Jeweller's Stone

A man went to God and asked, "What's the value of life?" God gave him a stone and said, "Find out the value of this stone, but don't sell it." An *orange seller* saw the shiny stone and said, "Take 12 oranges and give me the stone." The man apologised and said that God had asked him not to sell it. A *vegetable seller* saw the shiny stone and said, "Take one sack of potatoes and give me the stone." The man apologised and declined.

Later, at the *jewellers*, after the stone was put under a lens, he said, "I'll give you 5,000,000 for this stone." The man shook his head, and the jeweller said, "Alright! Take 100 million, but give me the stone." The man refused to sell.

Next, he saw a *precious stones dealer* and asked for the value of the stone. The dealer saw the big ruby, placed it on a red cloth, walked in circles around it, admiringly. And he said: "Where did you find it? This is priceless! Even if I were to sell the whole world and my life, I still won't be able to purchase it."

Amazed yet confused, the man returned to God to relate what had happened. And he asked: "Now tell me what is the value of life, Lord!" God spoke: "You already know the answer. The sellers have explained the value of life."

The lesson from the knowing eyes: You can be a precious stone but your value depends on the information they have of you, their belief in you, their motives, their ambitions and their risk-taking

ability. True value must be discerned. To God, you are always precious. Do you see your worth?

QnQ? Q asks: When I give, can I expect a return?

What we give doesn't always return. But what we give is always what we are. We often give with an eye on the return — expecting gratitude, reciprocity, recognition. And when none comes, we feel cheated. But the saying above gently dismantles that expectation: the return was never the point.

What you give is a signature, a transaction. When you offer patience, you reveal that patience lives in you. When you give judgment, that too is a self-portrait. The world may not send it back but you've already shown what you're made of, to yourself and to others. This is both liberating and demanding.

Liberating, because your generosity doesn't depend on the other person's response.

Demanding, because you can no longer hide behind outcomes. The gift is the evidence. If the people closest to you could only know you by what you gave this week — not what you said, felt, or intended — who would they meet? (Matt 6:21)

The Spirit @ Work: "When you're ablaze in the Holy Spirit, people will be drawn to you.

They'll watch you burn in fascination, drawn to the flame.

Something to tickle you: Faith is an oasis in the heart which will never be reached by the caravan of thinking. *Khalil Gibran*

Bernard Paul
Bishop Bernard Paul

Community walk for autism awareness

PETALING JAYA: In conjunction with Autism Awareness Month, a community walk organised by the Ministry for Special Needs brought together families, children, and volunteers in a meaningful initiative to promote understanding, acceptance, and inclusivity.

Held at Taman Jaya and coordinated by Gunavathi Thurchinamurthy, the event was organised in collaboration with the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) and the Creation Justice Ministry, reflecting the theme *In the One, We Are One*. Participants from diverse backgrounds gathered in solidarity with individuals with autism and other developmental conditions.

The programme was graced by Archbishop Julian Leow, YB Senator Tuan Isaiah D Jacob, AOHD Acting Director Aaron Koh, Dr Gary Liew, and ministry coordinators.

In his address, Archbishop Julian emphasised the importance of respecting differences and embracing diversity, reminding attendees that all belong to one community. Aaron welcomed participants and thanked them for their presence, noting that the event was an opportunity to come together in unity.

Senator Isaiah highlighted ongoing challenges in awareness and acceptance. “Many



The participants during the walk in solidarity with individuals with autism and other developmental conditions.

still do not fully understand autism and other developmental conditions,” he said, pointing to gaps in awareness, acceptance, and community involvement. He called for stronger engagement from policymakers and urged both government and private sectors to create more opportunities, including employment, for individuals with autism.

The event began with a symbolic walk, representing a shared journey towards inclu-

sion, as participants of all ages walked side by side in support of the cause.

This was followed by a *gotong-royong* activity, where participants worked together to clean the park, fostering teamwork and environmental responsibility. The programme concluded with a simple lunch, allowing families to connect in a relaxed setting.

Parents praised the initiative for its impact. Catherine Gan, 69, whose 34-year-

old son has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), described it as “a very good experience,” noting how much her son enjoyed the day. She stressed the need for greater awareness and acceptance, adding that exposure plays a key role in shaping attitudes.

Emmanuel Miranda, 28, shared that the event was meaningful for his 16-year-old brother, who has a genetic developmental condition. Encouraged by family members, he participated enthusiastically and enjoyed the outdoor setting. Emmanuel expressed hope that such programmes would continue, helping individuals with special needs stay active and connected.

Priscilla Gomez, 50, a mother of two autistic children, said the initiative promoted inclusivity by bringing together families from different backgrounds. “It’s about giving children the chance to interact and parents the opportunity to connect,” she said, adding that such programmes help ensure no one is left out.

A mother who wished to be known only as Meenu, 39, also shared a positive experience. Her nine-year-old child with autism and cerebral palsy thoroughly enjoyed the event, marking their first participation in such a programme.

Rethinking parenting in today's complex world

Deacon Dr Leslie Petrus

JOHOR BAHRU: Parenting today invites far more reflection and dialogue than in previous generations. Unlike 30 or 40 years ago, when a more uniform parenting style was common across many Asian families, today’s landscape is shaped by diverse perspectives, social media influences, and an abundance of psychological insights. While these developments offer valuable tools, they have also introduced a level of confusion — reflected increasingly in the behaviour and emotional wellbeing of children from early childhood through adolescence.

In response, the Diocesan Family, Laity & Life Ministry (DFLLM) of the Diocese of Malacca Johor organised a timely online forum titled *A Conversation on Blessed Boundaries and Understanding Discipline in Today's Realities*. The session, held on Sunday April 26, from 8.00pm to 10.00pm via Google Meet, was moderated by Andrew Chew, a former EXCO member of DFLLM.

The discussion featured two distinguished speakers: Christine Maryanna Gabriel, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist and Psychology lecturer at Taylor’s University, and Fr Alvin Ng Sze Syn, SJ, parish priest

of the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya, board member of Caritas Malaysia, and former educator at St Joseph’s Institution, Kuching.

Christine began by emphasising that boundaries are essential within any society. They protect personal space, behaviour, property, and communication, contributing to the wellbeing of all. When boundaries are enforced purely as control, consequences become punitive. However, in the Christian understanding, boundaries take on a different meaning — they become an expression of love.

Rather than rejection or restriction, boundaries offer guidance, helping a child grow in maturity, responsibility, and discipleship.

Drawing from psychology, Christine explained two essential dimensions of parenting: nurture and structure.

Nurture refers to warmth, emotional safety, and the experience of being seen, heard, and valued. It is rooted in compassion. Structure, on the other hand, involves setting limits, maintaining consistency, and applying consequences when boundaries are crossed. It provides moral guidance and discipline.

She cautioned that imbalance in either direction can have unintended effects. Exces-

sive nurture may lead to entitlement, lack of respect, and difficulty in following instructions. Excessive structure, however, may result in fear, emotional distress, mistrust, and even dishonesty.

“Love,” she emphasised, “must be soft enough to hold, but firm enough to guide.”

Christine also highlighted the growing influence of technology on children. Designed to capture attention and trigger dopamine responses, digital devices can shorten attention spans and weaken a child’s ability to self-regulate. Over time, this may reduce real-life social interaction and contribute to early patterns of dependency and potential addiction.

Fr Alvin reflected on human development through the lens of Erik Erikson’s psychosocial theory, drawing from his experience as an educator at St Joseph’s Institution, Kuching. He observed that contemporary parenting concerns have shifted, particularly around a child’s ability to connect, compete, and cope with discipline.

He noted that while physical bullying in schools has decreased, cyberbullying has become more prevalent, even among primary school children, largely due to increased access to mobile devices. Parents, he stressed,

must not only set boundaries but also equip children with emotional resilience, empathy, and the ability to manage frustration and disappointment.

From his pastoral experience, Fr Alvin observed that children raised without clear boundaries often struggle with anxiety, confusion, and a sense of entitlement. In contrast, boundaries and discipline provide security and predictability, helping children feel safe and develop essential life skills, including decision-making.

“Setting boundaries is not control,” he noted, “but loving leadership. It is how we show that we care.”

In conclusion, both speakers reflected on how Jesus Himself modelled both compassion and clarity of boundaries. Scripture offers many examples of consequences, responsibility, and restoration, most notably in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Participants were left with two reflective questions:

- How am I loving right now? (Nurture)
- How am I clear and consistent? (Structure)

The session concluded with a lively Q&A, where participants shared personal experiences and reflections.

Earth Day activity enriches special needs children

PETALING JAYA: In conjunction with Earth Day, a sensory gardening activity was held at Pusat Jagaan Istimewa Nathanel, offering children a unique opportunity to connect with nature in a hands-on and enriching way.

The programme was designed to provide a calming and stimulating sensory experience, allowing children to engage with soil, plants, and the natural environment. Through this interaction, nature became not only something they explored, but something that positively responded to them —

creating a soothing and rewarding experience.

The activity was conducted by Guna from the Bio Terra, who guided the children through basic gardening techniques. Participants learned how to plant seeds, remove weeds, and carefully transfer germinated seedlings into prepared garden beds.

Each step encouraged patience, focus, and sensory engagement, while also teaching responsibility and care for the environment. The simple yet meaningful tasks helped the children develop a sense of accomplish-

ment as they nurtured living plants.

The initiative highlighted the importance of inclusive outdoor activities, especially for children with special needs, demonstrating how nature-based learning can support both emotional well-being and practical skills.

Overall, the sensory gardening session served as a joyful and educational experience, reminding all that connecting with nature can foster growth — not only in plants, but in young hearts and minds as well. **Gunavathi Thurchinamurthy**



Strengthening church–embassy ties for migrant welfare

Christopher Kushi

KAMPAR: The Church of the Sacred Heart recently hosted a special gathering to strengthen fraternity and cooperation between the parish community and the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia. Held on Sunday, April 26, the event brought together parishioners, members of the Indonesian migrant community who regularly worship at the church, and a distinguished guest, His Excellency Raden Dato' Mohammad Iman Hascarya Kusumo, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Malaysia, accompanied by his consular staff.

Fr Simon Anand, parish priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart, extended a warm welcome to all present. Speaking on behalf of the Diocese of Penang, he reaffirmed the Church's commitment to serving the migrant community, ensuring they are supported in building a secure and dignified future in Malaysia. He also conveyed greetings from Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, whose diocese includes Penang, Perak, Kedah, Perlis, and Kelantan.

In his message, Cardinal Sebastian shared that he will be in Jakarta from July 20–27 to attend the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) Plenary Assembly, a major gathering expected to bring together some 300 cardinals and bishops from across Asia. Participants are scheduled to meet Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, and the programme will include a visit



His Excellency Raden Dato' Mohammad Iman Hascarya Kusumo listening to the plights of the Indonesian migrant community.

to Nusantara, the country's new capital in Kalimantan, where a new mosque and a Catholic church will be inaugurated.

In his address, Ambassador Mohammad Iman emphasised the Embassy's mission to safeguard the rights and welfare of Indonesian

citizens in Malaysia by ensuring proper enforcement of employment contracts, timely attention to welfare concerns, and accessible documentation services.

He advised Indonesians intending to work in Malaysia to be well-prepared with valid passports, visas,

work permits, and formal contracts, enabling them to earn a livelihood with peace of mind. To better serve migrants, the Embassy has introduced the "Consular Booth" (Warung Konsuler) initiative, bringing essential services directly to towns with significant Indonesian communities, thereby reducing travel time to Kuala Lumpur and costs.

Expressing appreciation to the parish, the ambassador thanked the Church of the Sacred Heart for hosting the gathering and expressed hope of strengthening ties with Cardinal Sebastian Francis.

Consular officers present — Bapak Idul Adheman (Immigration Attaché), Ibu Octavin Dewi Zulaicha (Consular Officer), and Ibu Dina Juliani (Legal Attaché) — provided practical guidance on key matters, including birth registration for Indonesian children born in Malaysia, repatriation arrangements, legal advisory services, and assistance during legal

proceedings.

The gathering, attended by approximately 185 migrants, surfaced pressing concerns, including the risk of losing citizenship after prolonged stays abroad, some exceeding 15 years. Migrants were advised to renew passports either online or in Indonesia. Participants also raised concerns about high medical costs, particularly for childbirth, highlighting the need for greater healthcare support.

Fr Simon proposed that church facilities could serve as venues for documentation and legalisation processes, especially for migrants working nearby, helping to reduce travel burdens. He further suggested that World Migrant Sunday could integrate both spiritual and consular services into a unified celebration — an idea that was warmly received by Embassy officials.

A significant milestone was achieved during the gathering. As an immediate step towards safeguarding child welfare, the Embassy, with the support of the Church, issued 15 birth certificates on the spot for Indonesian children, using certification provided by the parish to confirm parentage.

Fr Simon concluded by expressing gratitude to parishioners, volunteer university students, and the migrant community for their dedicated service in ensuring the success of the event. Reflecting on Matthew 20:28 — "the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve" — he underscored the spirit of service that defined the day.

From a simple hut to a renewed chapel

PERAK: Located in Ulu Kinta, just outside Ipoh, Malaysia, the rural town of Tanjong Rambutan holds a story of perseverance — a story closely connected to the Malaysian Redemptorist community, especially shaped by the life and ministry of Fr Joseph Stephen CSsR.

The mission began in 1972, when the Redemptorists of the Vice Province of Malaysia and Singapore were entrusted with the pastoral care of this area. What started as a simple outreach by the Redemptorists of Ipoh Gardens (Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help), gradually became a living and growing

mission.

