

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



(CNS photo/Vatican Media)

# Pope Leo XIV pledges peace, unity and missionary renewal

**VATICAN:** The Catholic Church turned a new page in history on May 8, 2025, as Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, an American missionary and Vatican official, was elected the 268th pope. He emerged from the conclave as Pope Leo XIV, the first American to ascend the papacy in modern history, and signalled from the outset a clear commitment to carry forward the vision of a church that is missionary, synodal, and deeply engaged in peace building.

Speaking from the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica just hours after his election, Leo XIV opened with the Easter greeting of the Risen Christ: "Peace be with you!" He described this peace as "a disarmed peace and a disarming peace, humble and persevering."

The new Pope, formerly the prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and bishop of Chiclayo, Peru, thanked his predecessor, Pope Francis, for his enduring leadership. Citing Francis' "weak but always courageous voice" in his final public appearance on Easter Sunday, Leo XIV pledged continuity with his vision of a church that "walks together, builds bridges and remains close to the suffering."

"We want to be a synodal Church," Pope Leo said. "A Church that walks, a Church that

always seeks peace, that always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close especially to those who suffer."

His election was swift — chosen by the College of Cardinals on the second day of the conclave. In defying conventional wisdom that an American would not be chosen due to the US's geopolitical status, the cardinals delivered a bold statement of trust in Prevost's global and pastoral outlook.

In his first public remarks, Pope Leo XIV spoke in both Italian and Spanish, reflecting his missionary background in Latin America and his Vatican experience. He described his election as a call "to walk together with you as a united Church searching all together for peace and justice, working together as women and men, faithful to Jesus Christ without fear."

Pilgrims gathered in St Peter's Square responded with cheers, flag-waving, and emotional hymns. Among the celebrants was a group of women religious attending a plenary assembly of the International Union of Superiors General in Rome. "When the white smoke appeared, we all sang the Alleluia," recalled French Sr Nathalie Becquart, undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops and a veteran of both recent synodal assemblies. "It was incredible."

Sr Becquart, along with other synodal participants, underscored the continuity Leo XIV represents. "I can see and feel that he is a very balanced, serious man, who will take his time to determine how to continue the work of the

synod," she said.

Observers and collaborators during the synodal process also emphasised his missionary grounding and his thoughtful leadership style. "He never wanted to be the centre of attention," said José Manuel De Urquidí, founder of the Juan Diego Network. "He cares deeply about people — especially about the bishops from all over the world."

Leo XIV's choice of papal name evokes further symbolism. "Pope Leo XIII is the father of Catholic social teaching," noted theologian Anna Rowlands, an expert in the synodal process. "It's really interesting that Pope Leo XIV is going to follow in that legacy now."

Rowlands emphasised that synodality — a key theme of Leo's inaugural address — is not simply about structure, but mission. "People forget that mission was at the heart of the synodal process: the renewal of the church on the inside to proclaim a credible witness to the world outside."

Kim Daniels, communications advisor to the synodal assemblies, described Leo XIV as "an American with a missionary heart and a global vision — a son of Chicago who's spent his adult life in Peru and now Rome." His election, Daniels said, confirms the cardinals' endorsement of Pope Francis' vision of spiritual and structural renewal.

But Pope Leo XIV inherits a church in flux. While Catholicism continues to grow globally — especially in Africa and Asia — the Church faces critical internal and external

challenges. These include rising global conflicts, persecution of Christians, migration crises, and the decline of international cooperation.

Internally, Pope Leo must navigate deep divisions over synodality, the role of women, Church governance, and priestly formation. Francis had set the stage for structural reform through the synod on synodality, which is scheduled to continue through 2028. Its goals include fostering inclusivity, strengthening accountability, and expanding lay participation in church ministries.

He also faces urgent financial and administrative challenges: Vatican budget shortfalls, a looming pension deficit, and the continued need for comprehensive measures to address clergy sexual abuse. A decision is also pending on whether to retain Pope Francis' Council of Cardinals, which advises on governance reforms.

Among his first decisions could be whether to proceed with a long-planned trip to Turkey later this month. The event, commemorating the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, was dear to Francis and is expected to bring together global Christian leaders in an ecumenical gathering.

Pope Leo XIV concluded his address with a message of unity and hope: "Without fear, united, hand in hand with God and among ourselves, we will go forward." **Agencies**

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**FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK**

When the white smoke rose from the Sistine Chapel and the familiar proclamation rang out — *Habemus Papam* — the world waited in suspense to discover who had been chosen to lead the Catholic Church. Few expected the name that followed: Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost. His name had scarcely appeared in pre-conclave speculation, overshadowed by more prominent figures with global recognition. Yet, it was this quiet, unassuming American Augustinian who emerged onto the balcony, humbly greeting the faithful as Pope Leo XIV.

In an age when charisma and public presence often dominate the conversation, the College of Cardinals chose instead a man known not for headlines, but for his deep spiritual life, pastoral heart, and unwavering commitment to service. His election is a reminder that the Holy Spirit does not conform to human predictions, and that leadership in the Church is first and foremost a call to holiness, not popularity.

Born in Chicago, Cardinal Prevost's journey to the papacy has been one of fidelity and quiet strength. A member of the Order of St Augustine, he served for years in Peru, working among the poor and marginalised, deeply immersing himself in Latin American culture and ministry. Fluent in Spanish, with a natural sensitivity to the needs of the Global South, he gained the trust of those he served — not through titles, but through presence.

His later appointment as bishop of Chiclayo, Peru, and then as prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops under Pope Francis, demonstrated the Church's recognition of his gifts for discernment and leadership. In

that role, he was instrumental in helping identify and form new generations of bishops — shepherds after the heart of Christ. His style was marked by listening, patience, and clarity — qualities much needed in today's complex ecclesial landscape.

That the cardinals turned to him now, at a time when the Church stands at a crossroads, is deeply significant. It signals a desire for a pastor more than a politician, for a guide more than a manager. Pope Leo XIV enters the papacy not as a celebrity but as a servant — a man rooted in prayer, grounded in community life, and attuned to the quiet voice of God.

While many hope he will continue the bold and compassionate legacy of Pope Francis, especially in areas such as care for creation, synodality, and outreach to the peripheries, we must also be ready to receive Pope Leo XIV as he is. He will inevitably bring his own voice, shaped by his formation, experiences, and reflections. Just as every pope before him has done, he will interpret the signs of the times with the eyes of faith, and chart a path that reflects both continuity and renewal.

The name he chose — Leo XIV — is rich with symbolism. It evokes both Pope Leo the Great, the fifth-century Doctor of the Church who defended orthodox doctrine and papal authority, and Pope Leo XIII, the architect of modern Catholic social teaching through *Rerum Novarum*. In doing so, Pope Leo XIV may be signalling a papacy that seeks to unite doctrinal integrity with social conscience, echoing tradition while embracing modern challenges.

We cannot forget that Pope Francis opened many doors — calling the Church

to be less self-referential, more missionary, more merciful. His emphasis on listening, dialogue, and walking together culminated in the ongoing Synod on Synodality. It is likely that Pope Leo XIV will carry this process forward. But he will also ask new questions, confront emerging issues, and offer new insights. This is not a break, but the organic evolution of a Church always reforming, always discerning the voice of the Spirit.

As the Church welcomes this new pontiff, we must accompany him with prayer, openness, and trust. The burden he now carries is immense. He must guide over a billion Catholics across a fragmented world, build bridges between polarised communities, and ensure that the Church remains faithful to Christ while speaking meaningfully to today's generation.

Let us not weigh him down with expectations rooted in nostalgia or personal agendas. Let us instead allow Pope Leo XIV the freedom to be who he is — a man chosen by God, shaped by humility, ready to serve. In his first appearance, his calm presence and gentle words already signalled a pastoral style marked by simplicity and grace.

May Pope Leo XIV lead us not with the force of personality, but with the power of love. May he be a shepherd who listens before he speaks, who walks with the wounded, and who, like Christ, knows the names and needs of his sheep. And may we, the Church, respond not with resistance but with faith, ready to walk with him into this new chapter of our shared journey.

*Patricia Pereira*

## Do you love Me? *Learning to love like Christ*

During the third Sunday of Easter, the Gospel tells us of the dialogue between Jesus and Peter, where Jesus asked Peter three times whether he loved Him more than all the rest. The common explanation for this incident is that Jesus wanted to redeem Peter for his three denials before the Crucifixion. However, there is also an explanation which some of us may be familiar with if we examine the Greek version of the text.

The first two times, Jesus uses the word “agape”, which we all know is unconditional love and Peter replied both times with “philea”, which means brotherly love. Jesus wanted him to bring himself up to the level of “agape” but after two times, Jesus used the word “philea” instead. It was only at the third time that Peter was able to use the word “agape.” It was only after the third response that Jesus said to Peter “follow Me.”

Why is this significant and what does it have to do with today's Gospel? It is safe to assume that all of us will find it hard to reach the level of agape. Our love as humans will always be conditional. Spouses will put conditions on one another, parents will put conditions on their children etc. When our love is conditional, it is limited because we expect something in return or we will not love unless it is beneficial to us. In a sense, this is a selfish kind of love.

This is exactly the kind of love that the world is promoting today. In every form of media, love becomes almost utilitarian or a commodity. While there are movies

or songs that try to portray love in a more mutually giving manner, very often it is based on emotions rather than something deeper. In real life, love has also become an industry. In some countries, you can hire someone to be a boyfriend or girlfriend. The higher their hourly rate, the more things that they can do except for physical contact. There are some who even hire a girlfriend to bring home to avoid societal pressure.

Easter is not just about the Resurrection; it is the culmination of God's unconditional love for us. Every encounter with the Risen Christ is an encounter of love. Through this loving encounter, the eleven and other disciples went out to bear witness to this life changing love. While many miracles and signs were performed, the most important witness is the change in their way of life. Effective witnessing is carried out by our way of living. This is why, at the end of each Mass, we are called to go and glorify the Lord by our lives. It is only when we experience this unconditional love and try our best to love God unconditionally that we can follow Christ.

Today's Gospel tells us to love as Jesus has loved us. And how has He loved us? He has washed the feet of those who would betray and abandon Him. He has healed the outcast, fed the hungry, welcomed sinners, and restored the broken. He has chosen the cross.

This is not sentimental love. This is sacrificial, forgiving, humble, self-emptying love. It is the kind of love that

### Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

#### 5th Sunday of Easter (C)

Readings: Acts of the Apostle 14:21-27;

Revelation 21:1-5;

Gospel: John 13:31-35

serves even when it is inconvenient. That listens when it is tired. That stays present when it would be easier to walk away. In a world that too often equates love with feeling, Jesus grounds it in action.

This love is meant to be our identity badge, the way others recognise us as followers of Christ. Not by the cross around our neck, or the title before our name, or how well we argue theology — but by how deeply and concretely we love.

The question is, does our love look like His? Do we love those who are difficult to love — in our family, our parish, our workplace? Do we forgive those who have wounded us? Are we willing to be inconvenienced for the sake of someone else's dignity? When others look at our life, do they see a reflection of the love of Jesus?

The early Church grew not because of clever programmes, but because people saw something different in Christians — how they loved each other. The world is still hungry for that witness. And it starts with us. Let us return to the source: Jesus in the Eucharist. There, love is not just taught — it is given, poured out. May receiving Him today transform us, so that we can love — not just in word, but in truth, in deed, and in His image.

# Canon Law diploma course for lay people

KUALA LUMPUR: The Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) has announced the launch of a new diploma programme titled *Canon Law for a Synodal Church*, aimed at lay Catholics seeking a deeper understanding of their role within the Church.

Scheduled to run from June 7, 2025, to January 2026, the course will be conducted online via Zoom every Saturday from 4.00pm to 6.30pm. It is open to participants in Malaysia and beyond.

Speaking to *HERALD*, Rev Dr Merlin Rengith Ambrose, Executive Secretary of the Commission for Canon Law and Other Legislative Texts of the CCBI, explained that the programme is designed to raise awareness among lay people about their rights, responsibilities, and the participatory structures within the Church.

“Their baptismal call to cooperate in *Tria Munera Christi* (the threefold functions of Christ) will be the axis of the entire course,” said Dr Merlin, who will lead the sessions under the guidance of Most Rev Dr Antonysamy Savarimuthu.

The course will cover a range of topics including the role of lay faithful in the life of a Synodal Church, magisterial teachings on lay ministries, participatory Church structures, and insights from the Final Document of the Synod on Synodality.

Participants will also explore teachings from the CCBI and gain tools to become more effective missionary disciples in their communities.

For further details, interested individuals may contact Rev Dr Merlin Rengith Ambrose or Fr Duming Gonsalves via email at [shantisadangoa@gmail.com](mailto:shantisadangoa@gmail.com).




**KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow**

**May**

- 20-21** Clergy Monthly Recollection
- 23** Meeting – Commissions Coordinators
- 25** Confirmation – Church of St John Vianney, Tampin
- 27** Annual General Meeting – Catholic Health Care Asia (CHCA), online
- 28** Meeting – Yayasan Tan Sri Vendargon Board





**MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul**

**May**

- 20-21** Clergy Monthly Recollection – MAJODI Centre
- 22** Meeting – Diocesan Finance Council, MAJODI Centre
- 24** Annual General Meeting – Villa Paulos
- 27** Quarterly Meeting – Deliverance & Exorcism Office Team, MPI
- 29** Mass, Ascension of the Lord (Tri-lingual) – Church of St Joseph, Plentong at 8.00 pm
- 31** Sunset Mass (English) – Church of St Joseph, Plentong at 5.00pm

**DIOCESE OF PENANG**  
PKK/BDN/2025/05/203

## Notifications and Updates #49

*In Loving Memory of His Holiness Pope Francis (1936–2025)*  
**A humble shepherd, a voice of mercy, a beacon of hope.**  
*Forever in our prayers and hearts*

**1. The Launch of Perjalanan SALIB in the Diocese of Penang**  
This symbolic and spiritual journey began with Mass on Thursday, May 1 at 10.00am at the Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam, in conjunction with the feast of St Joseph the Worker. Let us gather as a diocesan community to walk together in faith and unity as we journey towards the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026.

Please be ready to welcome the Salib in your various communities within the diocese. Sharing the route of the *Salib* for the Diocese of Penang. <https://shorturl.at/acsCi>

**2. Establishment of Independent Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem - Lieutenancy of Malaysia Penang**  
This establishment of the Lieutenancy of Malaysia Penang will formally take place on May 24, while the Investiture Ceremony will be on May 25 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Penang.

**3. Updates on Placements/Movements of Infant Jesus Sisters in the Diocese of Penang**  
Sr Amy Sam is now at the Waterfall Formation House, Penang. She is the Sister-in-Charge of Initial Formation. Sr Marie Angele Phang has moved to Light Street Convent together with Sr Rita Lim and Sr Gertrude Tan. Sr Daniel Ee has joined the community in Sitiawan since March 2025. We remember in prayer, the mission of the IJ sisters in our diocese.

