

# The Catholic Weekly HERALD

## Mission Statement

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.

TERHAD

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For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

Hebr 9:24



Celebrating the Feast of St Jude

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A Home of hope, heart and love

■ P12



CHOICE Asia 17th Conference Behold I Make All Things New

■ P16

# Time for Church to get

# its hands dirty

**VATICAN:** Three years after he asked the world's Catholics to walk together in faith on a synodal journey, Pope Francis said that the Church cannot risk becoming "static" but must continue as a "missionary Church that walks with her Lord through the streets of the world."

"We cannot remain inert before the questions raised by the women and men of today, before the challenges of our time, the urgency of evangelisation and the many wounds that afflict humanity," the Pope said in his homily during the closing Mass for the Synod of Bishops in St Peter's Basilica October 27.

"A sedentary Church that inadvertently withdraws from life and confines itself to the margins of reality is a Church that risks remaining blind and becoming comfortable with its own unease," said the Pope. "If we

remain stuck in our blindness, we will continuously fail to grasp the urgency of giving a pastoral response to the many problems of our world."

As he officially brought the three-year synod process to its end, Pope Francis declared that it is now time for the Church to "get its hands dirty" and "carry the joy of the Gospel through the streets of the world."

"We do not need a sedentary and defeatist Church," he said, "but a Church that hears the cry of the world and — I want to say it, maybe someone will be scandalised — a Church that gets its hands dirty to serve the Lord."

Pope Francis delivered his homily seated in front of the basilica's newly restored 17th-century baldachin — the gilded bronze canopy that had been shrouded in scaffolding for restoration work since February.

Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, was the main celebrant at the altar under the baldachin.

The previous day, the Pope received the fi-

nal document approved by the more than 350 members of the synod. The document called for the increased participation of lay men and women in all levels of Church life, including in parishes, dioceses and in seminaries.

Pope Francis told the synod assembly Oct 26 that he did not plan to publish an apostolic exhortation after the synod due to the "already highly concrete indications" in the final synod document, which he ordered published.

Reflecting on the day's Gospel reading from St Mark in which a blind man hears Jesus pass by, asks for healing, regains his sight and then follows Him, the Pope stressed that following God on the synodal path entails cultivating the capacity to hear the Lord pass by and the confidence to follow in His footsteps.

"We follow the Lord along the way, we do not follow Him closed in our communities, we do not follow Him in the labyrinths of our ideas," he said. "Let us remember never to

walk alone or according to worldly criteria, but instead to journey together, behind Him and alongside Him."

At the end of Mass, four Vatican workers carried the Chair of St Peter into the basilica and placed it before the main altar. The chair — temporarily removed for restoration from its encasement in a sculpture behind the basilica's back altar — is traditionally believed to have belonged to St Peter, the first pope.

In his wheelchair, the Pope sat in front of the chair in prayer at the end of Mass.

In his homily, he had said, "This is the chair of love, unity and mercy, according to Jesus' command to the Apostle Peter not to lord it over others, but to serve them in charity."

After Mass, the Pope prayed the Angelus with visitors in St Peter's Square. Speaking about the end of the Synod of Bishops, the Pope asked people to "pray so that all that we have done in this month may continue forward for the good of the Church." **Justin McLellan, CNS**

(Photo/Stockcase)

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**HERALD**

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# Rooted and on pilgrimage to proclaim the Gospel

The document adopted October 26, by the Synod is a stage on a journey that began with the Second Vatican Council, which continues and which needs to be lived out concretely at every level in the Churches. It is a recognition that synodality is the way to live and bear witness to communion. The Church is not a company or a party; the Bishops are not the 'prefects' of Rome, the lay faithful are not the mere executors of clerical decisions and directives. The Church is a people, the People of God, walking together: the reason for its existence does not consist in the management of structures, bureaucracies, or powers. Nor does it aim at conquering and defending its own space in the world. Its only reason for existing is to make the encounter with Christ possible today, in every place where the women and men of our time live, work, rejoice, suffer.