In the early years, the community was made up largely of Tamil-speaking families — hardworking people, many of whom were rubber tappers or workers in the nearby mental hospital. Life was not easy, yet they had faith in God.

There was no church building then. Holy Mass was celebrated in homes, and sometimes in a Methodist or Tamil school. Due to curfew restrictions, Mass was held in the afternoon, around 3.00pm, with priests ensuring everyone returned home safely. These beginnings reflected deep commitment — both from the people and the missionaries.

Moved by faith, the people built a small hut that could hold about 20 people. That humble space became their place of worship — a place where, we can say, heaven touched earth.

By 1985, the community built a chapel dedicated to Mother Mary, Chapel of St Mary. Over the years, a grotto and a hall were added.

The journey was not without challenges. There were times of closure and uncertainty. Yet through prayer, discernment, and regathering themselves, the community returned again and again to God. In recent years, Fr Joe has played a pivotal role in strengthening the community.



Fr Philip Lai CSsR incensing the statue of Mary.

With his pastoral closeness and perseverance, he has walked with the people through their struggles and hopes — helping them remain rooted in faith. Alongside him, Fr Philip Lai CSsR, Fr Patrick Massang CSsR, and Fr Paul Kee CSsR have also journeyed with the community in different ways. Support has also come at times from Redemptorists in Singapore and Province of Bangalore, India.

A significant milestone was reached on April 19, when the newly renovated chapel was completed and blessed. Fr Joe and Fr Philip blessed the chapel, marking

a moment of thanksgiving for the entire community. This renovation was made possible through the generosity of many donors.

Today, the Tanjong Rambutan community stands as a witness to what faith and perseverance can achieve. The community has grown, children are better educated, and many families now live more stable lives.

This is not just the story of a place — it is the story of a people, and of the Redemptorist missionaries who have chosen to walk alongside them. **Redemptorist Missionary Series**



The faithful worshipping at the Chapel of St Mary.

Cardinal Sebastian pays fraternal visit to PAS leader in Perlis

KANGAR: On April 21, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, paid a fraternal visit to Tuan Guru Dato' Haji Hashim Jasin, Mursyidul Am of PAS and Chair of its Ulama Council, at his residence in Kangar, Perlis. The visit was a gesture of goodwill and solidarity, particularly significant as Tuan Guru Hashim had recently undergone a stenting procedure.

Tuan Guru Hashim warmly welcomed the Cardinal and his delegation, expressing gratitude for the visit. He reflected that there are many good people in the world, and it is the shared responsibility of all to promote harmony and fraternity. Drawing from a *Hadith*, he likened this to planting a tree that offers shade, nourishment, and benefit to



Cardinal Sebastian Francis visits Tuan Guru Dato' Haji Hashim Jasin at his residence during his recuperation, accompanied by a delegation from the Diocese of Penang and several PAS members.

all — freely and without expectation — reminding those present that the true purpose of life is to extend charity and goodness to others.

Cardinal Sebastian, in turn, affectionately referred to Tuan Guru as his “elder brother,” greeting him with *Salam Damai* and assuring him of

prayers for continued strength, good health, and a swift recovery.

The visit builds on a relationship first established at the *Majlis Pertemuan Mahabbah* dinner in Kangar on August 5, 2022, held under the theme *Bersama Menyuburkan Kehidupan Aman*

dan Sejahtera (Together We Nurture a Peaceful and Harmonious Life). Since then, with the support of Tuan Haji Abdul Rahman of Lajnah Dakwah PAS Pusat, a series of engagements and dialogues have taken place between Church leaders and PAS representatives, strengthening mutual understanding and cooperation.

These ongoing exchanges are particularly meaningful given the Diocese of Penang's pastoral presence across Penang, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Perak. Notable engagements include a joint luncheon in Penang on August 16, 2023, centred on the spirit of *Mahabbah* in line with *Fratelli Tutti*, as well as the PAS Hari Raya Open House in Kangar on April 27, 2024, attended

by national and state leaders.

Further visits included meetings with the Kelantan Menteri Besar and state leadership in Kota Bharu, Kelantan on Nov 1, 2024 and a courtesy dialogue with the Kedah Menteri Besar at Wisma Darul Aman, Alor Setar, on July 20, 2025 — all reflecting a consistent commitment to dialogue, peacebuilding, and social harmony.

The April 21 visit concluded on a warm and prayerful note, as Tuan Guru Hashim offered a blessing for Cardinal Sebastian and his delegation. The gathering ended with light refreshments, including Perlis' famed Harumanis mangoes, as conversations continued in a spirit of friendship and goodwill. **Christopher Kushi**

AOHD recollection deepens outreach commitment

NEGERI SEMBILAN: The Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) recently held a four-day recollection and outreach programme in Tampin, bringing together 19 staff and ministry leaders for a time of spiritual renewal and mission engagement.

The session, held from April 16 to 19, reflected AOHD's continued commitment to reaching out to communities in need. It began with a visit to Fr Anthony Naden in the outskirts of Pertang, about 70km from the Church of St John Marie Vianney, Tampin, where the recollection was based.

Fr Naden, together with Fr Albet Arockiasamy, parish priest of St John Marie Vianney and ecclesiastical assistant for AOHD, welcomed the group warmly. Sharing his experience of living and serving among the Orang Asli and the poor in the Pertang area, Fr Naden's simple lifestyle and dedication served as a powerful reminder of the call to give not only material aid, but time, presence, and compassion.

The team later visited the GATCO community (Kampung Serampang Indah), where residents continue to face land-related challenges and difficult living conditions. AOHD

members joined the community for Mass held in a village home and were deeply moved by the people's resilience and warmth. Several school-going children in need of assistance were identified, with plans for follow-up support in the coming months.

On the second day, representatives from Malaysian Care — Keith Daniel, Director of Communications, and Kenneth David, Executive for Church Relations and Advocacy — travelled from Kuala Lumpur to share insights on outreach initiatives and explore possible collaboration with AOHD in serving the marginalised.

In the afternoon, Fr Xavier Andrew led a session on the theme *In the One We Are One*, the Archdiocese's Lenten campaign. Rooted in St Augustine's concept of *Totus Christus* (the Whole Christ), the reflection emphasised unity, solidarity, and the call to care for one another as one body in Christ.

The day concluded with Mass, Holy Hour, and a joyful celebration with parishioners, including a 70th birthday gathering that fostered warm fellowship.

The third day began with the Rosary, followed by a reflective

Letter to Myself session, encouraging personal introspection. Ministry leaders also presented their plans for the year, generating fruitful discussions and new ideas to strengthen AOHD's mission.

Later, the team travelled to the interior of Jempol district for a roadshow and Mass at the Chapel of Mary, Mother of God. Despite its quiet setting, the community displayed a strong sense of unity. After Mass, the AOHD team engaged with residents to better understand their needs and identify areas for support.

The programme concluded with a parish roadshow at the Church of St John Marie Vianney, where AOHD



acting director Aaron Koh briefed parishioners on the organisation's work. Ministry representatives also

shared their experiences, while identifying areas for continued collaboration and outreach following the visit.

A perpetual light of love at Mount Miriam Cancer Hospital

PENANG: On April 15, Mount Miriam Cancer Hospital marked a deeply meaningful milestone with Mass followed by the lighting of the Perpetual Memorial Light — one of several events celebrating its 50th Golden Jubilee. The Mass was celebrated by Fr Larry Tan, SJ.

In an act of remembrance, the Perpetual Memorial Light will continue to burn throughout the year as a symbol of enduring love, compassion, and gratitude. It honours all who have journeyed with Mount Miriam since its founding — patients, the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM) Sisters, benefactors, donors, volunteers, former staff, and members of the Board of Directors — each one a part of its living story of care.

The hospital's story is rooted in the faith and vision of the FMDM Sisters, who arrived in Penang in the 1970s. Guided by the compassion of Christ, they established Mount Miriam Cancer Hospital as a place of healing for all, regardless of race, religion, or financial means. Their mission has always been holistic — to care not only for the body, but also for the dignity and spirit of

every patient.

Over the decades, through God's grace and the dedication of many hands, the Sisters together with doctors, nurses, and staff have built Mount Miriam into a trusted centre of cancer care in Malaysia — one defined by compassion and hope.

As the hospital celebrates its Golden Jubilee, Catholic Health Care Asia (CHCA) and the Board of Directors express deep gratitude to all who have contributed to this journey. Nurses who have accom-

panied patients through moments of vulnerability, staff and volunteers who have offered comfort and presence, and benefactors whose generosity has sustained the mission — all have helped shape its legacy of care.

Together, the community gives thanks and prays that Mount Miriam Cancer Hospital will continue to shine as a beacon of hope — where compassion, respect, and integrity remain its enduring light, never extinguished. **Trevor Sibert**



Remembering all who have passed on since the foundation of the hospital.

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KUALA LUMPUR: In conjunction with the 219th Police Day, the Christian community of the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) gathered across several parishes for prayer and fellowship, highlighting the vital role of faith in public service and strengthening bonds between the police and the wider community.

In **Kuala Lumpur**, members of the PDRM Christian community came together for Mass at the *Cathedral of St John the Evangelist*. The annual gathering drew about 600 serving and retired police personnel, reflecting a strong spirit of fellowship and devotion within the force.

Also present was Hannah Yeoh, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories), who was received by DCP Datuk Dennis Lim Kwang Keng, Deputy Director (Forensic/Strategic Planning) of the Bukit Aman Criminal Investigation Department, together with his wife, Datin Tan Yean Nee.

The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow, with parish priest Fr Gerard Theraviam concelebrating. Held in a prayerful and reverent atmosphere, the Mass was offered for God's blessings and protection upon all police personnel, with special prayers for strength, safety, and perseverance in their service to the nation.

In his homily, Archbishop Leow urged officers not to separate their professional responsibilities from their spiritual identity. Reflecting on the challenges of remaining faithful in environments that often demand compromise or compartmentalisation, he called on them not to become "officers who happen to be Christians," but rather Christians whose faith shapes their conduct, decisions, and relationships in service.

"Our faith must not be an afterthought," he said. "It must guide how we exercise authority, how we respond under pressure, and how we treat every person with dignity."

His message resonated deeply, particularly in a profession marked by ethical dilemmas, public scrutiny, and high-stakes decisions.

Beyond its spiritual significance, the gathering fostered unity and solidarity among members of diverse backgrounds, underscoring the importance of faith and moral values in public service. The celebration concluded with a fellowship session.

In **Negeri Sembilan**, the district-level Christian observance (*Sembahyang Hari Polis ke-219 Agama Kristian*) was held on Thursday, 16 April 2026, at the *Church of St John Marie Vianney, Tampin*.

The celebration honoured the dedication and sacrifices of police personnel who have faithfully served in safeguarding the community and upholding peace. Officers, together with their families and members of the faithful, gathered in a spirit of thanksgiving and unity.

The occasion also underscored the vital role of faith in public service, highlighting the values of commitment, integrity, and selfless service in building a safer and more harmonious society.

Meanwhile, in **Klang**, the Klang South District Police organised a High Profile

Police Day



PDRM Christians affirm faith, unity, and service

Policing (HPP) programme with the Christian community at the *Church of Our Lady of Lourdes* on April 22.

The celebration began with a Holy Mass, animated by members of the police force, and was led by ACP Lim Jit Huey, Klang South District Police Chief. Also present were DCP (R) Dato' Tan Chong Jin, former Commandant of the PDRM Training College, along with officers and personnel from IPD Klang Selatan and the Klang South Marine Police.

Parish priest, Fr Gregory Chan, and assistant parish priest Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis, together with church leaders and representatives from various Christian groups, were also in attendance.

The HPP programme aimed to enhance police presence during public and religious gatherings, fostering a greater sense of safety and trust within the community. It also served to strengthen cooperation and mutual understanding between the police and the faithful.

The event concluded in a warm and friendly atmosphere, with a cake-cutting ceremony to mark the 219th Police Day. Certificates of appreciation were presented to Fr Gregory Chan, Fr Selva, and Dr Alex Gabriel in recognition of their support and collaboration.

In **Keningau**, Christian personnel of the PDRM from the District Police Headquarters (IPD), led by Superintendent Yampil anak Garai, marked the occasion with a Eucharistic celebration at *Gereja Laudato Si', Keningau Diocesan Retreat House*.

The celebration gathered members of the police community in a spirit of thanksgiving and reflection. Police personnel actively participated in the liturgy as lectors, choir members, and altar servers.

The Mass was presided over by Bishop Cornelius Piong, who reflected on the meaning of vocation in light of the Church's observance of the World Day of Prayer for



Police personnel at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang.

Vocations.

In his homily, Bishop Cornelius emphasised that policing is not merely a profession, but a calling entrusted by God. Just as priests and religious are called to serve the Church, he said, police officers are called to serve society by safeguarding peace, upholding justice, and protecting the dignity of every human person.

Drawing from the Gospel theme of vocation, he reminded the faithful that every Christian is first called to become more like Christ.

"Our true calling is not defined by our profession alone, but by how we live out the values of Christ in our daily responsibilities," he said.

He further explained that vocation is rooted in a daily response to God's invitation. For members of the police force, this means exercising authority with fairness, showing compassion to those in distress, and remaining steadfast in truth even under pressure.

The bishop encouraged officers to approach their duties with integrity, compassion, and humility, noting that in a world

often marked by tension and conflict, police personnel play a crucial role as instruments of peace and stability.