*Sebastian Francis*  
**Cardinal Sebastian Francis**




**Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #222**



**Welcome dear friends.**

**Local takes:**  
“No man is an island. No man stands alone.” In a borderless and globalised world, can we remain untouched, untaught and unlearning? The US tariffs talks, if it fails, investors may divest and move elsewhere; supply chain disruptions, cost inflation and order cancellations occur; companies with investments here may relocate; Malaysia may become the dumping ground for cheap products. The US cited Malaysia’s halal import restrictions and bumiputra equity requirements and others as trade barriers.

**Other interesting ripples:**  
Implosion is expected within PKR; Petronas-Petros dispute continues; unhappy doctors march to Putrajaya, a DAP rep reminds a politician that the nation belongs to all, not just the Malays. A MACC witness disappears on the way there. Plans to revive the direct train link from KL and Bangkok are underway, while Johor waits for Spore-JB RTS and the ETS from Gemas.

**Conclave Times.**  
There will be lobbying. Yet the Holy Spirit is at work too. Going right or going left, conservative or progressive, hierarchical or Synodal — we have yet to see. The prayers everywhere are for continuity and building upon the legacy of Pope Francis. Note the four absolute conditions highlighted by Cardinal Camillo Ruini, for the good and future of the Church — a good and charitable Church, doctrinally secure, governed according to the rule of law, and deeply united internally. The Cardinals had also reflected on the hermeneutic of continuity between the pontificates of St John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. There is a call on re-visiting the role of the Eucharist, the Church’s evangelising mission, scandals, liturgy, and canon law. As you read this article, we may already have our new pope.

**A Thought For The Week: ABQO.**  
An employee, “A”, asked his manager for his task of the day. The manager asked him to cross a river. “A” completed the task successfully and reported back. The manager said, “Good job.”  
The next day, Employee “B” received the same task. While crossing the river, “B” noticed Employee “C” struggling with the same task. He helped “C” across and then reported back. The manager said, “Very good job.”  
On the third day, Employee “Q” received the same task but did some research beforehand. He consulted “A”, “B”, and “C”, documented the process, identified common mistakes, and created a guide for future reference. He then completed the task and presented the documentation to the manager, who said, “Excellent job.”  
Finally, Employee “O” was assigned the task. After reviewing “Q’s” guide, he realised the company was wasting resources on this repetitive task. Instead of crossing the river, he designed and implemented a bridge, eliminating the need for future crossings. The manager said, “Outstanding job.”  
**Lesson from ABQO:** A: Completed the task as expected. B: Completed the task and helped a colleague, demonstrating teamwork. Q: Created a knowledge base to improve efficiency, showing leadership and foresight. O: Innovated by solving the root problem, adding long-term value to the company.  
While doing what is expected brings satisfaction, going above and beyond — through helping others, creating resources, or solving underlying issues — leads to outstanding success. Initiative and out-of-the-box thinking are the keys to lasting impact.

**Something’s Happening Near You:**  
1. The diocese prepares for the *Training of Trainers Programme on Synodality*, the changes that are expected, the conversions needed, the spirituality required to sustain this new Pentecost. Ignorance is not bliss.  
2. The PSO MJD will be conducting a *Safeguarding of Minors Workshop* on July 5 (9.00am - 1.00pm) at Majodi Centre for Tamil-speaking parents, youth leaders and catechists.

**QnQ! Q asks? “The voice that says “You can’t”, where is it coming from?”**  
1. The voice that says “You can’t” isn’t yours. it’s your paradigm. (A paradigm is a group of habits and a habit is an idea that has been fixed in your unconscious mind through repetition.)  
2. Your conscious mind has the power to reject ideas. But your subconscious mind doesn’t — it accepts whatever you feed it over and over. That’s why repetition is so powerful. Every time you impress a new belief or image on your subconscious mind, you’re building a new paradigm. One that aligns with who you want to become.  
3. But don’t be surprised when the old paradigm resists. It’ll whisper things like: “Who do you think you are? You’ve never done that before. You don’t have what it takes.” That’s not your truth — that’s your programming.  
4. You can override it. You can rewire it. But it takes awareness, repetition, and belief.  
5. Keep feeding your mind the truth about your potential — and you’ll create the life you want.” - Bob Proctor. (Shift and repeat, that’s the “magic”.)

**The Holy Spirit @work:** “And He departed from our sight that we might return to our heart, and there find Him. For He departed, and behold, He is here.” *St Augustine*

**Something To Tickle You:** “Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen.” *Michael Jordan*

*Bernard Paul*  
**Bishop Bernard Paul**

# Feast of St Joseph the Worker

Bernard Anthony

The Chapel of St Joseph came alive with joy and devotion on May 1.

The celebration began at 2.15pm with the recitation of the Rosary and the Litany of St Joseph. Mass at 3.00pm was celebrated by Fr Michael Goh, assisted by Bro Gabriel Puvan.

Bro Gabriel delivered the reflection in English, highlighting that St Joseph is honoured with two feast days: March 19, which celebrates him as the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and May 1, as St Joseph the Worker — a model of labour and humility. He explained that these two feasts reflect both aspects of our Christian life: how to “be” and how to “do”.

“To be a husband is a vocation, not a job,” said Bro Gabriel. “As workers, St Joseph teaches us how to approach our tasks with dignity and integrity. Often, we focus too much on doing rather than being. Both are interconnected, and we must strive to balance them.”

He noted that although St Joseph is a towering figure in salvation history, the Gospels record very few of his words. Instead, his faith and obedience shine through his actions. Bro Gabriel shared about the three dreams recorded in the Gospel of Matthew that guided St Joseph’s life: accepting Mary as his wife, fleeing to Egypt to protect Jesus from Herod, and returning safely to Nazareth

## Tanjung Kling, Melaka



The statue of St Joseph carried in procession around the chapel grounds.

after Herod’s death.

“These dreams reflect St Joseph’s deep faith, his obedience, and trust in God’s will,” he said.

Bro Gabriel also emphasised the “3Fs” that define St Joseph: Faith, Fidelity, and Family. “St Joseph listened to God and remained faithful. He cared and provided for the Holy Family, becoming a model of responsible fatherhood. Whether serving God in the Church or at home, fidelity is essential. It is a vocation.”

He reminded the faithful that St Joseph continues to intercede for us as a fatherly figure,

a moral compass, and a model of faith. “Pray to him for your family and your community,” he encouraged.

Fr Michael, in his homily delivered in Mandarin, echoed the same message and added a fourth quality, Love. He said, “Joseph’s love for God and the Holy Family guided his every decision. Let us strive to walk in his footsteps and be a ‘little St Joseph’ in our own families.”

After Mass, Fr Michael incensed the statue of St Joseph before it was carried in a solemn procession around the chapel grounds, accompanied by the faithful in

honour of the saint.

Returning to the chapel, chapel chairperson Richard Koh expressed gratitude to God for the fine weather and welcomed all guests. Richard also thanked the donors and sponsors who made the recent completion of the new toilet block possible, as well as all those who contributed to the feast day preparations. He invited everyone for tea fellowship at the adjacent hall.

Fr Michael gave thanks to God for the meaningful celebration and the strong turnout, encouraging the faithful to “be a little St Joseph in your own way.”

Bro Gabriel, who has completed four months of pastoral service in Ayer Salak, shared that he would return to Kuala Lumpur for a short break before heading back to Kuching for his final year of formation. He thanked the community for their prayers, companionship, and support, and asked them to continue praying for vocations to the priesthood.

As a token of appreciation, the chapel community presented Fr Michael and Bro Gabriel with love gifts and bouquets of flowers.

The celebration concluded with a joyful tea fellowship at 4.45pm, as the faithful gave thanks to God for a meaningful and inspiring feast day — renewed in faith, love, and fidelity through the example of their patron, St Joseph.

## Bidor, Perak

The Feast of St Joseph was celebrated from May 1 to May 4.

Fr James Pitchay, the parish priest of the Church of St Mary in Tapah, was the preacher throughout the four-day celebration. On the first day, he reflected on the theme *Exemplary of the Workers*. On the second and third days, he focused on “Exemplary of the Faithful” and “Leadership of the Family” respectively. A 45-minute procession through Bidor town took place on May 3 following the evening Mass, held in honour of St Joseph.

The feast culminated on Sunday, May 4, with the theme *Pilgrims of Hope*. The church was filled to capacity.

In his homily, Fr James emphasised that we are all pilgrims, journeying through life with hope in God. “We go on pilgrimages with the faith that God will grant us what we seek. Life itself is a pilgrimage towards eternal life with God,” he said. He likened this journey to that of St Joseph, who travelled from place to place in obedience to God’s will, faithfully fulfilling his role as guardian of the Holy Family. St Joseph, Fr James noted, listened to God’s word, obeyed it, and became a model father to Jesus and a devoted husband to Mary.

Reflecting on the Gospel for the Third Sunday of Easter, Fr James spoke about the Risen Jesus appearing to His disciples multiple times up to His ascension to strengthen their faith and affirm the reality of His resurrection. Jesus commissioned His followers to spread the Good News to all.

He highlighted how Jesus appointed Peter as the first Pope, asking him three times, “Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.” Peter responded with unwavering love, eventually sacrificing his life for Christ. Fr James urged the congregation to reflect: “Today, Jesus asks us the same, ‘Do you love Me?’ Will we carry our cross and follow Him? Will we be faithful spouses, obedient to God’s will, like St Joseph?”

Following the homily, Fr James baptised three young children and one adult. He also administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to nine adults. He introduced the newly baptised and confirmed to the congregation, warmly welcoming them into the community of faith.

Fr James presented certificates to the newly initiated members. He wished everyone a Blessed Feast Day of St. Joseph and encouraged them to draw closer to God by following the saint’s example.

The celebration concluded with a fellowship lunch on the church grounds. Fr James extended his gratitude to all sponsors and volunteers who helped make the four-day feast a success. He also introduced Bro Anthony, a Bidor native, who will be ordained a permanent deacon later this year.

Approximately 300 faithful attended the celebrations, including locals, Orang Asli from a nearby army camp, members of the migrant community, and visitors from outstation churches. **Bernard Anthony**



## Sentul, Kuala Lumpur

From April 26 to May 1, the novena and feast day unfolded as a sacred journey.

The celebration began with the flag hoisting, a meaningful tradition that marked the start of six days of devotion. Mass was celebrated by different priests offering messages of encouragement and faith. Among them were Fr Jude Nirmal Doss; Fr Vincent Thomas; parish priest Fr Frederick Joseph, and Msgr James Gnanapiragasam.

On the first evening, the faithful took part in a solemn procession of the Blessed Sacrament following the Eucharistic celebration. Walking in prayer, they journeyed around the church before concluding with a benediction at Mother Mary’s grotto. This was followed by a fellowship gathering, sponsored by the BECs, which helped strengthen the bonds of community. Throughout the novena days, each day focused on a different aspect of hope, encouraging reflection on overcoming challenges, practising charity, caring for creation, forgiveness, and building unity.

On May 1, a special symposium explored the theme *Hope does not disappoint*, based on Romans 5:5. The speakers shared insights on how faith and work are connected. Fr Gerard Theraviam spoke about the importance of labour as a sacred calling. Janice Leo, an expert in employment law, gave an overview of workers’ rights and responsibilities. Fr Jude Nirmal Doss talked about

the balance between work and personal life, offering reflections on how faith can help people find harmony.

In the evening, the faithful gathered for Vespers and the Novena to St Joseph, followed by Mass. Fr Vincent Thomas the main celebrant was joined by Fr Frederick, Msgr James, Fr Mitchel Anthony, Fr Lawrence Andrew, SJ, Fr Jude and Fr Bonaventure Rayappan. After Mass, a procession honouring St Joseph took place, with the Rosary prayed in multiple languages, reflecting the unity and diversity of the congregation. As pilgrims walked through Jalan Sentul, they expressed their devotion and reflected on St Joseph’s virtues. Upon returning to the church, petitions were burnt, symbolising trust in God’s providence. The flag was then lowered, and the congregation sang the Holy Patron hymn with deep gratitude.

The celebration ended with fellowship, bringing together over 1,300 attendees. More than just a gathering, the event was a powerful reminder that hope remains a guiding light for the faithful. Inspired by St Joseph the Worker, those who attended left feeling strengthened, uplifted, and renewed in their faith. May St Joseph continue to intercede for all, guiding those who labour toward fulfilment in God’s love. **John Bosco Morais**



Fr James Pitchay giving his homily during the parish feast day celebration.

# Deacons as icons of mercy

Isaac Alfred Simbun

PLENTONG: The annual gathering of Permanent Deacons, candidates, and their spouses took place at MAJODI Centre from April 30 to May 2. Seventeen deacons, their wives, and six candidates from the Dioceses of Penang and Malacca Johore attended, along with Bishop Bernard Paul, Fr Adrian Francis, Sr Shanti M. FdCC, Archbishop Julian Leow, and Fr Edwin Peter. Cardinal Sebastian Francis originally scheduled to speak was called to the Vatican for the conclave.

The theme of the gathering was rooted in the call for deacons to embody the *Image of Mercy*, echoing Pope Francis' message for the Jubilee of Deacons. The emphasis was on the threefold ministry of the Word, the Altar, and Charity, reinforcing the identity of deacons as ministers of service. Deacons are called to be visible signs of Christ's mercy, particularly in times of societal unrest and uncertainty. They are not assistant priests but distinct ministers of charity, deeply rooted in the mission of Christ the Servant.

Archbishop Julian emphasised the importance of balancing ministry, work, and family life, reminding deacons that their primary mission field begins at home. He highlighted the reciprocal nature of marriage and ordination, a teaching emphasised by Pope Francis. Deacons, particularly those who are married, are urged to support their families as the first community of faith and serve as bridges between the Church and society. The family, he stated, is not secondary to the diaconal vocation but integral to it. This integration, however, is not without its challenges. Many deacons find themselves stretched between parish responsibilities, secular work commitments, and family duties. Effective time management, communication with spouses, and prioritising family prayer time were discussed as essential practices.

Another significant aspect addressed was the marketplace as a vital mission field for deacons. Since many deacons hold secular jobs, they are strategically positioned to witness to the Gospel in workplaces that may be hostile or indifferent



Permanent Deacons with their wives and Archbishop Julian Leow, Bishop Bernard Paul and clergy.

to Christian values. Archbishop Julian underscored that effective witness is not merely about words but about demonstrating moral integrity, compassion, and justice in every interaction. It is in these secular environments that the deacon's call to embody Christ's mercy becomes most relevant. Deacons are called to be anchors of moral clarity, bearing witness through everyday encounters, business decisions, and even small acts of kindness.

Fr Edwin invited the deacons to reflect on their core identity, urging them to consider how they would like to be remembered. He emphasised that the vocation is not just about performing acts of service but about becoming merciful persons. The question he posed, "How would you like to be remembered?" underscored the importance of authenticity in the diaconal ministry. "The image of God we hold will shape the kind of deacon we become," he reminded them, urging deacons to live intentionally as icons of mercy, humility, and service. Fr Edwin also addressed the importance of pastoral sensitivity and emotional intelligence, especially in dealing with parishioners facing crises or personal challenges. Deacons must not only serve but also listen attentively, offering a compassionate presence that can often be more impactful than mere words.