There is, therefore, a way of living relationships and bonds that is absolutely particular and evangelical. A way centred on service, just as Jesus taught. There is a concrete way of making decisions, of planning, of acting, which is in itself a witness, especially in a time like ours, characterised by divisions, hatred, violence, prevarication.

To live synodality, then, is to take a step towards the full implementation of the Council. It means taking seriously the originality – in the sense of being rooted in the origin – of being Church: a community in which there is room for everyone and in which everyone is valued, a community of forgiven sinners who experience God's love and want to communicate it to everyone.



Synod participants on the final working day of the General Assembly (Vatican Media)

The Synod on Synodality, with its various perspectives, asks a great deal of everyone. It asks for a change of mentality. It asks us not to consider synodality as a bureaucratic task to be implemented paternalistically with a few minor cosmetic reforms. It calls for a rediscovery of the desire to walk together as a modality that is desired rather than simply endured, with all the consequences that this entails. It asks us to cast off the moorings and to be daring, in the certainty that it is the Lord who guides His Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit. It calls for a rethinking of the ministry of authority, including that of the Successor of Peter. It calls for a role of greater responsibility for the laity, and especially for women.

It is an image of a Church whose members are rooted – in a place, in a history, in a community, in a context – and at the same time pilgrims, that is, on the move, searching, missionary. Ecclesial structures, in this new perspective, no longer represent the place to which the lay faithful must converge, but a support for the service that the People of God undertakes in the world. The horizon of the text, which Pope Francis wants to deliver to the whole Church immediately, is mission, according to the outline established by the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, to ensure that "Church going forth" does not remain an intuition or end up being reduced to a mere slogan, but is fully realised with the contribution of all. **Andrea Torielli, Vatican News**

## Recognising the Pharisee within

Why did Jesus' words towards the scribes and pharisees repeatedly sound unsparing in the Bible, whereas He treated the prostitutes and tax collectors with much compassion? Firstly, it is because the former are the learned in religious spheres, so they should know better. But more importantly, it is due to their obstinate behaviour. All of them were sinners whom He loved and came to redeem, but the key difference between them was the heart of repentance. While the scribes and pharisees continued to indulge in self-righteousness at the expense of the marginalised, Christ approached the prostitutes and tax collectors to regain their dignity in Him because of their will to repent.

Now, we may easily identify the scribes and pharisees around us, but often times, we have overlooked the pharisaic behaviour within us. We resonate well with the prostitute who was caught and then brought to Jesus whenever we fall into sin, while many times also, we intend to cast the first stone towards others. While the reproof of Jesus in today's Gospel was directed towards the religious leaders of His time, it serves well to help us in our own examination of conscience. Have I been doing good to seek for recognition and praise? Is my life centred around seeking approval from the people around me? Is my outward show of piety incoherent with the inner disposition of the heart or the way I treat others? Do I put a spotlight on the flaws of others while masking my own? These are the pharisaic behaviours detested by Jesus and they may very well exist in us, more so for those who are in the position of

power and intellects.

"Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more." (Luke 12:48) That explains why the sentence is much more severe for those in position who misuse their power and intellects. It is their responsibility to protect the vulnerable, but instead they take advantage of them. The psalm today enumerates well those who are weak, i.e. the oppressed, the hungry, the prisoner, the blind, the downcast, the stranger, the widow and the orphan. These people have a special place for the Lord as "... (He) maintains the cause of the needy, and executes justice for the poor." (Psalms 140:12) This is well-illustrated in the first reading today, where the welfare of the poor widow and her son was taken care of exactly as prophesied by Elijah. In the Gospel, Jesus contrasted the scribes' self-righteousness to the poor widow who gave generously without pompous show of her good deeds. The scribes were self-righteous by parading their pious acts, whilst the poor widow was outpouring her love by giving all she had to live on. Her simple act of charity radiates and speaks volume about her inner piety and God notices the good deeds done in secret. (Matthew 6:4)