"Your service is not only about enforcing the law," he added, "but also about leading with moral courage and being a visible sign of justice and mercy in society."

Acknowledging the challenges faced by those in uniform — including long hours and demanding responsibilities — he urged them to remain rooted in prayer and to seek strength in God, especially in difficult moments.

"May you carry out your responsibilities with dedication and a deep sense of mission," he said. "For your true calling is an invitation to live in the likeness of Christ."

The celebration concluded with a fellowship gathering at Dewan Kekitaan Tatal, where participants shared a meal and strengthened bonds of community.

Through such nationwide initiatives, the PDRM continues to build strong relationships with the community, promoting unity, harmony, and a shared responsibility in safeguarding peace.



An extraordinary minister of Holy Communion sprinkling holy water over the police personnel during the celebration in Keningau.



Fr Xavier Andrew praying over a policeman at the Church of St John Vianney, Tampin.

Indonesia's religious freedom survey draws criticism



JAKARTA: A nationwide survey claiming that 97 per cent of Indonesians feel free to practise their religion has drawn scepticism, with critics warning it may overlook the realities faced by minority communities.

Released on April 12 by Lingkaran Survei Indonesia, the *Public Evaluation and Commitment to Pancasila* survey polled 2,020 respondents aged 17 and above from March 4 to 12.

It found that 56.6 per cent felt "very free" and 40.7 per cent "quite free" in practising their faith, while only 1.6 per cent reported feeling "less free" or "very unfree."

Observers, however, questioned the methodology, noting that 87 per cent of respondents were Muslim, about 10 per cent Christian, and the rest from other faiths — raising concerns that minority experiences may be underrepresented.

While Indonesia's Constitution guarantees religious freedom, rights groups say legal and structural barriers persist. A 2025 report by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom cited restrictions under existing laws, including expanded blasphemy provisions in the revised Criminal Code, which took effect in 2026.

Religious minorities — including Protestants, Catholics, Ahmadiyah Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses and Baha'is — continue to face challenges, particularly in securing permits to build places of worship.

Bagus Sudarmanto of the University of Indonesia said the findings should be treated with caution. "The results are highly subjective and reflect perceptions rather than actual conditions," he said.

Aan Anshori of the East Java Anti-Discrimination Islamic Network noted that even the 1.6 per cent reporting limited freedom represents about 3.5 million people.

Mohammad Mahpur of Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University said perceptions differ sharply between majority and minority groups, pointing to structural issues requiring stronger policy responses.

A 2025 report by the Setara Institute recorded a drop in violations from 260 cases in 2024 to 221, but noted discriminatory regulations remain a key driver. **UCA News**

Vocations are growing in Africa and Asia

ROME: Vocations to the priesthood and religious life are on the rise in Africa and Asia, sustained by the strong faith of local communities and ongoing formation efforts in mission territories.

The growth was noted as the Church celebrated World Day of Prayer for Vocations on April 26, also known as Good Shepherd Sunday. Established by Pope Paul VI in 1964, the day calls the faithful to pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life.

Recent data from the Pontifical Society of St Peter the Apostle — which supports vocations in mission territories — shows a steady increase in both seminaries and seminarians. For the 2024/25 academic year, there are 801 seminaries with 88,156 seminarians, up from 778 seminaries and 82,859 seminarians the previous year.

Much of this growth is concentrated in Africa and Asia, where vocations continue to flourish despite economic and social challenges.

Church observers attribute the rise to strong, lived faith within local communities. Vocations often emerge in environments where the sacraments are regularly celebrated, Church teachings are embraced in full, and young people are actively engaged through pastoral initiatives and catechesis.

Many candidates come from humble backgrounds and have experienced hardship, which fosters a deeper sensitivity to the suffering of others and a stronger openness to God's call. Seminary formators note that such experiences often nurture prayer, reflection and a willingness to serve.

The continued presence of minor seminaries has also been identified as a key factor in fostering vocations. These institutions help young people discern their calling and prepare them for further formation in major seminaries or religious life.

Support from the universal Church remains crucial. The Pontifical Society of St Peter the Apostle provides



funding for seminaries and formation centres, including subsidies for construction, training of formators and scholarships for further studies.

For the 2024/25 academic year, the Society supported 449 minor seminaries with over 53,000 seminarians, as well as preparatory and major seminaries across mission territories. It also assists more than

1,200 novitiates, with nearly 8,000 men and women in religious formation.

Despite the encouraging growth, Church leaders stress that the need for vocations remains urgent. As pastoral demands increase, especially in mission territories, the call for more priests and religious continues. **Fides**

Mother Teresa's nuns regain voting rights after legal battle

KOLKATA: Some 55 nuns from the Missionaries of Charity (MC) were able to cast their votes in the West Bengal state assembly polls after successfully challenging their removal from the electoral roll.

The nuns, from the congregation founded by St Teresa of Kolkata, voted in the second phase on April 29 after the Election Commission of India (ECI) restored their names following scrutiny, a nun from the order's headquarters in Kolkata said.

All are registered voters in the Chowringhee constituency, with 35 listing the Mother House as their permanent address, according to *The Times of India*. Their names were included in a supplementary voter list published on April 28.

Most of the nuns, many born outside the state, discovered their names were missing from the voter list released on Feb 28. They subsequently approached a judicial tribunal to challenge their removal under



the ECI's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The SIR, announced in October last year and implemented in several poll-bound states, saw about 9.1 million names deleted in West Bengal alone from a voter base of around 76 million. While some names were later restored, the ma-

majority remained removed.

The ECI defended the exercise as necessary to eliminate duplicate, deceased or ineligible voters. Reports indicated that minority Muslims — who make up about 27 per cent of the electorate and are seen as AIT-MC supporters — were among the most affected.

Pakistan churches reject Christian marriage law amendments

LAHORE: Catholic and Protestant Churches in Pakistan's Punjab province have rejected proposed amendments to the colonial-era Christian Marriage Law, calling for wider consultation and announcing plans to draft an alternative bill.

The move follows an ecumenical consultation held April 24–25, organised by the Lahore Archdiocese, where Church leaders raised concerns over the proposed changes.

The bill, introduced in the Punjab Provincial Assembly on April 9 by Christian lawmaker Falbous Christopher, seeks to amend the Christian Marriage Act of 1872. Key proposals include raising the minimum marriage age to

18 and requiring both parties to be Christian for a marriage to be solemnised under the law.

Lahore Archbishop Khalid Rehmat welcomed efforts to update the law but stressed that any changes to Christian personal laws must involve full consultation with Churches.

"We cannot allow changes without the endorsement and consultation of the Churches," he said.

He also announced the formation of an ecumenical committee representing major denominations to prepare a unified draft in the coming months.

Punjab's Minister for Minority Affairs, Ramesh Singh Arora, who attended the consultation, agreed

the bill should not be rushed without engaging Church leadership.

The consultation comes amid growing concern over forced conversions and child marriages, following a March 25 ruling by Pakistan's Federal Constitutional Court upholding the marriage of a 13-year-old Christian girl to a 30-year-old Muslim man.

Advocate Qamar Iqbal criticised the bill as "hurried" and incomplete, citing the absence of provisions on nullity of marriage and penalties for false declarations or unauthorised solemnisation. He said the 153-year-old law requires comprehensive national reform, rather than piecemeal provincial amendments.

Church leaders echoed these concerns. Bishop Nadeem Kamran of the Church of Pakistan said the bill must be reviewed in line with Church teachings, while Reuben Qamar, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan, noted that the federal government had already set the minimum marriage age at 18 in 2024.

He urged lawmakers to engage Church leaders to ensure reforms reflect the concerns of the Christian community.

Pakistan officially recognises five Christian denominations for legal purposes, while unregistered Churches often face legal and administrative challenges. **UCA News**

Pope Leo urges priests to be ‘channels, not filters’

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV urged newly ordained priests to keep the Church’s doors open to a “suffering humanity” and not become obstacles to those seeking faith.

Speaking at an ordination Mass in St Peter’s Basilica on April 26, the Pope told 10 deacons they were called to reflect Christ’s “patience and tenderness” and to lead others without barriers.

“Keep the door open. Let people in, and be prepared to go out,” he said. “You are a channel, not a filter.”

The Mass, held on the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, drew about 5,000 people, including family and friends of the ordinands. Eight of the new priests were ordained for the Diocese of Rome, while others will serve in India and with the Idente Missionaries.

Reflecting on priestly vocation, the Pope said a deeper relationship with Christ must lead to a greater openness to all people, rooted in a love that is “indissoluble” and constantly renewed.

“You are called to a demanding way of loving,” he said, urging the new priests to become “builders of peace and social friendship.”

He also warned against fear and self-protection, noting that insecurity can make communities inward-looking and divisive.

“We must not be frightened by reality,” he said. “Find your security not in your role, but in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.”

The Pope reminded the ordinands that the Church must remain a place of welcome, not exclusion.

“The Church’s doors are open, not to isolate



Pope Leo XIV ordains a deacon to the priesthood during the Mass in St Peter’s Basilica on April 26, 2026. (CNA pic/Daniel Ibáñez)

us from life,” he said. “Whoever is saved can go out and find pasture.”

He encouraged the priests to journey alongside the people they serve — families, youth, the sick and the elderly — trusting in the guidance of the Good Shepherd.

Drawing on the Gospel image of Christ as the gate, Pope Leo said the Church must never restrict freedom or close in on itself, but instead remain a space of encounter and renewal. He cautioned against communities that appear welcoming but become controlling, stressing that authentic Christian life always

leads outward.

The Pope also highlighted the quiet presence of grace in everyday life, reminding the new priests that God is already at work in the people they serve. “There is so much good being done silently,” he said, urging them to recognise and accompany this hidden grace.

Concluding his homily, Pope Leo invited the priests to remain attentive to the voice of the Good Shepherd, especially when faced with uncertainty, and to trust that their ministry would bear fruit when rooted in humility, openness and faithful service. OSV News

FLORIDA: The Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Florida, is preparing to debut an intimate village of micro-homes priced for seniors at risk of homelessness.

The diocese’s “Trinity Village,” located just a few blocks from Pensacola Bay on the Florida Panhandle, will offer the “tiny homes” at “affordable rents to individuals experiencing housing insecurity.”

The “target population” for the small parcel of homes is senior citizens, the diocese says, pointing out that the senior demographic is “one of the more vulnerable segments of the population” regarding housing costs.

Groundbreaking for the project took place in September 2024. The site of the village was previously a vacant lot; the parcel is located directly behind the diocesan pastoral centre.

Construction of the homes took place throughout 2025. The roughly 300-square-foot houses include a sleeping area, kitchen, living room, dining room and a bathroom, as well as on-site laundry.

Deacon Ray Aguado, the executive director of the Trinity House project, said that the Pensacola population has increased “significantly” in recent years, while housing stock has not kept pace.

“Rents in the area have increased and, in some cases, have more than doubled in the past 12-24 months,” he said. “Many citizens, especially seniors, make sacrifices in order to cover their higher cost of housing.”

Florida diocese to launch ‘Trinity Village’ for seniors



Tiny homes stand in the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee’s “Trinity Village” in Pensacola, Florida, in March 2026. (EWTN/Photo courtesy of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee)

“These sacrifices include foregoing health care, cutting back on buying healthy foods, or missing meals altogether,” he noted.

“Trinity Village will offer these tiny homes at affordable rents to these seniors,” he said. “Trinity Village will also offer case management and mentoring services to support residents in their personal growth and ensure they maintain sound physical and financial health.”

Rent is expected to run \$500 (RM1,986) for the homes, with that price including utili-

ties.

At the outset of the project, Pensacola-Tallahassee Bishop William Wack described the project as a “wonderful way for this community to come together” and support a vulnerable population.

“This is what we do as a Church. We don’t just come together to pray, though that is an important part of what we do,” he said. “We come together [also] to build up the kingdom, to serve our brothers and sisters.” EWTN News

Manila archbishop launches used cooking oil drive

MANILA: Cardinal Jose Advincula has launched an initiative to collect used cooking oil for conversion into biodiesel, as the Philippines grapples with an energy crunch linked to global conflict.

In a circular issued April 26, the Manila archbishop urged parishes, households and institutions across the archdiocese to take part in the programme, which aims to promote renewable energy and reduce dependence on imported fuel.

The Philippines imports up to 98 per cent of its oil, much of it from the Middle East, leaving it vulnerable to supply disruptions. Government data indicates the country has reserves for just over 50 days.

Cardinal Advincula said the initiative responds to “growing global challenges related to energy supply and environmental sustainability,” noting that used cooking oil can be processed into biodiesel — a cleaner fuel that



Cardinal Jose Advincula

can cut greenhouse gas emissions by up to 80 per cent.

Parishes have been asked to set up collection points, with contributors encouraged to store

used oil in clean, sealed containers. The oil will undergo processing before being redistributed, with a nominal fee to cover costs.

The programme is being implemented by the Archdiocese of Manila’s Ministry on Integral Ecology across its 87 parishes.

Lay coordinator Lou Arsenio said the initiative builds on earlier efforts dating back nearly two decades but has been revived in response to the current crisis. She noted that new technology developed locally has made biodiesel production more viable.

The project is expected to support communities, including jeepney drivers from low-income groups, while advancing environmental stewardship inspired by *Laudato Si’*.

The cardinal said the effort reflects the Church’s call to care for creation, adding that small actions can help ease pressure on energy resources while promoting sustainable living. **CruX**

Thousands gather for Catholic Youth Interdiocesan Day

GUINEA-BISSAU: More than 5,000 young people, together with members of the Catholic faithful from the country’s two dioceses, gathered for the 9th Catholic Youth Interdiocesan Day, held over three days in Bafatá. The celebration coincided with the 25th anniversary of the Diocese of Bafatá.