Reflecting on the participation of the deacons' wives, they were acknowledged as more than mere companions. Bishop Bernard emphasised that the wives play an essential role

in the diaconal ministry. Their prayer, presence, and works of mercy become vital expressions of Christ's compassion, particularly in spaces where the Church may be less present. Sr Shanti M. FdCC used the metaphor of *Kintsugi*, the Japanese art of mending broken pottery with gold, to illustrate how embracing brokenness can lead to transformation. By accepting their own vulnerabilities and those of others, the wives can become powerful instruments of mercy and healing. During the sessions, the wives discussed practical ways to support their husbands in ministry while also maintaining their own spiritual health and identity as women of faith.

Bishop Bernard concluded the gathering by reminding the deacons of their fundamental calling to serve as icons of God's mercy, especially to those at the margins. He urged them to embrace the *kenosis* of Christ, entering into the brokenness of the world with humility and

compassion. The diaconal ministry, he stressed, is not about gaining status or recognition but about pointing others to Christ through acts of love and mercy. He emphasised that deacons must not only serve but also advocate for those whose voices are often unheard – the poor, the marginalised, and the suffering.

In today's complex and fragmented society, the role of the deacon becomes ever more crucial. The deacon, as a living sign of Christ the Servant, is called to embody mercy in every encounter — whether in the parish, the workplace, or the family. They are to be anchors of hope, radiating Christ's compassion to those most in need and reminding the world that the image of God we hold will ultimately shape the kind of deacon we become. The gathering closed with a reminder that while deacons are called to be icons of mercy, they must also remain lifelong learners, continually seeking to deepen their own spiritual lives to be effective witnesses to others.



The wives of deacons doing a practical exercise on mending broken pottery.

## RCIA Study Day 2025: Living out the great commission

KUALA LUMPUR: On May 1, 160 RCIA coordinators, facilitators and catechists from across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur gathered at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the annual RCIA Study Day, which was organised by the KL Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry (KLACM).

This year, the theme *Living Out the Great Commission* was aimed at renewing the missionary spirit of those involved in the RCIA and to strengthen their call to accompany candidates and catechumens with intention and clarity. To achieve this, the KLACM invited the Archdiocesan Mission of New Evangelisation for Christ (AMNEC) team to present the sessions. All sessions were presented in English, Chinese and Tamil, and in Bahasa Malaysia, ensuring that the participants from various linguistic backgrounds could fully engage with the formative content and process.

The day began with breakfast and registration at 8.00am, setting the tone for a time of fellowship and spiritual preparation. The first session focused on *Kerygma: Proclaiming the Core Gospel Message Effectively*. Participants were invited to revisit the heart of the Gospel message and to reflect on how it is to be proclaimed, not merely as information, but as a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. At this stage,



RCIA coordinators, facilitators and catechists during their annual study day.

the Quad was introduced as a tool of Evangelisation. Emphasis was placed on clarity, conviction and authenticity in proclamation, particularly within the context of today's pastoral realities.

The second session addressed *Intentional Accompaniment in Evangelisation*. The participants were reminded that journeying with catechumens is not simply a process of teaching, but one of relationship and trust. The role of the RCIA team members is to

walk alongside individuals in their faith journey, listening to them with compassion and responding with pastoral sensitivity. Intentional accompaniment requires patience, presence and a deep awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit in each person's life.

In the third and final session, the focus turned to *Creating a Culture of Evangelisation*. Here, participants explored how parishes can foster environments that are not only welcoming, but missionary in

spirit. The call to evangelise does not rest on the shoulders of a few but involves the entire community. Practical approaches to building this culture were shared, alongside moments of reflection on how personal witness and parish structures can either support or hinder the evangelising mission of the Church.

The Study Day concluded with the participants gathering in the church, where Dr Steven Selvaraju, Director of Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre, presented the closing remarks. He expressed his gratitude to the members of the ANMEC team and all those who had assisted in the preparation of the Study Day. He also thanked the parish priest of the Church of Sacred Heart, Msgr Stanislaus, and the parish community for hosting the event.

The Study Day ended with a shared sense of renewed purpose among the participants. They expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be refreshed in both their knowledge and spirit, returning to their parishes with a deeper understanding of their role in the RCIA journey and a stronger commitment to living out the Great Commission in their ministry. It was a day marked by encounter, learning, and encouragement, a reminder that evangelisation begins with hearts set on fire by the love of Christ. **Angel Jupirik**

# Penang Diocese launches “Perjalanan Salib”

Nicholas Khor

BUKIT MERTAJAM: The Diocese of Penang officially launched the *Perjalanan Salib* (*Journey of the Cross*) during the 10.00am Mass at the Minor Basilica of St Anne.

The event saw a large gathering of the faithful coming together in communion to receive the *Salib* (Cross), which began its journey in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, during the recently concluded Malaysia Catholic Youth Day.

The morning Mass was celebrated by Msgr Jude Miranda. Concelebrating with him were Msgr Stephen Liew; Msgr Henry Rajoo; Fr Esmond Chua, OFM; Fr Bernard Hyacinth, SJ; Fr David Lourdasamy; Fr Francis Xavier; Fr George Vaithynathan; Fr Konstend Gnanapragasam; Fr Nelson Joseph and Fr James Pitchay.

Being the feast of St Joseph the Worker, Msgr Jude emphasised the importance of prayer for all labourers, focusing on their safety, well-being, and the dignity of their work. He specifically asked for God’s blessing for workers to receive fair wages and find purpose in their tasks. He also mentioned that the *Salib* will travel through various parishes, chapels, and parish centres over the next 18 months. Msgr Jude then invited the congregation to celebrate together with St Joseph, emphasising the beauty of relationships and Jesus’ role in their lives.



The “Salib” carried in the entrance procession.

In his homily, Msgr Henry underscored the symbolic significance of the Cross in Christianity, particularly in the context of an ongoing journey or pilgrimage. He posed critical questions about the choice of the Cross as a central symbol, emphasising that it is not merely a sign, but an instrument through which Jesus saved the world.

Reflecting on the meaning of carrying one’s cross, Msgr Henry engaged the audience in understanding the profound invitation to embody their daily struggles with faith and purpose. He elaborated on the journey of the Cross, clarifying that it encompasses not just physical travel but a spiritual mission of solidarity and intimacy with oneself, God, and others. He encouraged prayer, self-reflection, and communal support as es-

sential elements for enduring the burdens of life. Lastly, Msgr Henry invited everyone to embrace the Cross as a source of spiritual nourishment and unity, framing this initiative as a historic collective endeavour within the Catholic community of Malaysia.

During the launching ceremony, Msgr Jude said that each parish would host the *Salib* for two to three weeks, encouraging the parish community to engage in prayer, reflection, and activities surrounding core themes such as family, society, church, and ecology. Additionally, a guidebook was produced to help parish leaders and members facilitate their engagement during this journey, providing essential resources such as prayers, reflections, and a map of the pilgrimage route.

Specific appreciation was given to individuals who contributed to organising this event, such as Francis Kew Yoon Sen, who crafted the nine original crosses symbolising unity in Malaysia, and other coordinators instrumental in managing the *Perjalanan Salib* across the region.

The overall diocesan coordinator for the *Perjalanan Salib* is Simon Joseph, assisted by Jason Tioh for the Northern Deanery, Joel Peter for the Perak Deanery and Emma Imelda for the Penang Deanery. The ceremony concluded with a video presentation featuring bishops from different arch/dioceses, reinforcing the community’s commitment to spiritual growth and support for each other, exemplified by the teachings of Pope Francis on hope and charity.

Before the end of Mass, Msgr Stephen sought blessings for workers, so that they may find strength in their labour, find protection during hardships, find justice in their workplaces, find joy in the fruits of their efforts. He also prayed over those facing unemployment, uncertainty and unjust working conditions. He concluded with a call for work to glorify God and contribute to the common good, fostering a kingdom of love and peace through Christ.

The *Salib* will return to Majodi Centre in September 2026 for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention, where the nine *Salib* will unite as one, symbolising the unity of the Church in Malaysia.

## Celebrating inclusion and faith at SFA

CHERAS: The Assisi Beloved Community (ABC) Ministry of the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) commemorated the Jubilee for Persons with Disabilities on April 26, with a day of reflection, celebration, and community engagement.

The Jubilee, dedicated to persons with disabilities, calls for greater inclusion, awareness, and recognition of the gifts and challenges faced by these individuals. At SFA, the ABC Ministry – a special needs ministry consisting of parents, caregivers and volunteers – organised a full day of meaningful activities rooted in faith and fellowship.

The day began with parishioners and invited guests gathered at the covered carpark to begin the Way of the Cross. Children from a local orphanage were among those present, joining hands with the community in a shared journey of prayer and reflection.

SFA’s outdoor Stations of the Cross drew a large crowd. Each station was led by a different member of the congregation, with life-sized wooden crosses passed among the faithful – an evocative symbol of Christ’s fi-

nal hours. The procession concluded in unity and prayer before participants enjoyed a simple breakfast of *mee hoon*, sandwiches, traditional delicacies, and hot beverages, prepared by the ministry.

The celebration continued with a series of inclusive and engaging activities for all attendees. Upon registration, participants received coupons to be stamped at each activity station, which they later exchanged for commemorative Jubilee Year tokens, including a bag, card, and passport.

Activities designed for all ages and abilities filled the SFA Centre. These included paper rattan craft, balloon craft, beading, photo booths, face painting, sand art, batik painting, and a percussion workshop. A dedicated calming and sensory room was also available, offering a quiet space for individuals who needed respite.

In John Paul II Hall, a two-part talk was conducted by Helen Chin, an advocate and solicitor, as well as the mother of a young



The parishioners and guests participating in the Way of the Cross.

man with autism and artistic talent. Her sessions focused on the Persons with Disabilities Act 2018 and Planning for Families of Persons with Disabilities. The talks were attended by Senator Isaiah Jacob, a vocal advocate for disability rights, who encouraged parents to step forward with their children to seek rightful recognition and inclusion within society.

The morning of activities concluded around 1.15pm with lunch.

At 6.00pm the community gathered once more for Mass, animated by members of the ABC Ministry. Lectors, commentator, and hospitality ministers from the ministry served with reverence and joy. The congregation was then invited by the commentator, on behalf of the ABC Ministry, to participate in a Silent Walk from Our Lady’s Grotto to the 12th Station of the Cross, carrying tea light candles provided by the ministry. The walk formed a solemn and luminous display of devotion.

Later that evening, the community reconvened for a thanksgiving dinner. The thanksgiving dinner was organised by ABC Ministry to celebrate and embrace life, and that each member can make a difference by being a wick of hope and support to one another.

The evening was enlivened by a series of performances. The Praise and Worship session led by Ian Patrick and ABC’s special friends set a tone of joy and gratitude. Other performances featured Louis, Ernest and Gabriel from the ABC Ministry, and members of the Filipino, KUBM, and African communities, highlighting the parish’s vibrant diversity.

The night concluded with a word of appreciation and prayer from parish priest, Fr Paul Cheong, OFM, Cap, who expressed his gratitude to all who participated and supported the celebration. He emphasised the importance of continuing to uplift and support persons with disabilities, recognising their invaluable place within the Church. **Elasya Richard**



One of the activities during the session in the morning.

## Klang District formation on the Holy Spirit



# Flames of the Fire

Nesa Dhevasahayam

KLANG: As the Church celebrated the Risen Christ and prepares for Pentecost, 50 days after the Resurrection. The Klang district churches (Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, St Anne, Sts Peter & Paul and Holy Redeemer) came together for a special formation on the Holy Spirit. The event took place on May 1 at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, with the inspiring theme: *Flames of the Fire*.

The formation was led by the priests of the district, with sessions conducted in four languages to cater to the diverse community. The English session was by Fr Gregory Chan, Tamil by Fr David Arulnatham, Bahasa Malaysia by Fr Eugene Benedict and Fr Gnanam Selva Berentis and Mandarin by Fr Andrew Kooi

The first session focused on the identity of the Holy Spirit, as revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. They also explained about the Holy Trinity and the Creed. They emphasised that the Holy Spirit is the active presence of God in the world guiding, empowering, and helping believers grow in faith.



Group discussion.

The second session focused on how the Holy Spirit works in our daily lives. The Holy Spirit helps us understand Jesus' teachings, gives us strength in difficult times, and helps us love others as Jesus does. He lives in those who are baptised and is active through the sacraments, helping us become true followers of Jesus.

The final session encouraged everyone to live with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Living in the Spirit means growing closer to God and letting Him change our hearts and lives. It means paying attention to the Holy Spirit, asking for His help, and following His

ways with trust and faith.

The day concluded with the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, a time of prayer and reflection, followed by the celebration of Holy Mass. Many attendees were visibly moved by the presence of the Holy Spirit, with several sharing how they were touched and renewed during the formation.

A heartfelt thank you to all the Klang district priests for organising and leading this enriching, spirit-filled formation. It was a day of deep learning, fellowship, and spiritual awakening truly igniting the flame of faith in the hearts of many.



PETALING JAYA: Members of the Legion of Mary, in the Queen of Heaven praesidium, at the Church

of St Francis Xavier, were thrilled when Archbishop Julian Leow, dropped in at their meeting on May

## Surprise visitor at Legion of Mary meeting

3. He was invited by a member who spotted him at the church. The archbishop commended the legionaries on their work and stated that he was pleased to see many young members here.

Archbishop Julian encouraged legionaries to reach out to the lost and the lonely, particularly emphasising that whatever they do, it must be for the absolute benefit of the recipient and not for just fulfilling their duties as legionaries.

The Legion of Mary is relatively new at SFX, being in existence for only about three years. It now has 17 members and meetings are held every Saturday at 11am, at Bilik Ignatius, SFX. Known as the Queen of Heaven praesidium, this praesidium comes under the Petaling Jaya Curia, called the Mother of Church Curia which comprise legionaries from four other churches; Church of St Ignatius, Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe,

Church of the Assumption and Church of St Thomas More.

Members of the Legion of Mary are like a closely knit family. They work in loving fellowship, gladly helping the needy and always confident that Our Blessed Mother and the Holy spirit are guiding them.

New members are always welcome and anyone interested in joining the Legion of Mary may contact their own parish office for further information. **Peter Pereira**

## Letters to Editor

# Melaka's Good Friday procession of faith and heritage

Dear Editor,

The Church of St Peter in Melaka, is unique in being the only parish in the country that holds a Good Friday procession — a centuries-old tradition known as the Procession of the Dead Christ or "Death Lord."

The Good Friday service began at 3.00pm, preceded by the Rosary and reflections led by parish priest Fr Lionel Thomas. Around 1,600 faithful filled the church and surrounding ar-

reas, with numbers swelling to about 2,000 for the public procession.

This year's procession followed a longer route through the streets of Melaka with the approval of the authorities and lasted over an hour.

The service included the Stations of the Cross, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and a powerful reenactment of the nailing of Jesus to the Cross. Fr Lionel's homily called the faithful to forgiveness, repentance, and renewed faith.