The greatest challenge in our journey of faith is to recognise that self-righteousness and unrepentance within us. Both are so intricately connected because whenever we feel complacent with our current level of faith and holiness, we stop progressing. In fact, that journey is a continuous discovery of our own frailty and brokenness, then

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Bro Joseph Wong Pak Yii

### 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Readings: **1 Kings 17: 10-16;**  
**Hebrews 9:24-28;**

Gospel: **Mark 12:38-44 (or 12:41-44)**

allowing ourselves to be loved and redeemed by God through on-going repentance. On the other hand, mediocrity is another stumbling block for repentance where we are contented with our own weaknesses and refuse to be transformed while expecting God to accept who we are.

While God does love us at whatever state we are in, He constantly challenges us to move beyond our status quo. That is the epitome of incarnation – "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son..." (John 3:16) so that we may become like God; to "...be perfect, as (the) heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) He recognises the fallen nature of human being; our limitations and incapability to reach Him through our own initiative and effort. Therefore, Christ, our high priest came to do away with sin by sacrificing Himself once and for all. (Hebrews 9:26)

#### Questions for pondering:

- Can I recognise the pharisaic behaviour within me?
- Do I allow Christ to transfigure my weaknesses?
- Am I open to be loved and redeemed by Christ through on-going repentance?



**KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow**

**November**

- 11 Board Meeting – Sri Seronok
- 15 Meeting – College of Consultors
- 16 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of Sacred Heart, Bentong
- 16 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of Sacred Heart, KL
- 17 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mentakab
- 17 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Anne, Klang



**PENANG DIOCESE**

**Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis**

**November**

- 11 Thanksgiving Mass & Dinner at 6.30pm – Pusat Keuskupan Katolik, Penang
- 12-13 Council of Priests & Clergy Monthly Reflection – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 13 60th Sacerdotal Anniversary of Fr Robin Andrews at 6.00pm – Church of the Immaculate Conception, Penang
- 14 Curia Meeting – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam at 10.00am
- 15 Malaysian Education Council AGM at 2.00pm – Zoom
- 16 Peninsular Malaysia Tamil Leaders’ Formation at 11.00am – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 16 Meeting with Mother General of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (FSIC) at 3.00pm – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 16 Confirmation – Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi at 6.00pm
- 17-20 Radio Veritas Asia Annual General Board Meeting – Manila, Philippines



**MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul**

**November**

- 11-15 Caritas Assembly in Kota Kinabalu
- 16 70th Anniversary Mass – Church of St Elizabeth, Kota Tinggi
- 17 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai
- 17 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Sacred Heart Cathedral, Johor Bahru
- 17 Meeting – Couples for Christ Regional Mission Head



**Children’s holy hour at St Mary’s Cathedral**

SANDAKAN: For the first time, the Cathedral of St Mary held a Children’s Holy Hour with the theme *Go and Invite Everyone to the Banquet* (Mt 22:9)

The Holy Hour was led by Bishop Julius Gitom, President of the Pontifical Mission Societies, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. The prelate was assisted by Fr Arthur John, Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies of the Diocese of Sandakan. Sandakan Diocese was called to host this event which

was live-streamed throughout, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

The preparation for the Children Holy Hour was highly anticipated and brought great excitement. Children, catechism children with parents and parishioners came as a synodal family to show their unity, solidarity and support of Pope Francis’ Pontifical Mission Society programme. It was very inspiring and heartwarming to see children bringing their parents to the

Holy Hour.

A potluck fellowship followed after the Holy Hour. In his speech, Bishop Julius shared that our children have been helping children from other parts of the world that are less developed such as the African countries. He thanked all the children for their contribution through the Mission Sunday collections carried out annually. He also thanked all the committees which have helped in organising this successful event.



**Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #197**



**Greetings dear friends of MJD.**

Nobody appears to take responsibility these days! Private and educational loans not repaid. So scrap the PTPTN! Waving the Chinese flags in Teluk Intan! Another thoughtless act. House arrests: a solution for overcrowded prisons or for first-time offenders or the First-Timer at Sg Buloh or preparations for VIP offenders? Whom does it favour? Being responsible means pay back what we have taken or borrowed or being accountable for one’s misdeeds. Sorry is not enough. It is not about leniency, mercy or forgiveness. Because this trend encourages laziness, handout mentality and unethical practices.