Under the theme *Faith, Charity, and Hope*, the city came alive with three days of prayer, fellowship, and joyful witness. Despite soaring temperatures of up to 43°C, the enthusiasm and energy of participants remained undiminished.

The event opened on Friday, April 24, with a welcome by Bishop Vítor Quematcha of Bafatá, followed by a night of Eucharistic adoration. On Saturday, the bishop led a catechesis session for youth and families, while Bishop José Lampra Cá of Bissau presided over the Eucharistic celebration.

In a gesture of solidarity, Church leaders visited inmates at the Bafatá Prison Centre ahead of Mass. Among those present were Bishop Lampra Cá, Bishop Emeritus José Câmna na Bissiga, and Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Waldemar Stanislaw Sommertag, accompanied by priests. The prisoners received Jubilee-themed items, hygiene kits, and messages of hope — a sign of the Church’s closeness to those on the margins.

The closing Mass on Sunday was presided over by Archbishop Sommertag, with a homily delivered by Bishop Quematcha. He reminded young people that “following Christ is not just a religious feeling, but a life decision,” calling them to choose truth over falsehood and justice over corruption.

Encouraging them to remain steadfast, Bishop Quematcha said the Church places its trust in the youth and urged them to be agents of hope for the nation. He also acknowledged the vital role of families in nurturing faith, love, and responsibility.

Entrusting both the Diocese of Bafatá and the Diocese of Bissau — which will mark its 50th anniversary next year — to the Good Shepherd, the celebration concluded with a call to action. Bishop Emeritus Câmna na Bissiga urged young people to take an active role in promoting reconciliation and peace in Guinea-Bissau. **Vatican News**



At the threshold of a new Millennium

In this issue, we trace how the decisive deliberations of the 1999 PMPA II, the spiritual momentum of the Jubilee Year 2000, and the guiding vision of *Novo Millennio Ineunte* converge to shape a quiet yet transformative journey — one that forms Basic Ecclesial Communities into living expressions of communion, mission, and a distinctly local way of “being Church.”

Richard Chia

In November 1999, three years after the landmark Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention II, the Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Team once again gathered the Church’s leadership to discern the way forward. This second Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly (PMPA II), held at the newly opened Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre in Kuala Lumpur — a symbol of renewal — brought together some 100 leaders: bishops, priests, religious, and lay faithful.

The task before them was both urgent and demanding. The vision of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), so strongly affirmed after PMPC II, had met with both enthusiasm and uncertainty on the ground. PMPA II became a moment of honest reckoning — a space to name challenges, identify gaps, and chart a clearer path for implementation across the local Churches.

What emerged was not merely a list of concerns, but a carefully discerned roadmap: ten key recommendations aimed at anchoring BECs more firmly within the life of the Church.

A Church crossing the millennium

As the Universal Church crossed the threshold into the third millennium, the opening of the Holy Doors in the Vatican by Pope John Paul II marked not just the turning of a calendar, but the dawn of a new spiritual chapter. Around the world, this moment resonated deeply — and in Peninsular Malaysia, the local Church echoed it with a distinctly communal and pastoral fervour.

The Jubilee Year 2000 was inaugurated in cathedrals across the region with solemn Eucharistic celebrations. Families received specially prepared prayer booklets, rooting faith not only in churches but within homes. Designated pilgrimage churches became sacred destinations, drawing the faithful into journeys of prayer and reflection, with the promise of plenary indulgences serving as both invitation and grace.

Throughout the year, the Church moved through a rich cycle of jubilee observances — each highlighting a different face of Christian life. Youth, the sick, consecrated persons, children, and senior citizens each found their moment within the universal celebration of Christ’s birth two millennia ago. In Malaysia, these global commemorations took on local colour, expressed through diverse cultural traditions yet always centred on the Holy Eucharist — the enduring heart of Catholic life.

At the close of this historic year, on January 6, 2001, Pope John Paul II offered the Church a compass for the future: the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. Widely known as NMI, it was both reflection and mandate. It called the Church to “put out into the deep,” embracing the challenges of a rapidly changing world through renewed holiness, a revitalised evangelisation, and, above all, a deepened

Archbishop emphasizes unity and inter-collaboration at PMPA II

KUALA LUMPUR: Bishops, clergy, religious and laity have been urged to be united and committed in aiming for inter-collaboration.

“I have to emphasise the need for unity of purpose and sincere commitment for effective inter-collaboration,” said Archbishop Anthony Soter Fernandez at the Second Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly (PMPA II) held recently.

In addressing the assembly, the archbishop who spoke in Bahasa Malaysia said, “The assembly is aimed at reflecting on the goals and objectives of the Church in Peninsular Malaysia and to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the recommendations of the Pastoral Team (PMPT).”



Archbishop Fernandez... need for unity of purpose and sincere commitment.

Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention II and to make recommendations for the future.

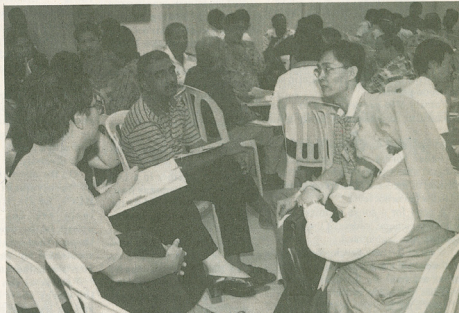
“In short, the PMPA is a consultative process for the Church and society imbued with the spirit of the Holy Spirit,” he said.

“We shall assess the activities of the PMPT, the district-level collaboration and structures as well as the role of the commissions, organisations and movements in the Church.

“This also calls for discipline on the part of all of us to be faithful to the decisions that will arise from the recommendations made at this PMPA under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,” he said.

The archbishop added that it is also important that those responsible for the pastoral planning and its implementation affectively...

Church and society... from Nov 19 to 20 at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre.



Some of the delegates of the Second Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly, held from Nov 19 to 20 at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre.

At its heart was a call for clarity. Many communities still grappled with what BECs truly are and how they should function. There was a pressing need for clear guidelines, structured approaches, and systematic leadership formation — ensuring that BECs would not remain vague ideals, but become lived realities.

Equally significant was the insistence on Christ-centredness. The assembly urged a return to a spirituality deeply rooted in Christ, expressed through a communitarian life of prayer — one that binds members not only in faith, but in shared experience.

The family, too, was placed at the centre of this vision. BECs were to become spaces where every generation — children, youth, and adults — finds belonging and participation. In this, the Church was called to rediscover itself not

merely as an institution, but as a living household of faith.

Beyond the immediate community, the assembly challenged the faithful to look outward. Outreach to lapsed Catholics and those distant from the Church was not to rest solely on clergy, but to be embraced as the shared mission of every baptised person.

Formation emerged as another cornerstone. The assembly called for holistic and systematic formation — one that goes beyond knowledge of Scripture and doctrine to include a transformation of attitudes, particularly in social responsibility and service.

Communication and connectivity were also seen as vital. From urban centres to rural districts, the Church was urged to strengthen networks that foster dialogue, reconciliation,

and unity, making creative use of emerging technologies to share resources more effectively.

Catechesis, participants noted, must begin at the grassroots. BECs themselves were to become centres of learning — places where young and old alike encounter the life and mission of the Church in meaningful and accessible ways.

The preferential option for the poor was reaffirmed with clarity. BECs were not to turn inward, but to reach out to the marginalised, embodying the Church’s mission of compassion and justice in tangible ways.

Finally, the assembly recognised that new wine requires new wineskins. It called for reimagined structures — new pastoral teams, animating groups, and approaches that reflect what the Asian Church has long described as “a new way of being Church.”

Presiding over this pivotal gathering, Archbishop Soter Fernandez offered a vision both simple and profound. He urged bishops, clergy, religious, and laity to remain united in purpose and committed to collaboration. Speaking in Bahasa Malaysia, he reminded them that pastoral planning and implementation must be guided by integrity, grounded in Christian love and humility.

His words echoed beyond the hall — a reminder that structures and strategies, however necessary, draw their strength from a shared spirit of communion and mission.

In many ways, PMPA II stands as a quiet but decisive moment — a bridge between vision and practice, and a renewed invitation for the Church in Peninsular Malaysia to become, more concretely, a community of communities.

sense of communion.

One passage, in particular, would leave a lasting imprint on the Church in Peninsular Malaysia:

“To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us... A spirituality of communion indicates, above all, the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us.”

These words became more than inspiration — they became direction. NMI shaped pastoral priorities across Malaysia, guiding efforts to build Christ-centred communities rooted in mutual care, shared responsibility, and a genuine appreciation of one another’s gifts. It called the faithful to recognise what is good in others, to receive it as grace, and to bear one another’s burdens in unity.

A Spirituality of Communion

In response, the Church in Peninsular Malaysia



The pilot session of the Communitarian Spirituality Experience held at the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, 2000.

introduced the Communitarian Spirituality Experience (CSE) — a formation initiative designed not merely to inform, but to transform. Launched in 2001, it began at the diocesan level, gathering parish representatives for a one-day immersion into the lived reality of communion: with the Trinity, with humanity, and within the Christian community.

Those first participants became its pioneers, returning to their parishes to facilitate and animate similar encounters. What distinguished CSE was its intentional simplicity. It was not content-heavy, nor focused on intellectual formation alone. Instead, it created space —

for listening, sharing, and encountering God through one another.

Particularly within BECs, the CSE became a catalyst for deeper conversion. It emphasised relationships: between individuals and God, and among members of the community. Participants were invited to reflect on their personal call, to discern the difference between merely “working for God” and truly “doing God’s work,” and to grow in authentic communion.

Parishes were encouraged to run CSE regularly, ensuring a diverse mix of participants — laity and clergy, religious, youth, and the elderly. With minimal input and a strong emphasis on guided small-group sharing, the programme fostered honesty and trust. Stories — both joyful and painful — were shared openly. In these encounters, many discovered a simple but powerful truth: they were not alone.

What the universal Church now calls synodality — the art of “walking together” — had, in many ways, already taken root in Malaysia. Long before it became a global emphasis, this spirit of shared journeying had been nurtured locally, tracing back to the vision of *Aggiornamento* 1976. In this sense, the Church in Peninsular Malaysia did not merely receive the call to communion — it had already begun to live it.



In the heart of Kuala Lumpur, when the lights dim after corporate dinners and wedding banquets, another quiet movement begins.

Volunteers from *The Lost Food Project* arrive to collect trays of untouched, still-warm food that would otherwise be thrown away. A simple call often comes at the end of an event, “We have a buffet here, can you take it?” Within hours, that same food is delivered to low-cost housing flats where migrant families and those in the B40 income group live.

There, the contrast is striking. What was excess in one place becomes a lifeline in another. For families who cannot afford to waste even a single meal, these rescued dishes are a rare source of nourishment, especially for children and the elderly.

This story reflects a deeper contradiction. In Malaysia, an estimated 4,000 tonnes of edible food is wasted every day, increasing by about 30 per cent during festive seasons. At the same time, many migrant workers, refugees, and low-income families struggle quietly with food insecurity, often surviving on very limited means.

In response, initiatives such as *What A Waste (WaW)*, *Green Hero*, and *The Lost Food Project* are turning surplus into support.

It becomes clear that hunger is not simply about a lack of food, but about a lack of access, and a growing habit of wasting what others desperately need.

It is into this reality that the Pope invites us to pray that everyone, from large producers to small consumers, be committed to avoid wasting food, and to ensure that everyone has access to quality food.

This intention touches the very heart of human dignity.

Hunger in a world of plenty

The tragedy of hunger today is not that the world cannot produce enough food. It is that food does not reach everyone fairly. A significant portion of what is produced is lost or wasted, while many continue to struggle for daily meals.

This is why food waste is not just an economic issue. It is a moral issue.

When food is wasted, we are not only discarding something edible. We are disregarding the effort of those who produced it, the resources of the earth that made it possible, and the silent struggles of those who cannot afford to waste even a single meal.

Food reveals how connected our world is. What we consume, how we consume it, and what we discard all have consequences beyond our immediate surroundings.

From a throwaway culture to a culture of care

Pope Francis often spoke about a throwaway culture where things are used and discarded quickly, including food. We see it in the way we buy more than we need, cook more than we can eat, and throw away what is still good.

But there is another way of living.

In recent years, people have begun to speak about using resources more carefully, reducing waste, and making better use of what we already have. At its heart, this is simply a call to respect what we receive.

In our homes, this can be very simple. Cooking what is needed. Keeping what can still be used. Sharing what is extra.

These are not complicated ideas. But they slowly form a different kind of person. Someone who sees food not as disposable, but as something valuable and life giving.



Prayer Prism

Fr Fabian Dicom

Pope's prayer intention for May

That everyone might have food



(What A Waste facebook)

The cry of the poor and the cry of the earth

Food insecurity today is not only about poverty. It is shaped by forces we do not always see.

Events happening far away affect the food on our tables. Conflicts, rising fuel costs, disrupted supply chains and increasing fertiliser prices make food more expensive and less accessible. Even when wars end, their effects remain, and it is the poorest who suffer most.

Closer to home, many families adjust quietly. Meals become simpler. Portions grow smaller. Certain foods are no longer bought. Hunger is often hidden. It is not always extreme, but a gradual loss of what was once enough.