Later in the evening, a young woman portraying St Veronica revealed an image of Jesus imprinted on a cloth, symbolising the Veil of Veronica. The crowd then joined a candlelight procession led by the *Irmaos da Igreja* — a historic all-male brotherhood — carrying the statue of the Death Lord and *Mater Dolorosa* (Mother of Sorrows). This deeply spiritual tradition reflects the rich Portuguese-Eurasian heritage of the parish.

Pilgrims from Singapore, Kuala Lumpur,

and beyond joined locals in this moving expression of devotion. Tourists also paused to witness the unique ritual. The procession concluded at 8.20pm, with many staying late into the night for veneration.

The entire day was one of prayer, reflection, and gratitude — a powerful reminder of God's mercy and the redemptive sacrifice of Christ.

*The Catholic Observer*  
Kuala Lumpur



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# Catholic leaders urged to 'End Gospel Poverty'

PENANG: Thirty-five Catholic leaders from across Malaysia participated in the Haggai Seminar May 1-4 at the Msgr Aloysius Spirituality Centre. Organised by Haggai Malaysia in collaboration with the School for New Evangelisation of the Diocese of Penang, the seminar aimed to equip participants to evangelise more effectively in line with the Gospel mandate.

Centred on the theme *His Last Command, Our First Concern*, the seminar drew inspiration from the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. Though away in Rome, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, sent his blessings to the participants.

The seminar opened with Pastor David Low, executive director of Haggai Malaysia and pastor of Emmanuel Evangelical Free Church in Wangsa Maju, outlining the mission of Haggai International: "Every nation redeemed and transformed through the Gospel of Jesus Christ" and to "equip and inspire strategically positioned leaders" for evangelisation. Founded by Dr John Edmund Haggai, the movement now comprises over



The 35 leaders with their graduation certificates.

150,000 trained leaders across 189 countries, united by the vision of "ending Gospel poverty."

Participants heard from a diverse line-up of facilitators, many of whom bring both corporate and church experience to their ministry.

Simon Wong, head of the Penang Diocesan New Evangelisation Commission, stressed that the Church exists by nature for mission, calling on participants to live out the Biblical mandate of evangelisation as a duty, not an option.

Ritchie Tay, National President of Haggai Malaysia, spoke on spiritual discipline, emphasising the need to nurture body, soul and spirit in order

to be sensitive to God's guidance. "To end Gospel poverty, we must be inwardly transformed before we can impact others," he said.

Corporate leader Jenny Ooi highlighted the importance of Communication for Evangelisation, encouraging leaders to evangelise using their intellect, emotions, and actions. "Reconciliation with God is the core of evangelisation," she said, adding that prayer must precede all efforts to share the Gospel.

Juanita Chin discussed Biblical Stewardship, reminding attendees that everything we possess, time, talents, and resources, are entrusted to us by God to be managed for His

glory.

Addressing leadership in the Church, Ong Hock Siew described servant leadership as humble, empowering, and service-led. "Great leadership," he said, "is about motivating yourself so you can motivate others."

In a session on youth evangelisation, Michael Xavier emphasised the importance of listening and empathy in reaching the younger generation. Quoting Pope Francis' *Christus Vivit*, he reminded participants that young people are not only the future of the Church, but also its present.

Alex Choong, Vice-Chair of the ADKL Institute of New

Evangelization, taught participants to create a VMG (Vision, Mission, Goals) board, aligning their aspirations with Scripture to better serve God's kingdom.

Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap, drawing from Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium*, reflected on the joy of evangelising, urging participants to be bold and Spirit-filled witnesses of the Gospel.

The seminar concluded with a graduation ceremony for the 35 leaders, ranging in age from 20 to 80. Fr Larry Tan SJ celebrated the closing Mass, while key messages were delivered by Simon (OC Chairman), Ritchie (Graduation & Challenge Address), Fr Michael (Commissioning), and Pastor David Low (Closing Blessing).

In his closing remarks, Ritchie challenged all graduates: "The time for applause is over. Now is the time to go to the ground and evangelise. Good works must be followed by the Gospel: Jesus died, Jesus was buried, and Jesus rose!"

The seminar ended with a resounding call to mission: Maranatha!

## SFX parish hosts session on *Lumen Fidei* – The Light of Faith

PETALING JAYA: Fr Alvin Ng, SJ spoke for the third enriching session in the "Journeying as Pilgrims of Hope" series at the Church of St Francis Xavier, April 24. His presentation *Lumen Fidei* – The Light of Faith, was enriched with depth, pastoral insight, and the fresh memory of Pope Francis' passing into eternal rest.

Fr Alvin guided the faithful through the profound message of faith as a light that illuminates life's journey, even amidst a world often shrouded in the darkness of confusion and false promises.

The talk, organised by the Firm Foundation Ministry of the parish, situated *Lumen Fidei* within the broader context of Pope Francis' pontificate and legacy. Although it bears Pope Francis' name - indeed Pope Francis' first encyclical, it is important to note that it represented a unique collaborative effort – a theological thread linking Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis.

Fr Alvin highlighted how this document not only bridges two papacies but also stands as a reflection of the Church's continuity in faith following the Second Vatican Council. Central to the session was the metaphor of light.

He explored how light, as used in Scripture and tradition, symbolises the divine clarity faith offers in the midst of life's darkness. He reminded attendees that just as the Israelites followed God's light through a cloud by day and fire by night, today's Christians are called to discern between the true light of Christ and the deceptive glimmers of



Fr Alvin Ng, SJ.

secular society.

Expanding on the encyclical's four chapters, Fr Alvin structured his talk around three movements of faith: Journey, Profess and Build.

In the first movement, faith is portrayed as a Journey - not just a progression through time but a remembrance of the future. Drawing from Hebrew concepts and the narrative of Abraham, Fr Alvin described faith as a trust that upholds us even when God remains hidden. He warned of modern idols, crafted not of gold but of self-reliance, success and distraction, which arise when we seek to domesticate divine mystery.

In the second movement, faith is something we profess. Fr Alvin explained that faith is not a private quest but a communal confession grounded in tradition. He emphasised that The Creed that we profess is more than a collection of doctrines. It is a proclamation that changes us and draws us into the Church's living mystery, embodied in sacrament and worship.

The third movement calls the faithful to Build. Inspired by the patriarchs and prophets, Fr Alvin spoke

of building a city of God rooted in love and dignity. He urged listeners to consider how faith calls us outward – to construct a just society and uplift those who are suffering. Faith, he said, is not escapism but engagement with the world through the lens of hope.

One of the most profound moments of the presentation centred on a painting by Hans Holbein depicting *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1521-1522). Fr Alvin reflected on how contemplating Jesus' lifeless form paradoxically strengthens faith. In this moment of total vulnerability, divine love is revealed as something trustworthy, something in which one can fully place one's life.

Fr Alvin did not shy away from contemporary challenges. He addressed the relativism of today's culture, the allure of subjective truth and the erosion of religious commitment in secular life. Yet he remained hopeful. He spoke of how love and truth are inseparable and how faith can guide science and reason toward a humble acknowledgment of human limitation.

Throughout the evening, Fr Alvin invited reflection. How does faith illuminate your personal journey? How has it helped you see more clearly, understand more deeply or act more compassionately? These questions were not theoretical. They were rooted in lived experience and offered as pathways for renewal.

The evening concluded with a Marian reflection, reminding those present that in Mary we see what it means to fully live one's faith.

Joanna Destiny



## A celebration of unity, grace and testimony

SHAH ALAM: This year's feast of the Divine Mercy was a celebration of God's unending love and compassion.

One memorable moment was a testimony by parish priest Fr George Harrison. He recounted his encounter with three Mexican brothers, Simon, Luis Alfonso, and Jose Regino Gonzalez Villareal, who had been sentenced to death in Malaysia for drug trafficking. Arrested in 2008, their situation gained international attention, prompting their families to seek help from the Vatican.

Fr George, who visited them in 2012, prayed before the Divine Mercy image, asking for a way to bring rosaries and prayer pamphlets sent by Pope Francis into the prison. Against all odds, the guards allowed him to bring the items in. The prisoners cried as he shared the Pope's letter and offered the rosaries.

Following further appeals, Pope Francis reached out to His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, then the Sultan of Johor and now the King of Malaysia. In a gesture of compassion, the Sultan commuted their death sentences to life imprisonment. In 2018, the brothers were pardoned and released the following year. The Pope later sent a letter of gratitude to the Sultan,

delivered by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, praising the act of clemency as a testament to the power of mercy.

Fr George's account was a reminder to all present that Divine Mercy is not an abstract concept but a living force that brings redemption and hope to even the darkest situations.

This year's feast day was a collective effort, from setup to hospitality, echoed the theme of mercy, not just as something to receive but something to live out in service and unity. Every ministry and volunteer contributed to creating a welcoming, prayerful, and inspiring atmosphere.

This year's Feast of the Divine Mercy came shortly after Pope Francis' passing. His papacy was defined by a deep commitment to mercy, justice, and care for the marginalised. His teachings and actions challenged the Church to reflect Christ's heart more deeply.

As we reflect on his legacy, the celebration served as a moment to recommit ourselves to the values he championed. Mercy is not confined to church walls or feast days; it must be the light we bring into a world often clouded by division and suffering. **Kiren Velu Pillai**

# Escalating tension between India and Pakistan

NEW DELHI: On May 6, the Indian Air Force launched "Operation Sindoor" at 1.44am (4.44 am in Malaysia), targeting terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The strike was a response to the deadly April 22 attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, which killed 26 civilians, mostly Indian tourists. The Indian military emphasized that the operation was focused, measured, and non-escalatory, with no units crossing the Line of Control (LoC). The Ministry of Defence stated that no Pakistani military facilities were targeted.

The strikes, reportedly targeting bases used by terrorist groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, and Hizbul Mujahideen, were welcomed by some victims' families. Pragati Jagdale, who lost her husband in the attack, expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian Armed Forces for their response. The operation was named after "sindoor," the reddish cosmetic powder worn by married Indian women, symbolising the tribute to the men killed in front of their wives during the attack.

Following the missile strikes, tensions rose, and the Pakistani military claimed to have shot down Indian aircraft. Bishop Ivan Pereira of Jammu reported casualties from Pakistani shelling in Poonch, where two students were



An Indian soldier is seen at the previously popular and now-deserted tourist destination of Pahalgam in Kashmir following the recent deadly terror attack. (ucanews photo)

killed, and local infrastructure was damaged. Schools were closed for holidays, and Church leaders, including Bishop Pereira, prayed for peace. Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore called for peace and reconciliation, warning of the potential for further escalation.

India's defence ministry affirmed that the strikes were in line with their commitment to hold those responsible for the Pahalgam attack accountable, but the Pakistani government has denied involvement. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif vowed retaliation, and Pakistan's military reported casualties from

Indian airstrikes. Both countries have nuclear arsenals, raising concerns about the possibility of further conflict.

Archbishop Vincent Aind, Secretary General of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, expressed concern over the violence and called for diplomatic solutions instead of war. The United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, urged both nations to exercise military restraint, stressing that the world cannot afford a military confrontation between the two nuclear-armed countries. **AsiaNews**

importance of these discussions, as they could reshape our understanding of the history of humanity and the Catholic Church's views on the origins of the human race. Barr also pointed out that this issue has deep theological implications, as it touches on the question of what distinguishes humans from other animals.

In addition to scientific presentations, the conference will include an after-dinner talk by Ross Douthat, who will discuss his book *Believe: Why Everyone Should Be Religious*, relating scientific evidence to a religious worldview. There will also be a presentation by Mark Saxon on near-death experiences, as well as Kelly Kears's examination of Eucharistic miracles from a scientific perspective. The 2025 conference is open to both SCS members and nonmembers and will be livestreamed for free, further broadening access to the event. **CNA**

intelligence, but will instead cover a variety of subjects within science and faith.

Prominent speakers include Dominican Fr Anselm Ramelow, who will discuss *Free Will, Aquinas, and the Brain*, exploring how neuroscience challenges the notion of free will. Harvard mathematician Martin Nowak will present *Does Mathematics Lead to God?* marking the first time the SCS has featured a talk on mathematics. Additionally, cosmologist Rogier Windhorst will discuss discoveries from the James Webb Space Telescope, which launched in late 2021.

A discussion on Neanderthal personhood will also be a key feature, addressing questions about whether Neanderthals had language, reason, or rational souls. Barr highlights the



The Society of Catholic Scientists convenes in South Bend, Indiana, in 2019. (CNA photo/courtesy of Stephen Barr)

## From DNA to divinity

WASHINGTON: The 2025 Conference of the Society of Catholic Scientists (SCS) will take place from June 6-8 at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. This year's conference will feature a wide range of talks on topics related to the origins of the human race, offering insights from scientific, theological, and philosophical perspectives. Stephen Barr, founder of SCS, expects around 150 attendees, including a significant number of graduate students, reflecting the growing interest in integrating faith and science.

Key themes for this year's event include studies on the human mind, free will, and the relationship between neuroscience and philosophical views on human nature. Three separate talks will explore the Catholic Church's views on evolution. Barr emphasised that one of the main goals of the SCS is to foster intellectual and spiritual fellowship among Catholic scientists, allowing them to connect and support one another in their work.

Barr, a physicist at the University of Delaware, believes that many Catholic scientists face challenges in openly sharing their faith within their professional environments. Despite this, he stresses that there is a large and vibrant community of religious scientists, and the SCS helps them feel more confident and supported in their work. This year's event will not focus on a single topic, as it did last year with artificial

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Seoul Archbishop meets disability rights activists, urges cautious deinstitutionalisation

SEOUL: Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taick of Seoul met with leaders of the Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination (SADD) to discuss South Korea's deinstitutionalisation policy.

The meeting followed recent SADD protests, including a high-risk demonstration atop a church bell tower. Archbishop Chung expressed concern for the protesters' safety and supported the court's rejection of arrest warrants for two activists, for whom he also submitted a petition for leniency.

While supporting the principle of community-based living for people with disabilities, he cautioned against blanket policies that could endanger those with severe needs. SADD members shared personal testimonies, and both sides agreed on the need for ongoing dialogue. **ucanews.com**

### Vietnam Church hosts sacred music workshop

HO CHI MINH: The Catholic Church in Vietnam held its 54th Sacred Music Workshop on May 6 in Ho Chi Minh City, bringing together clergy, musicians, and liturgical leaders from across the country.

Organised by the Sacred Music Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference, the event focused on the theological and pastoral role of sacred music in liturgy.

Bishop Pierre Kiêu Công Tùng emphasized the importance of choirs, congregational participation, and liturgical beauty.

Practical topics included song selection, silence, multilingual needs, and proper choir placement. Bishop Aloisio Nguyễn Hùng Vị announced the 55th workshop will be held on October 14. **LiCAS News**

### Court denies Dalit Christians legal protections

ANDHARA PRADESH: An Indian court ruled that Dalit Christians are not eligible for legal protections meant for Scheduled Caste groups, stating that Christianity does not recognise caste. The case involved a Dalit-origin pastor who faced caste-based abuse.

Christian leaders condemned the ruling as discriminatory, noting that social exclusion continues despite religious conversion. Although benefits for Dalits are extended to Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists, Christians remain excluded. A government panel was appointed in 2022 to review the issue but has yet to report.