**Synod or “Sin Nod” Times:** An academic expressed that exempting public universities from Act 605, will encourage more scholarly discussions, instead of unfounded statements. He called for competent and reputable academics, not “kangkung professors” to work in universities and selections to be based on expertise, not skin colour, ethnicity, gender, or other nonsensical factors.

The Second session of the Synod has concluded. The final document which has magisterial value, highlights the moving away from a vision of the “universal Church” as a kind of multinational corporation to the Church seen as a “communion of Churches,” with growing contributions from laypersons and women and becoming more missionary. For this conversion, we need courage and conviction. More importantly, the local Church must undergo synodal conversion or we may have a Church led by “kangkung leaders”. The synodal Church does not “nod to sin”.

**A Thought For The Week: A father’s advice**

The father had something to say to his

son, “Just go for it and give it a try! You don’t have to be a professional to build a successful product. Amateurs started Google and Apple. Professionals built the Titanic.

*Lesson from the father:* Never hold back the inner impulse nor resist trying new ideas. No harm in trying. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. The world needs innovators, not imitators.

**Announcements for the Week:**

1. The *Pusat Kasih CARITAS*, MJD’s Social Mission Hub, located at the Brothers’ Block of SRJK(C) St Joseph opens on December 1, at 12.00 noon with the blessing and dedication ceremony. Contact Albert Tan 016-8492346 by November 15.

2. The MJD Counseling Ministry is organising *Reclaiming Joy: Healing Childhood Wounds and Restoring Peace*, which will take place at MAJODI Centre on 24th Nov 2024 (9.00am-5.00pm). Limited to 100 participants, the cost is RM 80 per pax, with meals. Register with Diana 013-7274147; Mary 012-7070750; Michael 012-2104116. Closing date: Nov 17.

3. *The Beloved*, a stay-in camp exclusively for single men aged 18 and above will be held on January 11-12 at the CDD Formation House in Melaka. For more information, please contact Fr Adrian Francis at 012-3947986 or [vocations@mjdioocese.my](mailto:vocations@mjdioocese.my). Closing date is December 20.

**QnQ? The Q asks: Am I responsible for what I become? Am I not a child of God who must depend on Him?**

Henri Nouwen says: There is within you a lamb and a lion. Spiritual maturity is the ability to let lamb and lion lie down together. Your lion is your adult, aggressive self. It is your initiative-taking and decision-making self. But there is also your fearful, vulnerable lamb, the part of you that

needs affection, support, affirmation, and nurturing.

When you heed only your lion, you will find yourself overextended and exhausted. When you take notice only of your lamb you will easily become a victim of your need for other people’s attention. The art of spiritual living is to fully claim both your lion and your lamb. Then you can act assertively without denying your own needs. And you can ask for affection and care without betraying your talent to offer leadership. Developing your identity as a child of God in no way means, giving up your responsibilities. Likewise, claiming your adult self in no way means that you cannot become increasingly a child of God. In fact, the opposite is true. The more you can feel safe as a child of God, the freer you will be to claim your mission in the world as a responsible human being. And the more you claim that you have a unique task to fulfill for God, the more open you will be to letting your deepest need be met.” (Henri Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love*).

**See The Holy Spirit @ Work:** Let’s ask ourselves: Are we open to the Holy Spirit, do I pray to him to enlighten me, to make me more sensitive to the things of God? And this is a prayer we need to pray every day, every day:

Holy Spirit may my heart be open to the Word of God, may my heart be open to good, may my heart be open to the beauty of God, every day. **Pope Francis**

**Something To Tickle You:** “Every life you touch, every difference you make, every prayer you pray makes the world a better place.” **Linda Evans Shepherd** (31)

**Bishop Bernard Paul**

# Melaka Vicariate organises inaugural Family Day

Francis Ong

MELAKA: About 1400 parishioners from the main churches in Melaka — Our Lady of Guadalupe; St Francis Xavier; Holy Spirit; St Theresa; St Peter and St Mary and chapels; gathered together at the grounds of the Church of St Mary, on October 26 which had been colourfully decorated for the Melaka Vicariate Family Day.