At the same time, food insecurity is closely linked to climate change, environmental degradation, migration and poverty. Floods, droughts and unpredictable weather affect farmers. Rising costs limit access to nutritious food. Migrant workers, refugees and those on the margins are often the first to go hungry.

The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor meet at the table.

Ensuring access to quality food requires more than charity. It calls for transformation in systems, policies and hearts, responsible production that respects the land, fair distribution that prioritises the vulnerable and conscious consumption that resists waste.

Integral human development reminds us that food is not only about survival but about dignity. To deny adequate food is to deny the possibility of living fully as persons created

in the image of God.

Ensuring that everyone has enough is not only about giving. It is about paying attention to the hidden hunger around us and the deeper realities that shape it.

The Eucharistic vision

For Christians, food carries a deep spiritual meaning. In the Eucharist, ordinary bread becomes the sacrament of Christ's self-giving love. Jesus feeds the hungry crowds not only with words but with bread. He reveals a God who desires that no one be left without nourishment.

The Gospel reminds us that after the multiplication of loaves, Jesus instructed the disciples: When they had all had enough to eat, He said to His disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” (John 6:12).

Nothing is to be wasted.

This instruction is not merely practical; it is deeply theological. It reflects God's abundance that does not exclude responsibility. Divine generosity invites human stewardship. The Eucharist forms us into a people who recognise that what we receive is meant to be shared.

The parish as a table where all can eat

If the Eucharist shapes who we are, then our parishes must become places where no one in our neighbourhood is left hungry.

One simple but powerful initiative is the parish food bank.

A food bank is not merely a charitable activity; it is an expression of who we are as Church. It allows the parish to become a

living sign that what we receive from God is meant to be shared with others.

There are families around us who struggle quietly. The elderly who live alone. Workers whose income is not stable. Migrants who support families far away. They may not always ask, but the need is there.

A parish food bank creates a way for the community to respond.

It also helps address the reality of waste. Food prepared in excess during parish functions, donations from parishioners, or contributions from local businesses can be channelled towards those who need them most. In this way, surplus becomes blessing.

Even a small beginning can make a difference: a designated shelf for non-perishable items, a monthly collection of essential groceries, youth groups helping to pack food parcels, or collaboration with Caritas and other community organisations.

More than the quantity of food collected, it forms a different kind of community. One that notices. One that responds. One that shares.

The parish then becomes not only a place where the Word is proclaimed, but where the Word becomes flesh in acts of care.

A conversion of heart

Responding to this prayer intention begins close to home.

How often do we buy too much, cook too much, and throw away what is still good, simply because it no longer suits us? What we discard without thought is, for someone else, a meal they cannot afford.

Conversion begins with noticing. It means using what we have carefully, sharing what is extra, and refusing to treat food as disposable.

Such actions cultivate a culture of care.

When we become attentive to food waste, we begin to notice the hidden inequalities that shape our world. We begin to ask not only “What can I do?” but “Why are some left without enough?”

This shift opens the door to solidarity.

This is where charity opens into justice.

The table where all belong

The Kingdom of God is often described as a banquet where all are invited. It is a vision where no one is excluded, no one is hungry, and everyone has a place at the table.

To pray that everyone might have food is to desire a world where dignity is not determined by wealth, where creation is respected, and where communities care for one another.

Perhaps the simplest examination of conscience today is this:

In our homes, our parishes, and our societies — is there space at the table for everyone?

May this prayer intention awaken in us a deeper gratitude for what we receive, a deeper sensitivity to those who lack, and a deeper commitment to build a society where no one is left hungry.

For when even one person is deprived of daily bread, our humanity is diminished.

And when food is shared, hope becomes visible.



Food banks play an important role in helping underprivileged and low-income households make ends meet.

Fr Fabian Dicom is the National Director of Caritas Malaysia

Sixty-four years under the Kluang sun

Deacon Louis Martin

The air in Kluang smells different now. Sixty-four years ago, when my lungs first drew breath in this corner of Johor, the scent was dominated by the damp, earthy aroma of rubber estates and the sharp, tropical sweetness of oil palm fruit. Back then, Kluang wasn't a place people "passed through" on their way to somewhere bigger; it was a destination built on the grit of agricultural pioneers. I have lived all my life within the embrace of this town, watching it evolve from a quiet collection of estates and Felda settlements into the sprawling commercial heart it is today. Yet, now while the skyline has climbed higher, the pillars of my life — my family and my service at the Church of St Louis, have remained as unshakable as Gunung Lambak on the horizon.

A childhood divided by loss

My story is one of two halves, divided by a single, shattering year. I grew up in the 1960s, a young boy running through the version of Kluang that felt like a vast, green playground. My world was centred firmly on my family, held together by my mother and my siblings. But in 1973, when I was just eleven years old, the world shifted on its axis: I lost my father.

To lose a father at that age is to lose your primary map of the world. Suddenly, the boy who played in the red dust of the agricultural outskirts had to grow up.

In the wake of that silence, my mother became a titan of strength, and I began to look towards the Church, not just as a place of Sunday obligation but as a sanctuary.

Church of St Louis and the fatherhood of Fr Lourdes Rayappan

It was at the Church of St Louis that I found the guidance I so desperately needed. If my biological father's passing left a void, it was the late Fr Lourdes Rayappan, *pic*, who stepped into the breach. He was not merely a spiritual director; he was a father to me in every sense that matters.

Fr Lourdes was a man who understood the heart of Kluang. He saw the struggles of the estate workers and the quiet anxieties of a fatherless boy. Under his wing and the prayers and blessings of my mother, who is, and will always be, the author and architect of my life, I didn't just learn about Liturgy; I learned about manhood, responsibility, and the quiet dignity of service. Fr Lourdes saw something in me as a young boy that I had not yet seen in myself. He encouraged me to serve in various ministries, from opening the church doors at 6.00am before going to school, to ringing the church bells before Mass and *Angelus*, sweeping the church, singing and responding to prayers, anchoring my restless energy into the work of the Lord.



It is because of his fatherly hand that I transitioned from a grieving child to a young man dedicated to the altar, eventually leading me to my calling as a deacon. The Church of St Louis became my second home, and Fr Lourdes the architect of my character.

The transformation: From estates to urbanity

As I entered my working life, the physical landscape of Kluang began to shift. The agricultural quietude started to give way to the roar of machinery.

I witnessed massive commercial and residential development firsthand. Areas that were once densely grown with rubber trees were cleared for the "Tamans" that now house thousands.

The FELDA settlements, once considered the remote outskirts, were suddenly connected by paved arteries to a booming commercial centre.

Watching this development was like watching a child grow up; there is pride in the progress, but a lingering nostalgia for the simplicity of the 1960s. The old shop-house where I once ran errands for my mother was joined by modern shopping complexes. Yet, even as the town grew larger and more anonymous, the Church of St Louis remained the constant. Whether the town was a small agricultural outpost or a commercial giant, the needs of the soul remained the same.

As a deacon, I saw the town's growth reflected in the pews — new families seeking the same spiritual home I had found fifty years ago.

Mary, Kevin, and John: The three pillars

While my early life was defined by the strength of my mother and the guidance of Fr Lourdes, the last 34 years have been defined by a different kind of grace. My wife, Mary Matthew, and my two sons, Kevin Sirach and John Edwin, have been my pillars of strength.

In the journey of a deacon, the family is the "Domestic Church." Mary has been my partner in every sense, standing by me through the demands of ministry and the changes of the town.

For 34 years, she has been the quiet inspiration behind my service.



In Kevin and John, I see the continuation of a legacy. I lost my father at eleven, but through my sons, I have been able to experience the father-son bond from the other side. They are my pride and my constant reminder of why I serve.

Everything I do, every prayer I lead, and every hand I hold in ministry is fuelled by the love and stability they provide. They have always been, and will always be my source of inspiration.

A deacon's reflections: The guardian of memory



Today, at 64, I stand as a witness to the history of Kluang. I walk down streets today where I can see three versions of history at once.

I see the modern storefront, and I remember the small wooden shop that stood there in the 70s, and I can almost still see the red earth track where an eleven-year-old boy once wondered what his future would hold.

My life has been a series of circles. I started at the Church of St Louis as a boy seeking a father, and now I stand there as a deacon, offering a fatherly hand to others. I saw the estates disappear to make room for a city, kept the values of that agricultural town — hard work, community, and faith — alive in my own home.

Living in one place for a lifetime is often mistaken for a lack of vision or movement. But I have travelled a thousand miles in spirit. I have seen a town reinvent itself, and I have reinvented myself alongside it.

I am no longer just a son of Kluang; I am a husband, father, and servant of God.

Kluang is no longer just a dot on the map of Johor to me. It is the soil where my mother's prayer took root, the place where Fr Lourdes Rayappan showed me the way, and the soil where my father is laid to rest.

Kluang is the home where Mary, Kevin, and John continue to give my life meaning.

As I look toward the future, I see more development on the horizon. But I am not afraid of the change. God has laid His Hand on me from the day I was formed in my mother's womb. He will lead me on. I know that as long as the bells of St Louis toll, and my family is by my side, I am exactly where I am meant to be.

I am home.

God is my refuge and my strength.

A quiet 'yes' that shapes lives – Sr Margaret Pereira, RGS

Vocation Sunday may have passed, but its quiet message continues to echo in the life of the Church — in the faithful witness of those who have said "yes" to God, often in ways unseen, yet deeply transformative.

Among them is Sr Margaret Pereira, a Good Shepherd Sister serving at the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang. Through her leadership in Campus

Ministry, she has become a steady and guiding presence for many young people navigating both faith and life.

For Medna Kaling, Sr Margaret was more than a campus minister. She was a patient listener, a wise companion, and a gentle guide — someone who walked with students as they deepened their faith, encountered the sacraments, and learned to live their Catholic identity with

meaning and conviction.

In moments of uncertainty, she offered clarity. In moments of growth, she journeyed alongside. Through her presence, faith became real, leadership was nurtured, and community took root.

Even years later, the impact of her vocation continues to unfold in the lives she has touched — lives that now carry Christ into their own families, workplaces, and communities.

Such is the beauty of a vocation lived not in the spotlight, but in quiet fidelity. It is a reminder that God's work is often most powerful in the unseen — in conversations, in accompaniment, in the patient forming of hearts.

As we move beyond Vocation Sunday, we are invited not only to give thanks for such witness, but also to recognise that the call of God continues — in every generation, in every heart willing to listen, and in every life ready to respond.

Holy Family Kajang FB



Not long ago, my husband and I visited the Church of St Paul the Apostle, a parish tucked away in the little town of Kuala Kubu Bharu. Compared to where we come from, it was small, quiet, and unassuming, yet full of heart. In that parish, everyone knew each other. Visitors stood out immediately, not because they were outsiders, but because the community's instinct was to notice, welcome, and embrace.



Catholic Digest
Elvina Fernandez

That evening, though we were strangers, we were received with a warmth that spoke of true synodality. I remember everyone who attended Mass that evening had a chat with us, sharing a light moment, inviting us to frequent the town again and even recommending the must sees and dos in the town.

This is not the kind of experience one often finds in Kuala Lumpur, where parishes have a bigger congregation and everything moves so fast. We often rush off to do the many things we need to do after Mass, missing out those who are visiting and new to the parish that day.

While in Kuala Kubu Bharu, things move slowly, and families still come together. In the city, families grow and scatter, moving to different parishes, each seeking convenience or proximity. The result is fragmentation. The parish ceases to be the anchor of family life. There, we witnessed how the parish was not just a building, it was the heartbeat of the town.

Synodality beyond structures

We often speak of synodality in terms of meetings, documents, and processes. Yet here, in this small parish, synodality was lived. It was not a concept but a practice, worshipping together, noticing the stranger, extending hospitality. Synodality is not about bureaucracy, it is about communion. The Second Vatican Council reminded us that the Church is "the People of God," not

The loaves and fishes lesson for our parishes

merely an institution.

In Kuala Kubu Bharu, I saw this truth embodied. The parishioners were not passive attendees; they were active participants in each other's lives. Their welcome was not rehearsed, it was instinctive. This is the kind of synodality Pope Francis calls us to rediscover, walking together, listening, and sharing life as one body.

The gift of simple meals

After Mass, a local family invited us to dinner at a nearby restaurant. The gesture was simple, but it carried profound meaning. Around that table, I saw how simplicity was cherished. The dishes were modest, ordered in small portions, yet they were more than enough. We ate, we laughed, and we even had leftovers. They spoke with the both of us like we were one of them, no difference, sharing their happiness and hearing what we had to share. By the end of the dinner, we knew everything about them and they about us.

I reflected how in Kuala Lumpur, my family dinners often involve ordering every dish possible, filling the table until it overflows. Yet here, fellowship was not measured by abundance. It was measured by togetherness. The joy was not in the menu but in the company.

Echoes of the loaves and fishes

That meal brought to mind the Gospel miracle of the two fishes and five loaves. Something small, when shared in love, becomes more than sufficient. The lesson was clear; abundance is not the prerequisite for joy. Love is. In that quiet

town, I was taught anew what it means to be community and family.

The Eucharist itself is the supreme example of this truth. A small host, a sip of wine, yet in faith, it becomes the Body and Blood of Christ, nourishing the entire Church. The meal in Kuala Kubu Bharu echoed this sacramental reality, simplicity transformed into abundance through love and fellowship.

Hospitality as evangelisation

Hospitality is not an accessory to parish life; it is its very witness. The welcome we received reflected the love of Jesus, who embraces each person as His own. Evangelisation begins not with programmes or campaigns, but with kindness. A smile to a newcomer, an invitation to share a meal, a willingness to listen, these are the small loaves and fishes that multiply into miracles of belonging.