Dalits make up 201 million Indians, with 60 per cent of Indian Christians from Dalit or tribal backgrounds. **LiCAS News**

## Camden Diocese ends opposition to Grand Jury on clergy abuse

NEW JERSEY: The Diocese of Camden, New Jersey, has decided to end its legal opposition to the state's efforts to empanel a grand jury investigating clergy sexual abuse allegations. Bishop Joseph Williams, who became bishop in March 2025, announced that the diocese would no longer contest the grand jury after consulting with diocesan leaders. A letter submitted to the New Jersey Supreme Court confirmed this decision, signalling a shift in the diocese's legal approach.

Bishop Williams expressed that the change in direction was motivated by a commitment to support survivors of abuse and restore trust in the Church. He emphasised that the primary goal was to demonstrate sensitivity to survivors and assure them of the diocese's dedication to healing. "I will remain committed to that goal in the months and years ahead," he wrote in a letter to the diocese.

The bishop also praised the work done by his predecessor, Bishop Dennis Sullivan,

in implementing safe environment protocols in the Camden Diocese. These efforts, though challenging, were vital for protecting children and vulnerable individuals within the diocese. Williams affirmed that such efforts would continue to be a priority.

While supporting the grand jury investigation, the diocese stressed the importance of protecting the due process rights of any clergy who might be implicated. The diocese had previously argued that the state

lacked authority to convene a grand jury for abuse cases that were decades old but has now dropped that opposition.

The state's move to convene a grand jury follows the 2018 Pennsylvania grand jury report, which exposed widespread clergy sexual abuse and institutional cover-ups. In light of this report, several states, including New Jersey, have initiated similar investigations, and the Diocese of Camden has now chosen to cooperate in the pursuit of justice and healing. **CNA**

# Biography of Pope Leo XIV

## born Robert Francis Prevost

Prior to his election as Pope Leo XIV, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost was Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops. Here is the biography of the 267th Bishop of Rome.



Pope Leo XIV, the former Cardinal Robert F. Prevost, waves to the crowds in St Peter's Square at the Vatican after his election as pope May 8, 2025. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

The first Augustinian Pope, Leo XIV is the second Roman Pontiff — after Pope Francis — from the Americas. Unlike Jorge Mario Bergoglio, however, the 69-year-old Robert Francis Prevost is from the northern part of the continent, though he spent many years as a missionary in Peru before being elected head of the Augustinians for two consecutive terms.

### First Augustinian Pope

The new Bishop of Rome was born on September 14, 1955, in Chicago, Illinois, to Louis Marius Prevost, of French and Italian descent, and Mildred Martínez, of Spanish descent. He has two brothers, Louis Martín and John Joseph.

He spent his childhood and adolescence with his family and studied first at the Minor Seminary of the Augustinian Fathers and then at Villanova University in Pennsylvania, where in 1977 he earned a Degree in Mathematics and also studied Philosophy.

On September 1 of the same year, Prevost entered the novitiate of the Order of St Augustine (O.S.A.) in St Louis, in the Province of Our Lady of Good Counsel of Chicago, and made his first profession on September 2, 1978. On August 29, 1981, he

made his solemn vows.

The future Pontiff received his theological education at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. At the age of 27, he was sent by his superiors to Rome to study Canon Law at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum).

In Rome, he was ordained a priest on June 19, 1982, at the Augustinian College of Saint Monica by Archbishop Jean Jadot, then pro-president of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, which later became the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and then the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue.

Prevost obtained his licentiate in 1984 and the following year, while preparing his doctoral thesis, was sent to the Augustinian mission in Chulucanas, Piura, Peru (1985 – 1986). In 1987, he defended his doctoral thesis on *The Role of the Local Prior in the Order of St Augustine* and was appointed vocation director and missions director of the Augustinian Province of “Mother of Good Counsel” in Olympia Fields, Illinois (USA).

### Mission in Peru

The following year, he joined the mission in Trujillo, also in Peru, as director of the

joint formation project for Augustinian candidates from the vicariates of Chulucanas, Iquitos, and Apurímac.

Over the course of eleven years, he served as prior of the community (1988 – 1992), formation director (1988 – 1998), and instructor for professed members (1992 – 1998), and in the Archdiocese of Trujillo as judicial vicar (1989 – 1998) and professor of Canon Law, Patristics, and Moral Theology at the Major Seminary “San Carlos y San Marcelo.” At the same time, he was also entrusted with the pastoral care of Our Lady Mother of the Church, later established as the parish of St Rita (1988 – 1999), in a poor suburb of the city, and was parish administrator of Our Lady of Monserrat from 1992 to 1999.

In 1999, he was elected Provincial Prior of the Augustinian Province of “Mother of Good Counsel” in Chicago, and two and a half years later, the ordinary General Chapter of the Order of St Augustine, elected him as Prior General, confirming him in 2007 for a second term.

In October 2013, he returned to his Augustinian Province in Chicago, serving as director of formation at the St Augustine Convent, first councilor, and provincial vicar — roles he held until Pope Francis appointed him on Nov 3, 2014, as Apostolic Administrator of the Peruvian Diocese of Chiclayo, elevating him to the episcopal dignity as Titular Bishop of Sufar.

He entered the diocese on Nov 7, in the presence of Apostolic Nuncio James Patrick Green, who ordained him Bishop just over a month later, on Dec 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in the Cathedral of St Mary.

His episcopal motto is *In Illo uno unum* — words pronounced by St Augustine in a sermon on Psalm 127 to explain that “although we Christians are many, in the one Christ we are one.”

### Bishop of Chiclayo, Peru (from 2015 to 2023)

On Sept 26, 2015, he was appointed Bishop of Chiclayo by Pope Francis. In March 2018, he was elected second vice-president of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference, where he also served as a member of the Economic Council and president of the Commission for Culture and Education.

In 2019, Pope Francis appointed him a member of the Congregation for the Clergy (July 13, 2019), and in 2020, a member of the Congregation for Bishops (Nov 21). Meanwhile, on Apr 15, 2020, he was also appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Peruvian Diocese of Callao.

### Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops

On Jan 30, 2023, the Pope called him to Rome as Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, promoting him to the rank of Archbishop.

### Created Cardinal in 2024

Pope Francis created him Cardinal in the Consistory of September 30 that year and assigned him the Diaconate of St Monica. He officially took possession of it on Jan 28, 2024.

As head of the Dicastery, he participated in the Pope's most recent Apostolic Journeys and in both the first and second sessions of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, held in Rome from October 4 to 29, 2023, and from Oct 2 to 27, 2024, respectively.

Meanwhile, on Oct 4, 2023, Pope Francis appointed him as a member of the Dicasteries for Evangelisation (Section for First Evangelization and New Particular Churches), for the Doctrine of the Faith, for the Eastern Churches, for the Clergy, for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, for Culture and Education, for Legislative Texts, and of the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City State.

Finally, on Feb 6 of this year, the Argentine Pope promoted him to the Order of Bishops, granting him the title of the Suburbicarian Church of Albano.

Three days later, on Feb 9, he celebrated the Mass presided over by Pope Francis in St Peter's Square for the Jubilee of the Armed Forces, the second major event of the Holy Year of Hope.

During the most recent hospitalisation of his predecessor at the Gemelli hospital, Prevost presided over the Rosary for Pope Francis' health in St Peter's Square on March 3. **Vatican News**

## Pope Leo XIV: Peacemaker and openness in an historic name

Even before he stepped out on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica and spoke May 8, Pope Leo XIV's choice of a name was a powerful statement.

Following Pope Francis, who chose a completely new name in church history, Pope Leo opted for a name steeped in tradition that also conveys an openness to engaging with the modern world.

The Pope's choice of name is a “direct recall of the social doctrine of the Church and of the pope that initiated the modern social doctrine of the Church,” Matteo Bruni, director Vatican press office told reporters after the election of the new pope.

Pope Leo XIII, who was pope from 1878-1903, is known for publishing the encyclical

*Rerum Novarum* on worker's rights — considered the foundational document for the Church's social teaching. The document emphasised the dignity of workers and condemned the dangers of unchecked capitalism and socialism.

The name Leo is a “direct” reference to “men and women and their work, also in the time of artificial intelligence,” Bruni said.

Pope Leo XIII also opened the Vatican secret archives to scholars, founded the Vatican observatory to demonstrate the Church's openness to science and was the first pope to be filmed on a motion picture camera.

Tied to the new Pope's first words to the faithful: “May peace be with you all,” his

namesake Pope Leo XIII was also a peacemaker who reconciled the Church with the governments of France, Russia, Germany and Great Britain during his pontificate.

Pope Leo's name also has a Marian significance, since Pope Leo XIII wrote 11 encyclicals on the Rosary and was also the first pope to embrace the concept of Mary as mediatrix, which holds that Mary helps distribute Christ's grace through her intercession.

The first pope who took the name Leo became pope in 440. Known as “Leo the Great,” he promoted the doctrine of papal primacy based on succession from St Peter and was a peacemaker who convinced Atilla the Hun to turn back from invading Italy in 452. **Justin McLellan, CNS**



Pope Leo XIII.

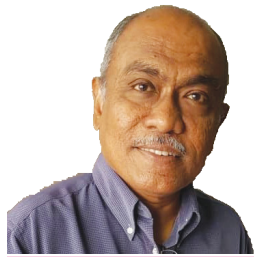
# Mystagogy — Experiencing the mystery

At the recent Easter Vigil, thousands of adults, who had journeyed in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), were fully initiated into the Catholic Church through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Upon their initiation, these adults are known as ‘neophytes’. The word ‘neophyte’ originates from the Greek word *neophytos*, meaning ‘newly planted’ or ‘newly converted’. Generally, it refers to someone who is new or a novice to a field or activity. In the Church, it means a person who is a ‘new convert’ to the Catholic faith.

For the neophytes, the journey in the RCIA usually lasts about nine months, beginning in July or August of the previous year. The journey reaches its highest point at the Easter Vigil. However, the RCIA journey does not end there. Instead, the neophytes enter the final period of the catechumenal process, that is, the Period of Mystagogy. This period extends through the entire Easter season and concludes on Pentecost Sunday. According to the RCIA, it is a period ‘devoted to the post baptismal catechesis or mystagogy’ and is a time ‘for deepening the Christian experience, for spiritual growth, and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the community’ (RCIA, 7.4).

### Devoted to post baptismal catechesis or mystagogy

‘Mystagogy’ has its roots in the early Church (2nd – 4th centuries). At that time, after they were initiated, the neophytes returned each day for the rest of the week to celebrate the Eucharist and to hear



### Echoing the Faith

DR STEVEN SELVARAJU

catechetical homilies preached by the bishop on the accounts of the Lord’s resurrection. Through a series of homilies, the bishop leads the neophytes to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Mystery of the resurrected Christ whom they had encountered at the Easter Vigil and in the sacraments they had received. In this way, they were helped to look back on what they experienced in order to gain a new perspective as to what it means to be a baptised member

of the Church.

Nowadays, the main setting for the post-baptismal catechesis for the neophytes are the Sunday Masses of the Easter Season. As in the early Church, through the Scripture readings and homilies that they hear, the neophytes are led to reflect on their encounter with the Risen Lord and to a richer understanding and appreciation of the sacraments in their lives. From this experience, states the RCIA, ‘they derive a new perception of faith, of the Church, and of the world’ (RCIA, 246).

### Deepening the Christian experience and spiritual growth

The word ‘mystagogy’ means leading the one who has been initiated into the Mystery. Its aim is to help a neophyte to savour the mysteries, that is, to become conscious that the Mass is not something that is merely celebrated or that the sacraments are something merely received but are, in themselves, sacred and profound encounters with the Risen Lord. Therefore, during the Period of Mystagogy, the emphasis is distinctly on the experience of the Mystery of Christ’s resurrection rather than on the impartation of any knowledge

or intellectual content.

At this time, the neophytes will begin to participate fully in the Sunday Eucharist with the rest of the community. It is significant that, as members of the worshipping community, they can now partake of Holy Communion. In this sense, the liturgical assembly itself becomes part of the Mystery into which the neophytes enter more deeply. In other words, it is particularly by their participation with all the faithful in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration that the newly baptised can experience being truly a part of the Christian community.

The Period of Mystagogy is also a time for the community to deepen its own understanding of Christ’s resurrection, and especially its link to the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist which they themselves have received. Therefore, during this period, through hearing the Gospel message and sharing in the Eucharist, they too are called to reflect deeply on the Mystery of the Risen Christ and on their relationship with Him as His disciples.

### Entering more fully into the life and unity of the community

According to the RCIA, during the period of Mystagogy, the faithful should ‘... welcome the neophytes with open arms in charity and help them to feel more at home in the community of the baptised’ (RCIA, 5). The neophytes, as such, should experience the Risen Christ through the joyful welcome of the community and by entering into closer ties with the other faithful. As they begin their new life as Christians, they are to be guided by the community to know what it means to belong to a community of believers and to be at the service of others.

The faithful, in meeting the neophytes,

should themselves derive a deeper understanding and appreciation of their own faith and what it means to be members of a welcoming, participatory and serving community. In fact, one of the greatest gifts that community members can receive during the Period of Mystagogy is the witness of the neophytes’ enthusiasm and presence. In seeing the newly baptised eagerly embrace the Gospel way of life and commit themselves to Christ, the community itself should be inspired to deepen its own awareness of its faith and sense of Christian discipleship.

### Conclusion

It is clear that the Period of Mystagogy is a sacred moment not only for the neophytes but also for the community, most especially the parish community. Members of the parish must come forward to help the neophytes experience the Mystery of the Risen Christ, while they themselves must enter more deeply into it. Seen in this way, this period provides a privileged time and setting for community members to remember and deepen their original commitment to God which they made on the day of their baptism. If taken seriously, it can motivate them to discover anew their baptismal identity and make a greater commitment as members of the Church and as disciples of Christ.

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

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

## MYSTAGOGY = EXPERIENCING THE MYSTERY

Thousands of adults are initiated into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil each year. Upon their initiation, these adults are known as ‘neophytes’. In the Church, a neophyte is a ‘new convert’ to the Catholic faith.

After this, the neophyte enters the final stage of the RCIA - the **Period of Mystagogy**.

This period is...  
 • devoted to post baptismal catechesis or mystagogy.  
 • deepening the Christian experience and spiritual growth.  
 • entering more fully into the life and unity of the community.

Through the scripture readings and homilies of the Sunday Masses of the Easter season...  
 ... the neophyte savours the experience of the Risen Christ and grows in appreciation of the sacraments which he or she has received.

At this time, the neophyte will begin to participate fully in the Mass with the rest of the faithful and partake of Holy Communion. Together with the community, he or she will enter more deeply into the experience of the Risen Lord in the Eucharist.

The neophyte will also experience the Risen Lord in the welcome that he or she receives from the community. The community, in turn, is to be inspired by neophyte’s willingness to commit him or herself to Christ.

The Period of Mystagogy provides the privileged time for the members of the community to remember and deepen their original commitment to God as disciples of His Son, Jesus.

# Now 'Francis' belongs to the pages

*A cartoonist says goodbye to his beloved pope*

Pat Marrin

The Sunday morning comics pages taught me to read. The cartoon characters inhabited my imagination and formed my basic sense of truth and justice, right and wrong, heroism and cowardice.

It is no mystery why I jumped at the chance to do a comic strip on Pope Francis. He has been both source and foil within the cartoon Vatican waiting to be explored.

The real Pope Francis will be the focus of many official and scholarly examinations, but Francis and the other characters in the comic strip will also have a place among other beloved cartoon characters that live forever.

The almost 1,400 images produced for NCR and Universal Press' GoComics explored the ironies and incongruities that Francis himself exposed within the Catholic Church. Two papal "assistants," a young Franciscan brother named Leo, living the radical virtues of the Pope's saintly namesake, and a trafficked Somali Muslim woman named Gabby, rescued in Rome, were added to the strip to witness the pope's words and actions.

A comic strip pope needed Francis, the real pope, human, humble, open to real people, wearing the face of a merciful

God who loved the poor, elderly, children, migrants, refugees and outsiders — victims of a global society neglecting them all. The strip explored the issue of war as the failure of dialogue, the abuse of women and children as the sin of power, the toxic worship of money as destroying community and the planet, the advance of technology replacing human wisdom and experience. Serious subjects, begging for satire, irony and context.

The few cartoons offered here represent the themes of the Pope's intent to preach the Gospel of mercy, highlighting God's unconditional love for creation, human relationships, justice and compassion for everything and everyone in an integral ecology of love.

Humour invites a humble eye and an open heart. We are all in the picture, its problems and the solutions that must include everyone, and forgive and encourage everyone to see the work of history as shared survival, joyful surprise and continuous welcome.

Beauty, that tender invitation to find hope in history, can save the world if we trust the promise that God's love overcomes all fear and doubt. This faith, in the end, affirms that, wonder of wonders, God will have the last laugh. **NCR**



## Tailor of history: Meet the man who dresses popes

In the quiet heart of Borgo Pio, a stone's throw from St Peter's Basilica, is a tiny backroom with two wooden tables, a sewing machine and an old iron. It is here that Raniero Mancinelli, 86, silently sews and cuts the robe that will welcome the new pope at the most intimate and symbolic moment of his election: inside the "room of tears," next to the Sistine Chapel.

"I am making three cassocks of three different sizes, 50, 54 and 58," he told *National Catholic Reporter* in a slight Roman accent. "I will give them to the cardinals before the conclave begins. It is a gift, as always."

Three white robes, a silk-blend band with golden fringes, and a white papal zucchetto: everything must be ready for when the white smoke signals to the world the election of Pope Francis' successor.

Mancinelli speaks with the confidence of someone who has been sewing the cassocks for popes for more than half a century. He started at the age of 15, side by side with his father.

"I feel normal. This has been my job for 70

years, and I do it with passion. I work with my daughter and with my grandson Lorenzo, who is 23 and is now making a sash for a cardinal. It is a tradition that continues."

His small atelier is a time capsule. The walls are papered with photographs in which Mancinelli appears smiling next to the popes he has dressed — John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis. The iron, heavy and blackened, is the same one he has used since 1962. The sewing machine looks like something out of a museum, yet will help create a white cassock destined for one of the most exciting moments in a pope's life.

Mancinelli had a special relationship with Francis.

"Our first sweetest and most beautiful encounter with him, I can never forget. He was friendly, joyful. We seemed like lifelong friends. I met him at least five times. He chose me."

It was in Mancinelli's store more than 30 years ago that Francis bought the iron pectoral cross that he wore until the day he died. An image of that cross is now depicted above his tomb in the Basilica of St Mary



**In his store in Rome by the Vatican, Raniero Mancinelli works on one of the three papal robes that he is preparing for the next pope to wear on the day of his election. (Camillo Barone)**

Major.

When Francis was elected pope, he wanted to continue to be dressed by Mancinelli. But with a specific request: simplicity.

"Francis did not like expensive things. He wanted simple, durable fabrics, like light wool mixed with terital," Mancinelli said. Francis' simple lifestyle paved the way for a new understanding of papal elegance. He refused to wear the short, cape-like red mozzetta on the night of his election, appearing that evening of March 13, 2013, in only a white cassock.

Mancinelli has prepared a mozzetta for the new pope, "in case he wants to dress as pope," he said.

Mancinelli told *NCR* about seeing two cardinals in the last few days, one American and one Eastern European, sporting new red cassocks. "I said to them, 'Your Eminence, what if you then become pope?' And they said, 'But no, there's no risk!'" He said he doesn't remember who they were, but maybe, like any good craftsman, he is a keeper of secrets.

In recent days, the workshop has been frequented by cardinals from all over the

world. Some for a new collar, some for a button. Mancinelli said no to all: "Let's wait until after the conclave. I wouldn't want one of them to become pope with a newly sewn gold button."

What is certain is that in a few days, when a man walks out onto the balcony of St Peter's Basilica, there will also be a little piece of Mancinelli on his shoulders.

With the same humility with which he sews every hem and measures every buttonhole, Mancinelli said he looks to the future without pretense, but with a gentle hope.

"I hope I can continue to dress the next pope as well, if I haven't already dressed him."

He smiled as he said this, hinting that the robes of Francis' successor may have already passed through his hands. And then he let slip a remark that is both a joke and a sign of a deep respect earned through years of silent service.

"One of the cardinals once told me, 'I will make you secretary of state if I become pope.' 'Even if it doesn't happen, Mancinelli will still have already had his highest title: tailor of history. **Camillo Barone, NCR**



**Croziers and mitres displayed in Raniero Mancinelli's store in Rome. Mancinelli's clients count more than 2,000 bishops coming from all over the world. (Camillo Barone)**

# Is Easter more dead or alive?

Have you ever wondered why Easter often feels more like Ordinary Time, especially after the first week of Easter celebrations, when all the Easter parties and Easter Egg hunts have died (pun intended) down?

For the most part of my life as a Catholic, Lent seemed to be the liturgical season that was often 'busier' and more 'alive' than Easter. First, there is the yearly task of figuring out what to do for Lent in relation to the three Lenten practices of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. Then there are the Stations of the Cross devotions which either the parish or certain church groups would organise to help us get more in touch with Jesus' Way of the Cross. Some, might even have had the luxury of witnessing a Lenten play in your parish which depicted scenes of Jesus' Passion in such vivid and heartfelt ways.

Yet, when Easter finally comes after forty seemingly very long days of prayer and activity, apart from the Easter Vigil that most certainly ushers Easter in in a very grand and celebratory way, we do not seem to be able to keep the spirit of Easter alive (pun intended again) for long. By the second or third week of Easter, life seems to have returned to normalcy, almost as if we are not really sure how to celebrate Easter for fifty long days. Sure, there are the Easter hymns, the sprinkling of Holy water, and the use of incense to remind us of the Easter season, but our daily practices and efforts seem to also go up in smoke and not really carry the spirit of Easter into our daily lives.

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I will praise You in the great assembly, fulfil my vows before all who revere You. The lowly will eat and be satisfied. Those who seek the Lord will praise Him. May your hearts live forever!" (Psalm 22:2,26-27)

My recent insight on how we can keep

Easter alive for us in our day to day came out of a prayer walk that I decided to embark on during Good Friday this year. After meeting someone in town that day, I somehow felt prompted to experience my own Way of the Cross, by literally walking home from there, a journey that took around two hours.

As I listened to music from Catholic composer Shawn Williams to accompany me on my prayer walk, the initial sombre instrumentals that were played at random helped me connect with Jesus' experience of being wronged, misunderstood, and unjustly condemned. They reminded me of the times when I too felt silently mocked and abandoned, when I too fell and felt like giving up.

But what caught me by surprise was when a very upbeat song started playing at this point, even before I had gotten to reflecting on Jesus' resurrection. Yet it indicated to me that resurrection for Jesus might already have happened, even while on the Cross. Even when externally He



**Word Made Fresh**

NICHOLAS LYE

appeared weak, weary, and out of strength, yet internally in His Spirit, I felt this strength arising within Him, which allowed Him to quote Psalm 22, acknowledging feelings of abandonment yet still holding on to hope at the end of the psalm; to gain strength and clarity to know that He was not a helpless victim but one who freely chooses to give His life for all; to have the compassion to empathise and forgive His perpetrators; and to choose to commend His Spirit to His

Father in love and trust. All this speaks of the effects of resurrection and the new life already taking place in Jesus, where He was filled and moved by the Spirit that allowed Him to overcome lies, fears, shame, resentment, unforgiveness, even while hanging on the Cross.

As I carry the above experiences into Easter, I am reminded that in our daily lives, even throughout the Easter season, we do continue to experience our own Passion in different ways. We are not spared of our own crosses — mockery, ridicule,

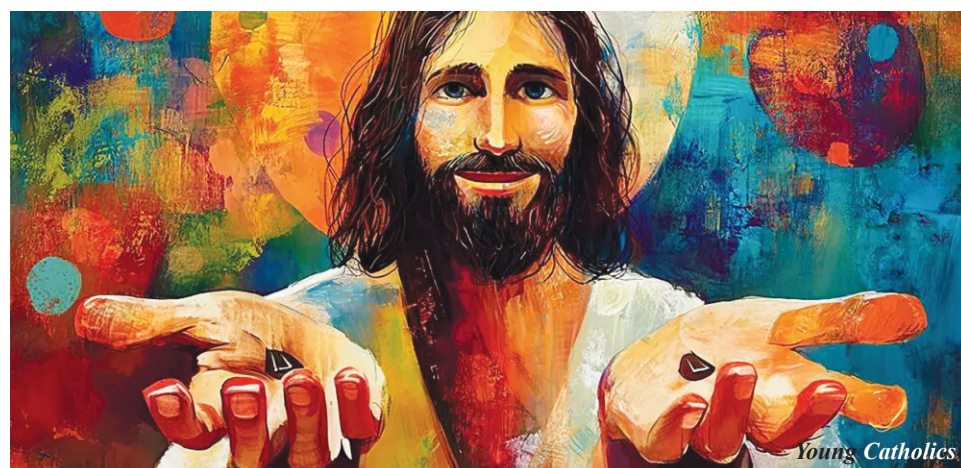
disappointment, self-defeat, rejection, and so much more. We continue to find ourselves nailed to our crosses, appearing helpless or hopeless.

Still, what Easter is meant to remind us and call us to action, is to bring the spirit of Easter into these real situations and struggles: to follow Jesus in holding on to hope despite having nails in our hands; to exercise care to choose the more loving and compassionate response especially when faced with people who hurt us without knowing what they are doing; to keep trusting in God's providence and greater plans even though we cannot change the circumstances we find ourselves in. These are the many Easter practices we can carry out throughout Easter and beyond. These are the ways we can keep Easter alive in our day to day.

Of course, these practices seem more hidden and less explicit as compared to our Lenten practices or Stations of the Cross devotions. But so too is the resurrection — quite hidden, and only made known through the fruits of the resurrection witnessed through the lives of people who came in touch with the Risen Lord. So too are we meant to be witnesses of Easter, by how we choose to live our lives and respond to difficulties in life.

Let us not let Easter die in flames or go out in smoke. Let us keep the Easter spirit alive, albeit in small and hidden ways, but which reveal the faithfulness and life of Christ through the ways we too commend our spirit and life to the Lord, even if we sometimes do find ourselves hanging on the cross.

*Nicholas is a lay missionary and creative evangelist who loves to use creativity and various art forms to share the faith and help people encounter God's truths in a fun and meaningful way.*



## BE OUR GUEST

# More like him: Reflections after a Pope's passing

By Arvin Reuben Yuvaraj



Let's just get this out of the way — no, I haven't had a miraculous conversion since my last piece. I still don't consider myself a Catholic. I still don't go to church. And yes, I still get awkwardly twitchy when people want to say grace before eating.

But something happened recently that made me pause: the Pope died.

And not just any pope. The Pope.

Pope Francis was, to many (including lapsed Catholics like myself), a symbol of hope. Not because he was perfect. Not because he was revolutionary in ways that shook the Church to its core. But because, quite simply, he tried to make space. Space for dialogue. Space for disagreement. Space for the forgotten, the judged, the sidelined. Space for those like... me.

You see, for once, we had a pope who didn't flinch when the conversation turned to gay people. A pope who talked more about love than condemnation. Who emphasized mercy over doctrine. Who asked, "Who am I to judge?" — a sentence so un-pope-like it almost broke the Internet.

And yet, while the man at the top modelled openness, far too many on the ground refused to budge. The Church

may have had a shepherd preaching compassion, but many of the sheep remained... less than pastoral.

I still get the odd message telling me I'm living in sin. That my soul needs saving. That I'm "welcome" in church as long as I repent, renounce, and basically reboot my entire identity.

But here's what I've come to realise: the Church itself teaches that not all sins are equal. That pride, cruelty, and unjust judgment can be just as, if not more dangerous to the soul than anything else. So why is it that my supposed sin gets a louder spotlight than someone else's arrogance? Why is who I love considered worse than someone else's hate?

It's ironic, really. Because the same people who love to weaponise faith often forget the parts about humility, forgiveness, and checking the plank in your own eye before pointing out the speck in someone else's. Somehow, in all their zeal to "save" me, they've missed the very heart of the Gospel they claim to defend.

Every time I hear that kind of conditional "welcome," I think: Would the Pope have said this?

He probably wouldn't have. And that's the part that upsets me.

Because, imagine if we actually followed his example. Imagine if kindness weren't just a slogan, but a lived reality. If compassion weren't conditional. If faith didn't come with fine print.

We love our rules. We cling to them like life rafts. And yet, when the Pope himself reminded us that the rules should never outweigh love — when he pointed us towards grace, not gatekeeping — so many turned away. Because grace is hard. Grace demands vulnerability. It asks us to loosen our grip on certainty, to sit in the discomfort of mystery, and to see the divine in people we don't understand.

I didn't cry when the Pope died. But I did feel something shift. A kind of mourning — not just for the man, but for the version of the Church he tried to build. A Church that welcomed questions. That didn't slam the door on people who didn't fit the mould. A Church that felt less like an exclusive club and more like, well, the home it was meant to be.

It's wild to think that a pope could feel more human than the people sitting in the pews. But somehow, he did. He felt like

someone who would've seen me. Not just as a headline. Not as a debate topic. Not as a soul to fix. But as a person, in full. And that, in itself, was holy.

I may never call myself a Catholic again. But I will always remember Pope Francis as someone who made me feel like maybe, just maybe, there was room for someone like me in the pews. Not as a project. Not as a sinner-in-waiting. But as a person. Full stop.

So, here's my prayer (that's right, I said prayer). Not for a new pope, but for the people. That we learn from the one we've lost. That we lead with grace. That we stop confusing righteousness with cruelty. That we remember the point wasn't to be right. It was to be kind.

Because if the Pope could look past the rules and see the human, maybe we can too.