Too often, urban parishes risk becoming places of anonymity. We attend Mass, receive the sacraments, and leave without truly encountering one another. Yet the Gospel calls us to more. The Church is not a service provider; it is a family. And families thrive on hospitality.

Lessons for our city parishes

Urban parishes must learn from smaller ones. In larger, busier communities, where anonymity is easy and fragmentation common, we must not lose sight of the small acts of welcome. Synodality in the city must mean more than structures, it must mean communion lived in daily gestures.

Imagine if every parish in Kuala Lumpur

made it a priority to notice newcomers, to invite them into fellowship, to extend hospitality beyond the church doors. Imagine if family dinners were not about abundance but about togetherness. Such practices would transform our families and parishes from places of worship into true homes of faith.

I was reminded that the Church proclaims the Gospel most powerfully not through grandeur, but through fellowship. And when we embody hospitality, we reflect the very heart of Christ. When we cherish simplicity, we proclaim that love is enough.

Fellowship as a miracle

As I left Kuala Kubu Bharu, I carried with me more than the memory of a meal. I carried the conviction that our parishes in bigger cities must rediscover the miracle of fellowship. The miracle is not found in abundance, but in love. And love, when shared, is always more than enough.

The small parish taught me that synodality is not a distant ideal, it is lived in everyday gestures. It is found in the way we notice each other, welcome each other, and share life together. If we can embody this in our city parishes, then the Church will truly be what she is meant to be, a family of God, united in love, sustained by fellowship, and radiant with the hospitality of Christ.

Elvina is passionate about connecting Scripture with contemporary realities. Through her writing, she seeks to inspire belonging, empower the community, and make faith accessible in everyday life.

Picture Jesus standing before you today — His eyes steady, His voice filled with compassion and authority — as He asks: "Do you want to get well?"

At first, the question feels strange. Who wouldn't want healing after years of suffering? Yet Jesus' words go deeper than physical health. They reach into the heart, exposing the places where we are stuck in fear, doubt, or complacency.

My natural response is, "Yes, Lord." But that answer must mean more than simply wanting relief. True wellness requires surrender. Saying "yes" means yielding my will, my plans, my pride, and my fears.

Surrender is not about giving up in defeat. It is choosing to trust. It is about laying down the illusion of control and about embracing the freedom that comes with obedience. It is saying, "Lord, I cannot heal myself, but I believe You can. I cannot carry my burdens alone, but I trust You to carry them with me."

Think about the man at Bethesda. For thirty-eight years he lay by the pool, waiting for healing. Over time, his paralysis became his identity. When Jesus asked, "Do you want to get well?" the man did not immediately say "yes." Instead, he gave excuses — no one was there to help him, others always went ahead of him.

Excuses and complaints sound familiar, don't they? We often fall into the same pattern. We want change, we want healing, we want life to be different — but we cling to reasons why it cannot happen.

The mat he carried symbolised his past — thirty-eight years of helplessness, paralysis, and dependence. By rising and walking, he left behind the identity of



victimhood and embraced a new life defined by Christ's power.

We too carry our "mats". They may not be physical objects, but they represent the places where we linger in paralysis — fear, unforgiveness, bitterness, doubt, or complacency. We wait for circumstances to shift, for someone to lift us, for life to become easier. Yet Jesus comes to us, not with rituals or formulas, but with a question that demands honesty: Do you want to get well?

Answering "yes" is not as simple as it sounds. To be well means letting go of



Stepping Stone
Anne Amaladasan

the mat we have leaned on. It means surrendering control, allowing Christ to redefine our identity, and trusting Him to lead us into unfamiliar territory. Healing is not just relief — it is transformation.

Transformation through surrender

To be well in Christ means to be whole. It is not just the absence of pain, but the presence of

His peace. It is being reconciled with God, renewed in spirit, and given a new purpose in life. Saying "yes" to Jesus means choosing obedience, even when it feels risky. It means forgiving when forgiveness

is hard, serving when it stretches us, and trusting Him when the way ahead is unclear.

The man at Bethesda rose, picked up his mat, and walked. His healing required action. In the same way, our healing also requires a response. Jesus' question is not just for reflection — it calls for a decision. Do we want to be well enough to leave behind what has held us back? Do we want to be well enough to trust Him with our future?

Conclusion

Jesus' question echoes across time, reaching us today: "Do you want to get well?" Your answer matters. It is not about quick fixes or shallow affirmations. It is about surrender — yielding your brokenness, your fears, your identity, and your future to Him.

To say "Yes, Lord" is to rise from the mat of excuses, to walk in faith, and to embrace the transformation He offers. Healing in Christ is not just about being free from pain — it is about being filled with His presence, living in the fullness of His grace, and walking in the wholeness of His love.

Anne embraces her call to guide individuals through Holistic Life Planning that encompasses retirement readiness and bereavement support. More importantly, she is blessed to be a caregiver, wife, and sister; and a person woven into the fabric of her family. Through these meaningful vocations, each day unfolds as a journey of compassion, partnership and patience, lived in devotion to honouring God through the ordinary rhythms of life.



Fr Gerard Theraviam

Journey beyond Emmaus

The journey continues...
I am grateful that I am not alone!

To have someone to talk to and bounce things at — what a gift that is!
Otherwise, the journey might become drudgery.
Not that there is always a conversation going, but just to know that there is someone there alongside is a comfort, even when we are engrossed in our own minds...
Yes, sometimes we might disagree — even on fundamentals, but when I recognise that it boils down to issues, and not persons, then we can agree to disagree, with our friendship intact, even growing... as we realise that we are chosen to be together, as companions on the journey.

There are times that the journey is arduous ... then I am grateful there is someone to draw encouragement and support from... to have someone cheering me on from the sidelines, who has my back, who will help me up when I stumble under the weight of my burdens, to be my Simon of Cyrene and Simona of Seremban, as I too reciprocate in the same measure...
Sometimes the unknown stranger reaches out... mysteriously appearing at the right moment to offer the hand of support...

Yet sometimes the journey needs to be undertaken alone, maybe with prayerful support from a distance.
But I need to make my own solitary path across the valleys of deep shadows, although there will also be the promised restful waters and green pastures... and I can hear within the voice of the Shepherd calling me forward...

But the tide of time can change... drastically...
Darkness suddenly overwhelms me...
There is no longer the reassuring voice...
The whole scenario has changed!
The arid dryness of the desert seems unending, filling the horizon...
I stumble along... as if in a drunken stupor, But I will not give up!
Alone and forlorn, yet resolute!
For I have already tasted the sweetness of the Lord and I long for more!
The desert cannot be forever...
The wells that have run dry will overflow again...
When? — I don't know!
In the meantime, I am being schooled in patience, Life is not a packet of instant noodles!

Fear sometimes cripples me sometimes imagined fears that make no sense in my confusion loom larger than life!
But I shall continue to cling on to hope and trust ...

for I know the Lord does not abandon His beloved — for that is what I am!
As my tears stream down, I cannot help but feel that just maybe, there are divine tears mingled with mine...
for He shares in my pain and heartbreak and grace keeps me on my path
The invisible hand is there...
The dawn will surely come...

But in the meantime, I toss and turn in the night, With deep sighs that come from the depths of a broken heart...

But sometimes I lash out in frustration!
Show yourself!
Are you deaf to my pleading?
Blind to my plight?
Deaf to my anguished cries for help?
Show me your face!
I demand it, I scream out!
Like the petulant spoilt child ...
And then I whimper in the darkness...
For my will is not done!
I am powerless!
I must just wait...

Yes, the dawn will surely come, with the sun gradually peeping from the horizon...
its rays restoring hope and confidence as it completely changes the whole ambience and brings light and warmth.

I am ready and willing to face a fresh new day, with its joys and sorrows as a package deal...
And so I wait, patience and impatience alternating...

When the *Kairos* moment finally arrives and God shows His face again, my whole demeanour is transformed
The scowl and downcast face are uplifted as also are the hunched shoulders...
Joy, hitherto dormant, fills my whole being!
I am a renewed being!
I sing and smile with God!
My broken spirit is restored, refreshed
I run along with the wind of the Spirit...

The journey continues...
Destination unknown!
The compass is not in my hands!
Yet, I shall trust that He who sent me on the journey has it all mapped out...
His grace goes before me...
I shall continue to walk with sometimes wavering faith which is buoyed by His often-silent presence... with the companions He will send...
Thy Will Be Done!

Fr Gerard is the parish priest of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur, as well as the Spiritual Director to the World Community for Christian Meditation, Malaysia.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

A soul friend

One of the saints who speaks to me is Therese of Lisieux, commonly known as the *Little Flower*. This wasn't love at first sight. For years I was put off and left cold and uninterested by how her person and her image have become encrusted in an overly saccharine piety. She was too sweet, too pious. Not a saint for me! That changed, thanks to a friend who told me, "Don't read books about her — read her!" I read her and found in her a soul friend.

Who is Therese of Lisieux? She was a Carmelite nun who died from tuberculous in 1897. She was only twenty-four years old when she died, and as a Carmelite nun hidden away in a convent in rural France, she died in anonymity, probably known by fewer than a hundred people. However, during the last two years of her life, as she lay dying from tuberculous, she kept several diaries. After her death, her Carmelite sisters sent her unpublished diaries to a few other convents, intending to let a small circle of religious women know of her death and a little about her life.

The rest is history. The manuscripts were leaked to a wider public and in less than ten years, printing presses were literally having trouble meeting the demand for her autobiography. Her little convent in Lisieux was receiving more than five hundred letters a day, and people from all

over the world were beginning to come to Lisieux on pilgrimage. A hundred and thirty years later, little has changed. She remains extraordinarily popular.

Why? Why this perennial intrigue about Therese? Because there is something about her that touches the soul in a particularly empathic way. How so? Therese had an anomalous background that produced an extraordinary character. Her life as a child was, in many ways, tragic. Her mother got sick at the time of Therese's birth and was unable to care for her during the crucial first year of her life. She was cared for by a nurse and an aunt. As a one-year-old she was returned to her mother, but her mother was already terminally ill and when Therese was four, her mother died.

Therese then chose her older sister, Pauline, to be her new mother. Five years later, Pauline entered the convent and, as a nine-year-old, Therese again lost a mother.

Shortly after this she took ill and almost died. This was triggered by a visit to Pauline who was then a Carmelite nun. Together with her three other sisters and her father, she had gone to visit Pauline in her convent. After Pauline had spent some time focused on her little sister, she naturally became preoccupied in adult conversation. Left out, in sheer frustration,

little Therese stood right in front of her big sister and, shaking her dress, began to cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Pauline. "You didn't notice!" cried Therese, "I'm wearing the dress you made me!"

She then became disconsolate and, on returning home, took to bed and for some weeks; despite the best efforts of various doctors and every kind of cajoling by her family, hovered between life and death. Eventually she recovered. Such was the tragedy and oversensitivity of her childhood.

Yet, and this is the great anomaly, as a child, Therese was doted on and loved in a way that few children ever are. Her father, her sisters and her extended family considered her their little queen and she was cherished and made to feel extraordinarily precious and unique. Her sister Celine photographed her every move. Few children ever grow up as nurtured in love and affirmation as did Therese.

And her personality bore out the effects of both the tragedy and the love. On the one side, she could be heavy, dark, withdrawn, and otherworldly. She made easy friends with mortality, was a mystic of darkness, the austere adult, the little girl-woman, who, wounded early, grew up fast. But, on the other side, she always remained the magical child, Cinderella,

who, because she was so loved and graced, developed a very robust self-esteem, a confidence and a capacity to love as few others ever have.

So loved as child, a part of her remained ever the little girl, the *puella*, the incarnation of childlikeness, innocence, and gaiety. Only Therese of Lisieux could end all her letters with the phrase: *I kiss you with my whole heart!*

In a soul so formed lies her mystique, that is, her unique combination of depth, insight, and other worldliness, even as she desperately clings to the tiniest gifts from her family and every small token of earthly affection. Only a soul so formed could, at age twenty-two, have the complexity and wisdom to write a mystical and theological treatise that rivals that of great theological doctors, and only a soul so formed could be both a study in hyper-sensitivity and human resilience.

A saint so pathologically complex can be a soul friend to our own complex souls.

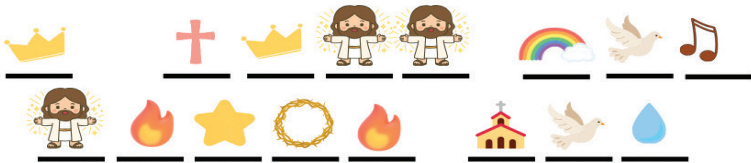
Oblate Fr Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He writes a weekly column that is carried in over 90 newspapers around the world. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com

LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER

CRACK THE CODE AND DISCOVER JESUS' MESSAGE FOR YOU



Message from Jesus:



Your answer:

UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS

(PUT THE LETTERS IN THE RIGHT ORDER)

- LVOE : _____
- TSRIIP : _____
- HTURT : _____
- SEUJS : _____

Dear children,

In today's Gospel, Jesus is telling us something very important. He says, "If you love Me, show it by doing what I teach you." That means being kind, telling the truth, sharing, and loving others. But Jesus also knows we might find it hard sometimes.

So He promises, "I will send you a Helper." This Helper is the Holy Spirit. We cannot see Him, but He is always with us, like



a quiet voice in our hearts, helping us choose what is right.

Jesus also says, "I will not leave you alone."