*Arvin Reuben Yuvaraj is passionate about social causes, animal welfare, and LGBTQIA+ rights. As an empathy-driven leader, he serves as a public relations consultant and foundation lead for an international communications agency, overseeing initiatives across APAC.*



Fr Ron Rolheiser

# Paradox, seeming inconsistency and tension

The thought of some of the greatest and most influential people in history seems at times riddled with inconsistencies. Jesus, Augustine, Socrates, Aristotle, among others, appear at times to be contradicting themselves. It's not always easy to see how everything squares with everything else in their teachings.

That's why the great religions and philosophies of the world are so prone to multiple interpretations. For example, given the depth and scope of Jesus' teaching, Christianity in particular is open to different kinds of understanding. It's no accident that there are hundreds of denominations within Christianity and every variety of spirituality and worship inside these. Jesus' teaching is so rich that it would seem none of us can carry it like the Master. Rather we each pick our parts selectively, struggle to hold them in some consistency, and end up much narrower than the Master.

Consistency, someone once quipped, is the product of a small mind, just as inconsistency is the mark of a great one. There's a truth in that, though it must be carefully understood. For instance, sometimes we achieve a certain consistency, a view of things that seemingly has no internal contradictions, though at a high price, namely, we end up narrow, non-inclusive, one-sided, impoverished, and reductionistic. Whatever else might be said about them, racism, bigotry, fundamentalism, and unhealthy nationalism are consistent.

However, their consistency is predicated on a synthesis that is so narrowly drawn that it ignores and denigrates important areas of life.

Conversely, sometimes what looks like inconsistency is really a person holding together a number of important truths in a higher synthesis. The person may look inconsistent, but what she is really doing is holding several truths in creative tension that are seemingly in opposition to each other but are not. The person who tries this juggling act will often find herself in great tension, but (metaphorically) she will also find that she has no blocked arteries and very resilient lungs, that blood flows freely to every part of her person and she is able draw life-giving oxygen from whatever kind of air within which she finds herself.

Jesus was like that. He held important truths together in creative tension and, as a consequence, was misunderstood by just about everyone and scandalised people on both sides of the religious and ideological spectrum. His teachings are more "both/and" than "either/or". We struggle with that. It's easier to carry a select few truths than try to carry them all.

What are some of the seeming contradictory truths that Jesus held together and carried in a creative tension? Here are ten of them, chosen because a healthy spirituality must always carry both sides of these.

1) A strong sense of individuality, a focus on private integrity and private

prayer, but coupled with an equally strong commitment to community, family, civic and ecclesial involvement, and social justice.

2) A healthy capacity to drink in life and enjoy it without guilt, even as one befriends an equally healthy capacity for asceticism and renunciation.

3) A self-confidence and healthy self-assertion in using the particular gifts that God has given us but held always in tension with a healthy humility and a habitual self-effacement.

4) An eye for the prophetic, a sympathy for what lies outside the centre, for what is marginalised, a challenging voice for the excluded, even as one recognises the importance of the institutional, defends against anarchy, and helps nurture what's sacred within family, church, and tradition.

5) A perpetual openness to what's new, what's strange, what causes discomfort, to what's liberal, even as one works to ground oneself in what conserves, in the familiar, in routine, in what gives rhythm and makes for stability.

6) An eye for the sacred, for God, for the eternal horizon, but always coupled with an unabashed love for this world, for its joys, for its achievements, its present moment.

7) A passion for sexuality and a defence of its goodness and earthiness, cou-

pled with an equal defence of chastity and reverence.

8) An eye for world community, for stretching the boundaries we were born into, for an ever more inclusive embrace of the foreigner and the stranger, even as one remains deeply loyal to family, personal roots, and hospitality at home.

9) A hope and an idealism that defies the facts, that relies on God's promises rather than on the evening news, that will not let the truth of the resurrection be silenced by the accidents of history, but is still held together with a realism that is pragmatic, programmatic, and is committed to doing its share of the work.

10) A focus on the next life, on life after death, on the fact that this is not our final home, even as we focus on the reality and goodness of life here on earth.

Jesus held all of these together in one synthesis and He paid the price – misunderstanding. Are we willing to pay that price to give fuller expression to Christ?

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

## Human beings are not zombies or robots

### they need prayers

There are different ways of praying in the spiritual life. The task is to learn about these different ways and see which ones resonate in our hearts.

Among the ways of prayer, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* highlights and teaches about vocal prayer. It can be awkward for some to give audible expression to our prayer, but it is a form of prayer that is deeply embedded in our spiritual tradition and highlight favoured by the spiritual masters.

Since we are body and soul, our prayer should engage our senses, especially our ability to speak and hear. The *Catechism* teaches: "The need to involve the senses in interior prayer corresponds to a requirement of our human nature. We are body and spirit, and we experience the need to translate our feelings externally. We must pray with our whole being to give all power possible to our supplication."

We are not zombies or robots. We are human beings, fearfully and wonderfully made, as the Book of Psalms tells us. As human beings, we have feelings and need to express them. We cry out, shout, sing, lament, announce, and proclaim. We cannot bottle up our experiences of God. They push and demand to be expressed, and one of the ways they're expressed is through vocal prayer.

In addition to our own human design and needs, vocal prayer is also a response to the call of God. The *Catechism*

explains: "This need [of vocal prayer] also corresponds to a divine requirement. God seeks worshippers in Spirit and in Truth, and consequently living prayer that rises from the depths of the soul. He also wants the external expression that associates the body with interior prayer, for it renders Him that perfect homage which is His due."

As uncomfortable as it might be for some, there are times in which God summons the people who love Him to give vocal manifestation to their prayer. When this is done, our prayer is given from the fullness of who we are. With vocal prayer, our bodies and souls are united in speaking to God. It is a very human thing to offer our prayers out loud to God.

While vocal prayer can be very personal, calling out to God in our rooms, it also lends itself to group prayer. In vocal prayer, fellow believers can speak from the heart in the midst of others. In such a moment of prayer, believers can also benefit from hearing and joining in the prayers for others.

The *Catechism* notes: "Because it is external and so thoroughly human, vocal prayer is the form of prayer most readily accessible to groups."

While many Christians, especially those in pluralistic societies, might shy away from vocal prayer, it is closely connected to mental prayer. Our mental prayer enriches and raises up the prayers we offer



(Crux photo)

to God internally.

The two – external and internal – walk together. As human beings, we cannot separate our mental prayer from vocal prayer, or vice versa. The two mutually nourishes and elevates the other.

The *Catechism* points out: "Even interior prayer, however, cannot neglect vocal prayer. Prayer is internalised to the extent that we become aware of Him 'to whom we speak;' thus vocal prayer becomes an initial form of contemplative prayer."

In the spiritual life, we cannot go deeper into mental prayer without vocal prayer. There is no contemplative prayer without vocal prayer.

For many people, this connection appears to be a contradiction. Our internal prayer, the prayer that is offered in the

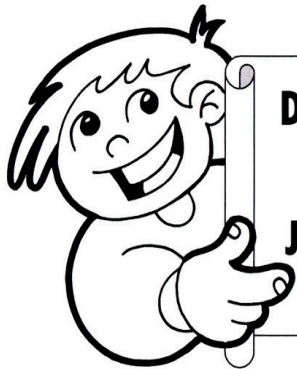
secret place of our hearts – matures and flourishes through vocal prayer. The hidden parts of our heart cannot grow unless they are manifested audibly. The heart must cry out.

In a similar way, our vocal prayer is anchored and sustained by our mental prayer. If we only pray vocally, we run the risk of becoming a Pharisee and mumbling prayers that mean nothing to us or God. It is easy to become a parrot and take on the appearance of a person of prayer.

The real work of truly being a person of prayer is much harder and demands both internal and vocal prayer. As we seek to encounter God and draw closer to Him, we have to be willing to cry out to Him, give Him a joyful shout, and sing a joyful hymn to Him. **Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, Crux**

# Little Catholics' corner

## Word Search



DBMANVJCOMMANDLOCZ  
MCHILDRENQERSONIK  
JGTGLORIFIEDVLOVEDISU  
CMCOMEPLESDISCIPLES

SON MAN GLORIFIED CHILDREN COME COMMAND  
LOVE DISCIPLES

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:34-35)

This is how all will know that you are my disciples:  
- | ▽ ○ × ■ ○ ▽ ▲ ○ □ ▲ △ □ ○ + - ▲ ●



What did Jesus tell His disciples in today's Gospel reading? Use the code below to find out!

A E F H I L N O R T U V Y  
△ ▲ | - • ■ □ ○ ● + × ▽ ▾

John 13:31-35

Answer: If you love one another.

## Let's colour



## Can you connect the dots and fill in the blanks?

God will \_\_\_\_\_ every \_\_\_\_\_ from their \_\_\_\_\_.

(Revelation 21:4)

eyes wipe tear

Hello children,

In the Old Testament, before Jesus came, there were many commandments. They told the people how they should live and what they should and shouldn't do. Jesus obeyed the commandments, but He gave

His followers a new one, something different from any of the others: LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

The love that Jesus was talking about is called charity. It means doing what is best for a person. Here are some ways to love others:

Always think kindly of people. Even when you know something bad about someone, try to think nice thoughts about them. Always speak kindly about people. Saying bad things about others can hurt them. Always act kindly toward others. Treat everyone in

the way that you would want to be treated. Show that you are a follower of Jesus by how you love others! Till we meet again, be good okay?

Love Aunty Eliz



## Young devotees ignite Marian devotion at Bandel Shrine ahead of annual feast

KOLKATA, India: A wave of youthful enthusiasm is building at the historic Marian shrine of Our Lady of Happy Voyage in Bandel as young devotees spearhead a campaign to deepen Marian devotion in anticipation of the annual May feast.

Under the guidance of Bandel Basilica Prior Fr John Puthiyedathuchalil and youth director Fr Deonis Minj, nine passionate youngsters have crafted nine short, meditative reflections. These spiritual offerings are designed to enrich the experience for Marian devotees and the wider parish community. Each meditation creatively weaves together historical insights about the revered shrine and the profound significance of Our Lady of Bandel, while thoughtfully highlighting Eucharistic and Marian themes.

“This initiative is a beautiful expression of our youth’s devotion and their deep love for Our Lady of Bandel,” commented their

mentor, Fr. Deonis Minj. “Through these reflections, we aspire to nurture and deepen the spiritual lives of our entire community.”

Celina D’Cruz, one of the young participants, shared her enriching experience: “The history of our shrine is so rich and truly inspiring. Creating these meditations has been a deeply rewarding journey, allowing us to connect with our faith on a profound level and actively involve the community in the joyful preparation for the May feast.”

Echoing this sentiment, fellow participant Eva Hembrom added, “Being part of the Video Novena to Our Lady of Bandel was a new and uplifting experience. It helped me forge a deeper connection with Our Lady and truly feel the significance of this cherished devotion.”

Since April 25th, these dedicated young individuals, comprising both college students and working professionals, have been enthusiastically sharing their heartfelt



reflections on the Bandel Church website and its YouTube channel, ensuring broader accessibility to these valuable spiritual resources.

“The enthusiasm of our youth is truly refreshing!” exclaimed Prior Fr John Puthiyedathuchalil. “Their commitment to sharing our cherished Marian heritage is a powerful testament to the vibrant spirit that

thrives within our church community.”

The annual May Feast, a significant event for the Archdiocese of Calcutta, will be celebrated on the first Sunday of May and presided over by Archbishop Thomas D’Souza. This year’s celebrations carry extra significance as the church observes the Jubilee Year 2025. **C.M. Paul, ucanews.com**

# Pope Francis and the power of play: A journey of faith, football, and fellowship

Bastin Nellissery

In the pages of *Hope: The Autobiography*, co-authored by Italian journalist Carlo Musso, Pope Francis — Jorge Mario Bergoglio offers a rare and deeply personal reflection on games and the Salesian influence that shaped his spiritual journey from childhood.

At the heart of this connection was football and Salesian Fr Enrique Pozzoli — a priest whose unwavering presence and pastoral care not only guided Bergoglio’s family through hardship, but also marked the beginning of his own lifelong devotion to faith and service. This bond, rooted in the Salesian charism of joyful companionship and commitment to the young through games, would leave an indelible imprint on the future Pope, defining his ministry and vision for a ‘Church that goes forth.’

From his earliest days in the working-class neighbourhood of Flores in Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio — Pope Francis — found joy in the simplest things: a football, a few friends, and a dusty patch of ground. He was never the strongest or the fastest on the field, but with a ball at his feet, he



Pope Francis twirls a soccer ball he was presented by a member of the Circus of Cuba, during his weekly general audience in the Pope Paul VI hall, at the Vatican. 2019. (Vatican Media)

felt free, alive, and connected.

Football was never just a game to Pope Francis — it was a means of connection, a source of joy, and a profound lesson in human relationships. Reflecting on the loneliness of modern life, he once remarked,

“We create links that are virtual, remote — theoretically in contact, but practically alone.” To him, football embodied the antidote, bringing people together in real spaces through real encounters.

This philosophy was deeply rooted in

his Salesian formation, inspired by Saint John Bosco’s belief in engaging with young people through play and presence. Pope Francis often cited Don Bosco’s famous adage: “You want children? Throw a ball into the air, and before it hits the ground, just see how many will have turned up!” The Salesian way—joyful, affectionate, and ever-present — shaped Bergoglio’s understanding of pastoral care, reinforcing his commitment to walking alongside the young.

His love for football extended beyond the field and into his faith. His favourite club, San Lorenzo de Almagro, was founded in 1908 by Salesian priest Fr Lorenzo Massa, who invited street children to play safely on church grounds in exchange for attending Mass and growing in sportsmanship and spirit. The club’s blue and red colours paid homage to Mary, Help of Christians, while rival fans playfully dubbed its supporters Cuervos (Crows), referencing the black cassocks worn by Salesians — an identity they embraced with pride.

For Pope Francis, football was a living parable of unity, inclusion, and joy — an extension of his faith and leadership. Through every match played, every friendship formed, and every young life touched by the spirit of the game, he saw echoes of the Gospel’s call to love, serve, and celebrate life together. **Matters India**



# The first-ever MCYD unites young people of the nation



**KOTA KINABALU:** The inaugural Malaysia Catholic Youth Day (MCYD) was held from 31 March to 6 April 2025 in Kota Kinabalu. Organised by the Malaysian Catholic Youth Ministers' Committee (MCYMC), the event gathered 1,092 young delegates from across Malaysia, along with participants from Brunei, Timor-Leste, and Thailand.

MCYD unfolded in two main phases: the Youth Assembly (Mar 31 to Apr 2) and the Youth Festival (Apr 3 – 5).

**Youth Assembly: Conversations in the Spirit**

Delegates were assigned to five parish centres according to age group. Here, they engaged in Conversations in the Spirit (CIS), voicing their hopes and concerns around four key themes: Family, Church, Society, and Ecology. These reflections, rooted in MCYMC's initiatives, were shared in group assemblies, creating a synodal space for dialogue and discernment. Each day concluded with the Eucharist at the respective parish centres.

A special feature of MCYD was the foster family experience. Delegates were welcomed by the hosting parishes, building lasting bonds and experiencing Sabah's warm Catholic hospitality. Many cited this as the highlight of their journey, an encounter of love, laughter, and belonging.

**Youth Festival: Faith in Action**

Modelled after World Youth Day, the Youth

Festival included faith-sharing sessions, cultural exchanges, sports, music, liturgies, and vocation booths. A Festival Pass allowed more youth to join, expanding the reach of this vibrant celebration.

On Apr 3, all nine bishops and archbishops of Malaysia, joined by Fr Robert Leong from Brunei, spent the day with the youth. Some took part in the Stations of the Cross on Cathedral grounds, while others joined games like captain ball. In the afternoon, they launched the *Perjalanan Salib* — a symbolic journey of the Cross that will travel through all dioceses and reunite at the Malaysia Pastoral Convention in 2026. That evening, the bishops surprised the youth during Fellowship Night with a heartfelt rendition of "Here I Am, Lord," which the young people joyfully sang along to—an unforgettable moment of communion.

**Faith Formation with Global Voices**

Fr Michel Remery, author of *Navigating with God* (formerly *Tweeting with God*), led workshops titled *Sharing Your Faith Creatively* and *Understanding Your Faith by Asking Questions*. He also presented the Bahasa Malaysia edition, *Berjalan Dengan Tuhan*, to Archbishop Simon Poh.

The Taizé brothers, Bro Jean-Patrick and Bro Jean-Daniel, held workshops on *Encountering God in Silence* and *Singing Our Faith*, and led a session explaining the Taizé community's unique spirituality.



Spiritual Walk.

On Apr 4, all nine dioceses presented at Cultural Night, with performances in traditional dress. Each act creatively reflected the theme: Christ inspires us to recognise and choose Him in our lives. Through dance, music, and drama, the youth celebrated their cultural identities while proclaiming unity, hope, and faith.

**A Synodal Future for Youth Ministry**

The final day featured a Youth Ministry Symposium with MCYMC leaders Roney Alfred (Sabah), Joan Lau Hui Sing (Sarawak), and Jacinta Claire Fernandez (Peninsular Malaysia). Anna Teresa Amandus, Malaysia's representative to the Synod, shared her journey of synodality, while Francisco Overee (Malacca Johore) updated participants on the Synthesis Report being prepared from the Youth Assembly's discussions.

**Missioning Mass: Sent to Witness**

MCYD concluded with Mass, presided over by Archbishop Simon Poh. In his homily, he reflected on John 7:46: "No one ever spoke like this man." He reminded the youth that Jesus is the heart of our faith and the One who offers eternal life. Delegates shared powerful testimonies of how Christ continues to move hearts today, affirming their call to be witnesses of hope in the world.



**A Reflection from Archbishop Simon Poh**

In his address during the Closing Montage, Archbishop Simon Poh reminded us: "Young people together realise that, like Jesus, we make the Emmaus journey. We walk after the cross — we've just received the cross. We're going to bring it back to our respective dioceses, parishes, kampungs, longhouses, and villages all over Malaysia as we return.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus left Jerusalem after Good Friday saying, 'There's nothing left; we have lost hope.' And indeed, it can feel that way. But here, during the Conversations in the Spirit (CIS), we face our challenges together. Through worship, the Word of God, and the Mass — and by walking with our bishops — we realise that we are not walking alone. Jesus walks with us. He listens to us.

May our hearts burn like those of the Emmaus disciples after this Malaysian Catholic Youth Day. We now have another journey to begin — this time with Jesus. So let us go back to our dioceses and villages, carrying the *Salib*, bringing Jesus' love, joy, and hope to everyone.

As Pope Francis said, 'You are the now of God.'

Young people, let's go and make a difference. Bring Jesus' love and hope to all. God bless you, and let the journey begin."



# Two kids among those killed in Kashmir



Soldiers inspect the debris of a mosque after Indian strikes in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, on May 7, 2025. (ucanews photo)

KASHMIR: At least 10 people, including a woman and two students of a Catholic school, were killed in India's border region of Kashmir as the armies of India and Pakistan traded deadly strikes, raising fears of war.

"Strikes from the Pakistan side killed two of our children as the shells fell on their houses," said Fr Shijo Kanjiarathingal, a member of the Carmelite of Mary Immaculate (CMI) in Poonch.

The deceased students were from Christ School in Poonch, and their homes were adjacent to the school's boundary wall, he said on May 7.

The priests have moved out of their school campus into a bunker for safety as instructed by the Indian government, Kanjiarathingal added.

Tension and shelling escalated after New Delhi announced on May 7 that it had carried out "precision strikes at terrorist camps" at nine sites in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Punjab state.

The Indian strike was in retaliation for the April 22 terrorist attack in Kashmir, which India blamed on Pakistan-based group Lashkar-e-Taiba, a UN-designated terrorist organisation. The terror attack had killed 26 people, mainly Hindu men, in the tourist spot of Pahalgam.

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said that Islamabad had struck

back. "The retaliation has already started," Asif reportedly said. "We won't take long to settle the score."

Dead were reported on both sides. Pakistan said Indian strikes had killed 26 people, and India said Pakistani artillery fire had six civilians and three soldiers along the de facto border in contested Kashmir.

In another incident on the Indian side, "a shell destroyed the water tank at the Carmel School campus, but there was no casualty or injury," said Fr Shaiju Chacko.

"The school belongs to the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel [CMC]," said the priest, spokesperson of the Catholic Diocese of Jammu-Srinagar.

Schools have been closed in the federally ruled territory, and residents have been urged to seek safety following continued heavy shelling from Pakistan, Chacko said.

"We see tension and anxiety among the people, and hope this does not escalate further," he added.

Bishop Ivan Pereira of Jammu-Srinagar said people "are living in fear. Many started to flee from their border villages," he said.

"The Catholic priests and nuns will continue to support the local people in whatever little way possible," he said. [ucanews.com](http://ucanews.com)

# Mozambique: Christians are suffering greatly amid spike in attacks

Christians are under fire as a fresh wave of jihadist violence sweeps northern Mozambique — beheadings and other killings, abductions and burning of houses and churches, according to a priest helping families in greatest need.

Passionist priest Fr Kwiriwi Fonseca told Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that intensified attacks by Islamist terrorists have not only led to a new wave of internal displacement, according to UN figures around 15,000 fled from the end of March to mid-April alone, but have also seen Christians besieged.

Fr Fonseca said: "The attacks show that many Christians are suffering — a number of chapels have been burned, as have their houses. The social projects no longer work, and the people are in despair."

The missionary priest stressed that violence continues to be part of daily life in northern Mozambique, and there was always the possibility of fresh assaults.

He said: "Terrorism continues... and we denounce this violence, because the people cannot continue to be punished in this way."

The priest added: "Over the past days there have been attacks in the region of Ancuabe, with the terrorists moving from the centre to the north. All the newly displaced mentioned having fled because of direct attacks on their villages, involving looting, arson, kidnappings and selective murders."

According to the UN report, a copy of which was received by ACN, villagers fled from Ancuabe,

Nkole, Nonia, Muela, Ngura and Miegane at the start of the violence.

"The attacks involved looting, burning houses, abductions and targeted killings. Attackers entered at night, demanded money, shot at civilians, and set homes on fire. Those unable to pay were at risk of kidnapping. In multiple accounts, community members spoke of ransoms up to 10,000 meticais [RM673.50] being demanded, often under the threat of death or abduction."

Two people were beheaded on April 19 when terrorists entered a safari reserve on the border between the provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado.

Fr Fonseca stressed that people from all religious groups were suffering, not just Christians, and that Church aid is often their only source of help.

Thanking ACN for its assistance, he added: "We don't just need your support, we also need your prayers... so that the people may have peace."

Working with Pemba Diocese, ACN has provided emergency aid for the displaced, including feeding more than 2,000 families, as well as supporting pastoral assistance and trauma counselling for victims of terrorism.



The charity has also provided vehicles for priests and Sisters working in IDP resettlement centres.

Militant group Ansar Al-Sunna (Estado Islamico em Mocambique or Islamic State of Mozambique) has caused the displacement of more than 1 million people and more than 5,000 deaths since the insurgency began in October 2017. ACN

## MEMORIAM

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In Loving Memory of

40th Anniversary	24th Anniversary	4th Anniversary
		
<b>John Ambrose</b> Began Eternal Life 23rd May 1985	<b>Violet Magdelene Ambrose</b> Began Eternal Life 23rd March 2001	<b>George Ignatius Ambrose</b> Began Eternal Life 27th June 2021

Rest well for you have glorified God by your lives of love, simplicity, kindness, gentleness and patience.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

2 corinthians 1:3-4

**Eleventh Anniversary Forever In Our Hearts**

**John 11:25**  
Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:  
For we were truly blessed when the Lord gave you as our beloved Mother and Grandmother  
We love you and miss you always  
"Those we love do not go away, they walk beside us everyday... unseen unheard but always near. Still loved, still missed and very dear"

**Anthony Lily**  
Returned to the Lord on 7th May, 2014


Missed dearly by children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, in laws, relatives and friends.

**NOTICE**

The cost for placing a memoriam is RM150 per column.

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Remembering you on your 53rd Birthday, my Beloved Husband Methuselah @ Mathuranthahan



On May 20th, you would have turned 53 years. On this special day and everyday, the love and deep bond we had shared still warms me the way it had always been. Your absence has left an empty space that time can never fill.

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God (Phil 1:3). Have a Blessed Birthday in heaven my love. Forever you'll be a part of my soul till eternity.

Fondly remembered by your Wife Camilla Ann.

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# Global Theology Summit at Franciscan University

OHIO: Theologians from around the world will gather at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, this summer for the fifth annual Truth of Love Conference.

This year's emphasis — the relationship of truth and love — takes inspiration from the past three pontificates.

To be held at Franciscan University from July 11–14, the conference “will tackle some of the most pressing theological issues of our times,” according to organisers.

Sponsored by the university and the Veritas Amoris Project, the conference will highlight various topics including creation, sexual difference, culture, synodality, and politics.

The intersection of charity, truth, and theology will be the central topic for the two keynote speakers: Deacon Frederick Bauerschmidt, professor of theology at Loyola University of Maryland, and Fr José Noriega, co-founder of the Veritas Amoris Project.

Stephen Hildebrand, event speaker and vice president for academic affairs at the university, said the conference is an “ongoing witness to the chief doctrinal pastoral concerns of the last three pontificates.”

“Pope St John Paul II highlighted the splendour of truth, without which our efforts to do good are futile,” said Hildebrand. “Pope Benedict taught us the primacy of love; and



Franciscan University of Steubenville. (CNA Photo courtesy of Franciscan University of Steubenville)

Pope Francis reminds us that love demands accompaniment.”

Hildebrand noted that truth and accompaniment in love “drive to the heart of the Gospel” and “stand behind the vision of every Truth of Love conference.”

Conference organiser Jacob Wood, associate professor of theology and director of the doctoral program in sacred theology at Franciscan University, said participants will “seek a renewed understanding of the relationship between truth and love in Catholic theology today.”

“In recent years, Christians have struggled

with many tensions between truth and love,” said Wood.

“Is truth ‘pastoral’? Does love relax us from what truth demands?” Wood asked. “And if love is truthful, then in what sense is love powerful? Does its power come solely from within, or does the truth of love also manifest itself in the wider structures of culture and society?”

Wood noted that they will be “debating a lot [of] theological questions that don’t have predetermined answers.”

“The goal is really seeking the truth together in an atmosphere of faith, hope, and

charity.”

Catholic speakers at the conference include D.C. Schindler, associate professor of metaphysics and anthropology at the John Paul II Institute; Oana Gotia, professor of moral theology at the Sacred Heart Major Seminary; and Matthew Muller, director of the Symposium on Transforming Culture at Benedictine College.

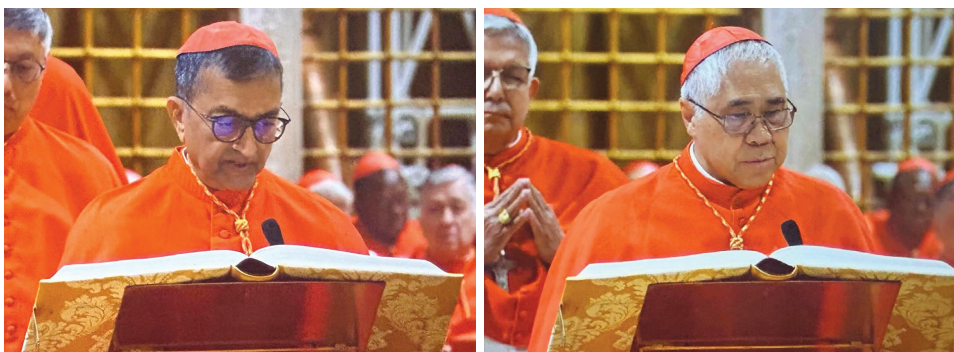
Fr Edmund Waldstein, a monk of the Cistercian Abbey of Stift Heiligenkreuz in Austria and lecturer in moral theology at the abbey’s theological college, will also be speaking at the event.

Several professors from Franciscan University will speak at the conference including Scott Hahn, who is the Fr Michael Scanlan professor of biblical theology and the new evangelisation at the university; John Bergsma, a Franciscan University theology professor; and several others.

The conference will have “an atmosphere of prayer and contemplation” for participants, Wood said.

“Formed by faith, hope, and charity, they’ll discuss and debate what it means to live, think, and act from the heart of the Church; and to bear witness to Christ at this critical moment in the history of the world and of the Church of Christ,” Wood said. **Kate Quiñones, CNA**

## A milestone moment for Malaysia and Singapore



Cardinals Sebastian Francis of Malaysia and William Goh of Singapore stand before the Book of the Gospels and take the solemn oath of the conclave. (Screenshot of Vatican Media)

KUALA LUMPUR: For the first time in history, Malaysia and Singapore were represented in a papal conclave. Cardinal William Goh of Singapore and Cardinal Sebastian Francis of Malaysia (Penang) participated as cardinal electors in the 2025 conclave that elected Pope Leo XIV.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, was elevated to the College of Cardinals in 2023. At 73 years old, he was eligible to vote, marking a historic milestone as Malaysia took part in a papal

conclave for the first time.

Cardinal William Goh, Archbishop of Singapore, was made cardinal by Pope Francis in 2022. At 67, he was also eligible to vote and was among the 133 cardinal electors who assembled in the Sistine Chapel to elect the new pope.

Their participation highlights the growing significance of the Catholic Church in Southeast Asia and reflects the late pope’s commitment to increasing geographic and cultural diversity within the College of Cardinals.



## Anwar Ibrahim congratulates Catholics worldwide on Pope Leo’s election

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has congratulated the Catholic faithful around the world and in Malaysia on the election of the new pope.

“I extend my warm congratulations to the Catholic faithful around the world, and especially in Malaysia, on the election of Pope Leo XIV.



“This historic occasion marks a new chapter for the global Catholic community. I am confident it will be a source of renewed purpose and inspiration.

“Malaysia values its ties with the Holy See, and we look forward to continued engagement rooted in mutual respect, dialogue, and our shared commitment to peace and human dignity”, Anwar said in a Facebook post on May 9.

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