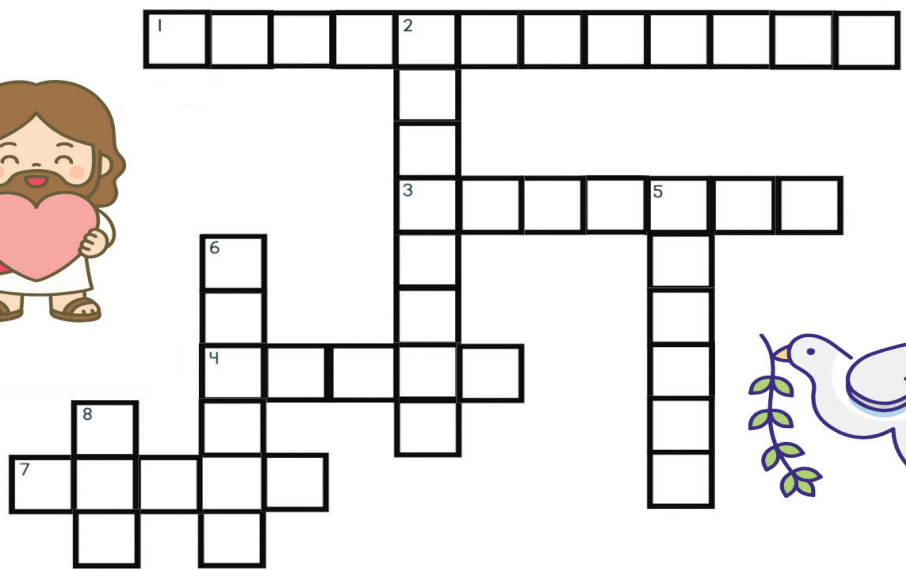
Even if we cannot see Him, He is close to us, loving us and caring for us every day.

And when we love Jesus and follow Him, we become close to Him, close to God the Father, and He fills our hearts with His love.

So remember, Jesus is always with you, and the Holy Spirit helps you love and do what is right."

Love,
Auntie C

JOHN 14:15-21



Horizontal

Vertical

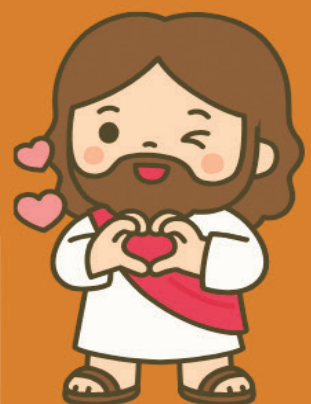
1. Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my _____."
2. The Father will send another _____ to help us.
3. Jesus says, "I will not leave you _____."
4. The Advocate is also called the Spirit of _____.
5. The Advocate will be with you _____.
6. The Spirit is given by God the _____.
7. Whoever keeps Jesus' commandments is the one who _____ Him.
8. I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I in _____.

Answers: 1. commandments 2. advocate 3. orphan 4. truth 5. always 6. Father 7. remains 8. you



JESUS IS ALWAYS WITH YOU!
WRITE WHAT YOUR HEART WANTS TO ASK
JESUS TODAY.

JESUS, HELP ME TO



YOUTH

MJD vocation programme draws strong response



JOHOR BAHRU: The Church of the Immaculate Conception hosted a well-attended and thoughtfully organised Vocation Discernment Programme for the Diocese of Malacca Johore on April 25, drawing more than 420 attendees from across the diocese.

The full-day event, held from 10.00am to 5.30pm, brought together approximately 390 participants from eight parishes. They were accompanied by 30 priests and religious representing both the diocesan clergy and various religious congregations serving within the diocese. A team of 38 volunteers supported the programme, contributing significantly to its smooth coordination and welcoming atmosphere.

The programme aimed to present the richness of the Church's understanding of vocation, extending beyond priesthood and religious life to include married life and singlehood. This broader perspective offered participants a more holistic appreciation of vocation as a universal call to holiness expressed in different states of life.

In view of the diocese's linguistic diversity, several common sessions were conducted to foster unity among participants. The programme began with an opening prayer led by diocesan seminarians, setting a reflective tone for the day.

A central feature of the programme was the "Round-Robin" sessions, in which participants were grouped according to language and rotated through a series of vocation-focused stations. Each station was facilitated by married couples, single laypersons, priests, and religious brothers and sisters. This format allowed participants to engage in meaningful and personal conversations, raising questions

and gaining insights in a setting marked by openness and trust. The structured movement between stations also ensured that participants remained attentive and engaged throughout the afternoon.

In addition, ten religious congregations, together with the diocesan vocation team, set up exhibition booths. During the lunch interval, participants were encouraged to visit these booths to learn more about the various charisms and forms of consecrated life. A simple incentive—collecting stamps from booth visits in exchange for a refreshing ice-cream—added a light-hearted and enjoyable dimension to the experience.

The programme culminated in a Holy Hour with Eucharistic Adoration, led by the Franciscan friars (OFM), which took place prior to the closing Mass. During this time of prayer and reflection, participants were invited to write the fruits of their discernment, as well as the vocation they felt drawn to, on paper hearts. These were later presented before the altar at the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration, symbolising the offering of their hopes, desires, and lives to God.

The programme concluded with a multilingual Eucharistic celebration presided over by Bishop Bernard Paul. In his homily, he reflected on the journey of vocation through what he termed the "6 Ds": Daily Life, Disruption, Darkness, Docility, Decision, and Direction. He emphasised that God's call often unfolds gradually, inviting openness, trust, and a willingness to respond with generosity.

The event ended on a hopeful and uplifting note, with participants expressing appreciation for both the depth and accessibility of the sessions. The programme successfully combined prayer, formation, and personal encounter, offering a meaningful and engaging experience for those discerning their vocation. **MJD-SOCCOM**



Anointing the youth through S.C.A.N



Adelle Barnaby

KUALA LUMPUR: On April 25, the Archdiocesan Single Adults and Youth Office Kuala Lumpur (ASAYO Kuala Lumpur), together with the Archdiocesan Vocation Promotion Team (AVPT), in collaboration with the Church of the Good Shepherd, Setapak, organised the S.C.A.N. event.

The programme gave young people an opportunity to learn how to discern their vocation and how to respond to it.

The event began with a welcoming address by Fr Michel Dass, followed by an opening prayer led by Fr Simon Lau. Talks were then delivered by Fr Mitchel Joseph, parish priest of the Church of the Good Shepherd and guest speaker, Fr Simon Labrooy.

Participants were later divided into break-



out groups after each session to share their journeys and discuss their faith. The programme also featured a praise and worship session.

The event was held in conjunction with the Feast of the Good Shepherd, with Mass celebrated by Archbishop Julian Leow.

An attendee, Aidan Alexander, described the programme as a blessed and anointed experience, adding that events such as this were valuable for youths as they provided opportunities to learn about different religious vocations, connect with young people from other parishes and deepen understanding of their faith journey.

Another participant, Jayden Pradeep, said S.C.A.N was eye-opening. He noted that the event helped him realise it was alright to feel unfulfilled at present as he believed God was

calling him to a higher purpose.

Similarly, Norah Pinto said she felt blessed to take time out from her busy schedule to reconnect and grow in understanding through the lens of Jesus.

She added that she was grateful for the chance to learn about her purpose from those in religious life, with her biggest takeaway being the realisation that she is a gift from God, and how she shapes her life becomes her gift in return.

Volunteer Melissa Nelson said she had a wonderful experience meeting new people and having meaningful conversations while helping with event coverage.

She added that there were many enjoyable moments throughout the day and she was grateful to have been part of a memorable programme.

Organisers said S.C.A.N served as a reminder that discovering one's purpose is an ongoing journey shaped by faith, community and a willingness to grow.

They added that the event highlighted the best of youths through a coordinated programme attended by 300 participants from many parishes.

The key message of the programme was that in a modern and fast-paced world, young people should hold firmly to their faith.

When people come together with purpose, they can become a force capable of making a difference.

The Church of the Good Shepherd said it was honoured to host the event and provide a platform for youth formation and fellowship.



Initiative promotes life-giving awareness

TELUK INTAN: The youth from the Church of St Anthony spearheaded an outreach initiative under the leadership of Faustina Francis. The programme combined a Blood and Organ Donation Campaign with a Dental Health Check-Up, turning care for the body into a lived expression of compassion and service to the wider community.

The initiative sought to encourage parishioners and the wider community to give the gift of life through blood donation, to promote awareness on organ donation, and to care for one's health through dental screening.

The response from the faithful and the wider community was most encouraging, with many stepping forward to participate. This generous response reflected a living witness of compassion, solidarity, and love for neighbour, values deeply rooted in the Gospel.

The event also became a moment of grace for the young people involved. It provided a platform for youths and young adults to grow in unity, strengthen bonds of fellowship, and deepen their call to service within the Church and community.

The success of the programme was made



possible through the collaboration of three agencies, namely Hospital Teluk Intan for blood donation services, the Hilir Perak District Health Office for organ donation awareness, and the District Dental Health Office for dental health screening.

The organising team expressed their heartfelt gratitude to all youths, young adults, parishioners, and volunteers whose dedication, generosity, and spirit of service ensured the smooth and meaningful running of the event. **Marie Ann Dawson**



BANTING: On April 18, eleven students from UiTM received certificates of completion for the Discovery module from Fr Eugene Benedict during a simple celebration at the Church of Sts Peter and Paul. The programme, organised by AMNEC (Archdiocesan Mission of New Evangelisation for Christ), marked the culmination of a journey of encounter, reflection, and renewed faith.

The students — Cassandra Isabel Pius, Faustina Kumang anak John, Jeremiah Jana anak Joshua, Joyce Nicole Nicholas Mojugit, Laura Hostein anak Robert, Lionel Max Ryan anak Zainuddin, Mischa Vindang anak Bollen, Nelson anak Tuah, Shaun Hakkinen anak Cagim, Stephen Ladie anak Mata-Ari, and Tracy Nicole Cosmas publicly testified to a renewed faith — affirming a deeper personal relationship with Jesus and a sincere desire to place Him firmly at the centre of their lives.

Their reflections bore witness to a journey marked by encounter, healing, and transformation.

One student shared how trust in God became a source of strength in difficult times: "I have started to trust and put God at the centre of my life. These past months had been

YOUTH DISCOVER CHRIST AT THE CENTRE OF LIFE

very hard on me, but these sessions helped me to accept and trust in God's plan. It helped me grow closer to Him."

Another spoke of finding direction and belonging: "Before Discovery, I felt lost and empty, as if I had no purpose. After completing the sessions, I feel blessed and connected to God. I am no longer a lost sheep — I have found my flock and my Shepherd, my God and my Lord."

Others described healing, renewed faith, and a growing awareness of God's unconditional love. One participant reflected, "Jesus offers us immense love — everlasting and unconditional. It is up to us to choose to receive it. I now want to live a Christ-centred life and serve Him with all my heart."



The programme also opened hearts to the simplicity of faith: "Discovery helped me realise that a relationship with God is not complicated. It strengthened my faith, resolved my doubts, and gave me the courage to share openly in a loving community."

Another participant testified to a profound shift in priorities: "I realised that God should never be my second, third, or fourth priority — but always the first. I am now reminded daily to seek Him and speak to Him."

Across all testimonies, a common thread emerged: encounters, sharing, and community life had awakened a deeper awareness of God's presence. Students spoke of healing from spiritual dryness, renewed joy in prayer,

and the courage to place Christ at the centre of daily life.

One participant beautifully summed up the experience: "Discovery has changed my perspective on leading a spiritual life. It reminded me to bring Jesus back to the centre of my life. Through the ups and downs, I realised that God was always calling me back into His arms. We lose nothing by welcoming Him — instead, we gain purpose, strength, and direction."

Another was moved by the power of shared stories: "Listening to others touched my heart deeply and helped me grow closer to Jesus."

The journey was guided throughout by a team of dedicated lay leaders — Philip Zarsadias, Joseph Mariadass, Catherine Joseph, Dominic Hong, Catherine Parinas, and Dennis Christopher Jacob, whose quiet service helped create the space for encounter and growth.

The Discovery programme will continue at the Church of Sts Peter and Paul, with 26 parishioners from various BECs participating in six weekly Sunday sessions after Mass — continuing this journey of encounter and renewal.

For enquiries, contact Dominic Hong (012-218 5886) or Joseph Mariadass (016-265 7832). **Veronica and Andrew Lim**

Where do I belong?

KUALA LUMPUR: Everyone has a calling, whether to priesthood, religious life, marriage, or to a mission-shaped life through which God invites us to serve.

On April 25, over 300 youth from across Malaysia, aged 18 and above, gathered at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Setapak for the S.C.A.N. programme. The day was filled with talks from speakers drawn from different walks of life, all of whom had journeyed through the process of discernment.

Participants also had the opportunity to visit over eight booths representing various religious orders in Malaysia. Among them were the Sisters of St Francis of Sarawak (SSFS), the Franciscan Sisters of the

Immaculate Conception of Sabah (FSIC), Little Sisters of the Poor, Good Shepherd Sisters, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FFM), Daughters of St Paul, Carmelite Monastery Seremban, and the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin. A wide range of workshops was offered, exploring themes such as making choices with God, listening to the voice of the heart, and deepening faith amid the challenges of today's world.

The session I attended was for youths aged 18-24. Sr Susanna from the FFM spoke on the "big decisions" we face at this stage of life, reminding us that the first step of discernment is to know ourselves. She also shared her own discernment journey, which



took nearly 10 years before she finally professed her vows in 2023.

I was deeply moved when she asked us to write our names on a piece of paper, and then reflect on their meaning. I knew mine had a Hebrew origin linked to wealth. But the moment that unsettled me most was when she asked us to turn the page and list the people or communities who could support us in our vocation journey. I struggled. I felt place-less. Was there really no one I could turn to?

After the session, I went to the FFM booth to speak with her. I shared how I often felt that there was no real place for me in the Church, even though I had been involved in various ministries. She listened and then said gently, "Sometimes, no matter how much we serve in Church — whether as altar

servers, lectors, or in other ministries — if we do not allow the community into our lives, that is when we begin to feel place-less."

That simple response shifted my entire understanding of vocation.

Another talk by Fr Simon Labrooy stayed with me as well. He shared stories from his early priesthood, especially the discovery that the mind and heart do not always speak the same language. He reminded us that when someone speaks from the heart, it must be received with reverence, understanding, and kindness — something that can only come from the Holy Spirit.

By the end of the day, one truth became clearer to me: a calling does not arrive simply by waiting. It comes when we choose to discern, to seek, and to deepen our relationship with God. **Ashira Clifford**



A tribute to my mother-in-law

While we often come across poems about mothers, my mother-in-law Mdm Anthonyammal Gnanarokiam, was truly God's gift to me. In conjunction with Mother's Day, I would love to honour her with a special poem. She passed away on December 13, 2013.

A mother-in-law like her

From the outside,
she seemed a typical Indian lady,
In her sarees so lovely,
draped gracefully, steady.
School taught her letters,
but life taught her heart,
She was a true friend to me,
a bond set apart.

She loved the Tamil tongue,
its rhythm and grace,
Her simple worldview lit every space.
With seven children,
she grew through the years,
Temper softened by love,
and prayers calmed her fears.

Her hands, a blessing,
made meals with care,
She ensured all who visited
had love to spare.
She watched my son
with a grandmother's pride,
And taught him to sing,
with joy as her guide.

When I returned from school,
tired and worn,
She welcomed me warmly,
my spirits reborn.
"Eat, watch TV, rest awhile," she'd say,
And ensure I was cared for
before I left for the day.

During holidays,
she'd urge me to explore,
"Spend a day with your friends;
I'll mind the home."
Her compassion ran deep,
her wisdom profound,
In her typical ways,
saintly love was found.

When I shared my pain,
my struggles, my strife,
She held no judgment
but mirrored Christ's life.
She imitated mercy,
her heart full of grace,
Her support was my refuge,
my safe, sacred space.

Her end came too soon,
an asthma attack,
But she left us with love
that will never lack.
A week later, a dream so divine,
Showed her glowing,
in a heavenly design.

In a golden saree, youthful and bright,
She greeted me warmly
in a house full of light.
The gift she gave me, a saree so fine,
Was her way of saying,
"This love is still mine."

She taught me how
love can endure through all,
How to rise with grace,
no matter the fall.
One day, I hope to be like her too.
A mother-in-law with a heart so true.

Her memory lives,
a beacon of care,
A soul radiant, beyond compare.

Ann Gratian

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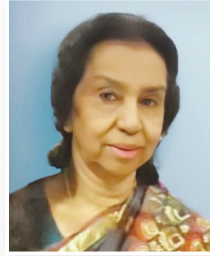
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*Truly, truly,
I say to you,
whoever
believes has
eternal life..*

John 6:47

5th Anniversary Forever in Our Hearts MARIE ANTHONY



5.10.1939 – 10.5.2021

"The years may pass,
but still, you stay.
As near and dear
as yesterday."
We miss you, Amma.
Love you dearly,
Your children,
grandchildren & in-laws.

6th Anniversary In Loving Memory of

Dr. Loke Kong Poh, PhD.
7 March 1955 - 14 May 2020

"For I am convinced that neither
death, nor life, nor angels, nor
principalities, nor present things,
nor things to come, nor powers,
nor height, nor depth, nor any
other creature will be able to
separate us from the love
of God in Christ Jesus
our Lord."
- Romans 8:38-39

Deeply missed and
forever cherished by
beloved wife, daughter,
son-in-law, grandson,
in laws, relatives, Karate
mates/students, and friends.



Remembering Philippines' 'Healing Nun'

MANILA: Sr Eva Fidela Maamo, a Catholic nun and surgeon known across the Philippines as the "Healing Nun" for her decades of free medical care to the poor, passed away recently at the age of 85.

In the 1970s, Sr Eva performed surgery on an Indigenous woman using a bamboo table and coconut water to keep the patient alive in Lake Sebu, southern Philippines. The urgent action was necessary because reaching the nearest hospital required hours on foot and crossing multiple rivers.

Her life of service and sacrifice made a deep impact on people, particularly the poor who most availed themselves of the nun's medical and pastoral care.

"I remember her vividly during my years as an intern and resident at Manila Doctors Hospital, attending to her patients," said Dr Anthony Leachon, a physician.

"Her quiet strength, her devotion to the sick and the poor, and her example of servant leadership shaped not only the lives of those she treated but also the young physicians who learned under her guidance," he added.

Sr Eva was born on September 17, 1940, in Liloan, Southern Leyte. She studied at the Velez College of Medicine in Cebu, central Philippines, and practiced at her family's clinic in Liloan for a while.

Later, she entered the Sisters of St Paul of Chartres to be a nun and missionary in 1974, serving as a physician in Lake Sebu and later in other parts of the country.

One of her steadfast beliefs was that health is a right for all, not a privilege for a few.

Being a surgeon, she did not limit herself to an operating room. She visited public hospitals, communities, and places with very limited access to health care.

Sr Eva's role went beyond that of a

physician who is meant to treat illnesses; she made sure to work for people's dignity — interacting with patients where they lived, seeing their existential realities.

"In this way, she showed the human face of healing and care while witnessing God's mercy," said Maria Martineze, a volunteer.

The nun's quiet and consistent commitment tried to abridge the existing gap — need and access to health but also working for inclusion and people's right to access health, Martineze explained.

She trained "barefoot doctors" — men and women skilled to treat common illnesses and provide basic care in remote and rural areas where accessing health care has always remained a challenge.

According to Sr Eva, the "barefoot doctors" are not physicians, but they are skilled at treating common diseases.

Sr Eva trained 17 barefoot doctors in Lake Sebu in 1974. Over the years, she expanded the initiative across the country, training 274 barefoot doctors from 110 Indigenous communities.

Sr Eva had a distinctive character — going to the peripheries — as a missionary and a doctor. In her heart, she had special love for Indigenous peoples and geographically and socially isolated communities in the country, including the T'boli, Aeta, and Manobo.

She trained them in basic medical skills like CPR, physical exams, and minor surgery, empowering them to become health providers for their tribes.

One of the Indigenous peoples, the Aeta, displaced by the Mount Pinatubo eruption in 1991, was cared for by the nun.

The nun worked with them for years, capacitating the leaders and community, strengthening their dignity, resilience, and physical well-being.



With her efforts, as many as 146 families with 500 persons were able to resettle. Some eventually converted to Catholicism.

"She spent her life in healing and service with compassion and love for Indigenous people," said Lourdes Balinta, an Aeta teacher.

The Foundation of Our Lady of Peace Mission was established in 1984 by Sr Eva and American Jesuit Fr James Reuter to address the needs of the poor.

Additionally, in 1992, Our Lady of Peace Hospital, Parañaque, Metro Manila, was built to provide the poor with affordable access to quality health care, including feeding and livelihood programmes for the poor in Metro Manila and other areas.

"Through her foundation and hospital, she brought healing, dignity, and hope to countless marginalised communities across the Philippines, offering free medical care, shelter, and livelihood opportunities," a message from Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation said.

"Small in stature but immense in spirit, Sr Eva's life stands as a powerful witness to Gospel compassion lived out in action," it added.

Her tireless work as a healer and advocate for the marginalised was a profound witness to her faith in Christ and love for humanity, he added. The remarkable legacy she leaves behind — her ministry and compassion — touched countless lives.

In 1997, Sr Eva received the Ramon Magsaysay Award, often considered Asia's Nobel Prize, for her dedicated service to the poor communities through medicine.

In 1992, she received the Mother Teresa Award of the Philippines. In 2006, the nun was recognised as a Lasallian Star of Faith awardee, recognising her decades of dedicated service as a nun and surgeon whose life epitomised faith in service. Santosh Digal, EWTN News



Sr Eva Fidela Maamo with hospital staff and a priest after Mass at Our Lady of Peace Hospital in Parañaque, Metro Manila, Philippines, on June 26, 2022. (EWTN/Photo courtesy of Our Lady of Peace Hospital)

WYD Seoul 2027 announces five patron saints

KOREA: The Local Organising Committee for World Youth Day Seoul 2027 has announced the patron saints who will spiritually accompany the next major international gathering of young Catholics, which will take place in the South Korean capital August 3–8, 2027.

The five patron saints of WYD Seoul 2027 are St John Paul II, founder of World Youth Day; St Andrew Kim Taegon and his companion martyrs; St Frances Xavier Cabrini; St Josephine Bakhita; and St Carlo Acutis.

St John Paul II (1920–2005) is remembered for centring much of his pastoral teaching on young people, the family, and the defence of the dignity of human life. St Andrew Kim Taegon (1821–1846), the first Korean Catholic priest, together with his companion martyrs, represents a powerful witness of faith and courage, sealed by martyrdom at a young age.

St Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850–1917) was a tireless missionary, known especially for her work on behalf of migrants and the poor. St Josephine Bakhita (1869–1947), a former slave who became a religious sister, is a witness of hope, freedom, and faith transformed through suffering. St Carlo Acutis (1991–2006), meanwhile, embodies the witness of holiness in the digital age

and remains a model of evangelisation for young people today.

As is customary for each World Youth Day, the patron saints are presented as models and guides of faith for young people through the witness of their lives and spirituality. For WYD Seoul 2027, the choices were made in light of the event's major spiritual themes: truth, love, and peace.

The selection process began at the end of 2024 and included a nationwide survey of young people, youth ministry leaders, and formators. Following that consultation, the Local Organising Committee reviewed the candidates and made the final selection.

After the announcement, a group of young volunteers spent two months studying the lives and spirituality of the five patron saints. Through prayer, dialogue, and shared reflection, they prepared a special prayer and a representative symbol for each saint to express the particular witness they offer to new generations.

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family, and Life, emphasised the importance of the selection, saying the patron saints "play a fundamental role in the preparation of each World Youth Day." He said these models of holiness invite young people to

reflect on God's call and encourage them to respond with generosity and courage in following Christ.

"May the witness of these patron saints inspire young people throughout the world, especially in contexts marked by difficulty and persecution," Farrell said.

Archbishop Peter Soon-taik Chung of Seoul, president of the Local Organising Committee, noted that the chosen saints represent different continents and generations.

"Each one of them offers a concrete path for living the faith amid the realities that young people face today," Chung said, expressing his hope that participants will form a deep spiritual bond with the saints during the journey of preparation for WYD.

The Local Organising Committee will continue presenting the lives and spirituality of the patron saints through the official WYD Seoul 2027 website and social media channels, while also developing new content and formation programmes.

Along with the announcement, the committee also launched an interactive section



titled "Meet Your Patron Saint!" Inspired by personality tests and digital quizzes, the feature asks young people a series of questions to help them discover which of the five saints most closely resembles their own personality. The goal is to help young people encounter the saints not only as historical figures but also as companions who can illuminate the questions and hopes of today. **CNA**

Vatican releases document on integral ecology within the family

VATICAN: The Vatican has published a document focused on living the care for creation and for human life within the family, entitled "Integral Ecology in the Life of the Family."

Released on April 27, the text is intended to be a response to Pope Francis' and Pope Leo XIV's appeals to listen to the cry of the poor and of the Earth and offer a concrete response, according to a press release presenting the initiative.

The document draws from the principles of the post-synodal Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* and the teachings of the Encyclical *Laudato si'*.

The text is the result of the joint efforts of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life, and was developed with the direct involvement of theologians, consultants, and married couples.

"Family values are the fruitful soil from which all of society grows. In order to care properly for our common home and for all people, families must be the model," wrote the Prefects of the two Dicasteries, Cardinal Michael Czerny and Cardinal Kevin Farrell.

"Many families are attentive in caring for our common home and caring for others, their minds set on the hope that is Jesus Christ. The values of the family are consistent and fundamental to the care of our common home and of our neighbours," they continued.

"What are the values of the family? Members of the family learn selflessness, patience and dedication, openness and protection of life, so that they can flourish, complementarity

and reciprocity, intergenerational connections and solidarity with other families, and the transmission of knowledge and traditions."

The document offers guidelines to families, Church groups, and individuals to help them address the current environmental challenges and to promote the integral development of every person.

The first part of the text presents fundamental concepts based on Pope Francis' most significant writings, while the second part — the heart of the volume — contains thematic chapters that reflect seven objectives from *Laudato si'*.

These include: listening to the cry of the earth, listening to the cry of the poor and the vulnerable, adopting and promoting ecological economics, adopting ecological lifestyles, integral ecology and education, ecological spirituality in the family, and families participating in community life.

Each chapter is divided into four sections: an explanation of the topic, implications of the topic, questions for reflection and discussion, and a list of proposed actions.

The press release notes that although the document is dedicated to families, it can be useful to all, as care for creation and the promotion of human dignity are topics that affect everyone.

Families, it says, as the constitutive element of society, can become the motor of this profound cultural change.

Integral Ecology in the Life of the Family is available for free in five languages on the official websites of both Dicasteries. **Vatican News**

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