This vicariate celebration was a result of the diocesan assembly held last year.

At 8.00am, the event kicked off with a vibrant Lion Dance performance by the Montfort Youth Centre, marking the start of this auspicious celebration, a first for the Melaka Vicariate. The energy continued with joyful praise and action songs led by the youth from the Church of St Mary and Pulau Gadong Chapel. The lively atmosphere had everyone — young and old — clapping, smiling, and swaying along to the upbeat music and singing. From 8.30am to 10.00am, attendees were free to participate in various field and hall games,



Some of the parishioners enjoying themselves at one of the field games.

enjoy a relaxed chat over tea or coffee, or watch a movie at the St Mary School Hall.

At 10.00am, praise and worship sessions were conducted in four languages at different locations, providing a time for thanksgiving, worship, and celebrating our unity as one Church family. The Rosary followed at

10.30am, recited in four languages within the church, leading into the 11.00am Mass, which used the liturgy of the Holy Family. The Mass was presided over by Bishop Bernard Paul, joined by all 10 priests from the Melaka Vicariate. Together, as God's family, we worshipped in a spirit of prayer

and gratitude, united in faith.

Bishop Bernard urged us to pray that Jesus remains the centre of our lives, families, and communities, following the example of the Holy Family. He emphasised four key aspects of the Holy Family: following the Word of God; keeping Jesus at the centre; fostering mutual respect within the family — father, mother, and children — as gifts from God; and embracing God's plan and mission by encouraging one another to follow Jesus.

During Mass, Bishop Bernard blessed all married couples present, with a special blessing for those who had been married for 50 years or more. After the service, everyone gathered at St Mary's School hall for lunch, followed by a series of cultural performances. The festivities also included several lucky draws, with cash prizes for the winners. The Vicariate Family Day concluded at 2.30pm with a final blessing from Bishop Bernard. We thank Fr Alexuchelvam Mariasoosai and his team for organising this truly wonderful and enjoyable Vicariate Family Day.



Some of the attendees relaxing at the cafeteria area.



Some of the young people who led the praise and worship session.



**DIocese of PENANG**  
PKK/BDN/2023/08/165

## Notifications and Updates

**Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.**

*Cardinal Sebastian Francis*

### Appointments and Transfers

I am pleased to share with you that I have appointed the following priests:

- Rev Fr Martin Arlando as member of the Professional Standards Office, Diocese of Penang (PSO Committee) for the protection, care and safety of minors and vulnerable persons effective September 1, 2024.
- Rev Fr Dominic Santhiyagu as Judicial Vicar of the Diocese of Penang effective October 22, 2024.
- Rev Fr Aloysius Tan as Parish Priest of Church of St Michael, Ipoh effective November 30, while also assuming the role of Chairman of the Board of Governors of SJK(C) and SMJK Sam Tet, Ipoh, Perak.
- Rev Fr Stanley Antoni as Head of Penang Diocesan Migrant Ministry effective December 1, 2024.
- Rev Fr Raymond Raj as Rector of

Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang effective January 1, 2025.

- Rev Fr Joachim Robert as resident full time Formator and Initiation Year Director at the College General Major Seminary, Penang effective February 15, 2025. He will continue his role as the Head of Caritas Penang Diocese.

Please keep our priests in prayer as they take up their new roles and embrace the new mission entrusted to them. Wishing them God's blessings.

### 2. Heartfelt gratitude to the Fathers of College General Major Seminary, Penang

As President of the College General Major Seminary, Penang, I, together with my brother bishops, thank Rev Fr Simon Labrooy, Rector and Rev Fr Eugene Fernandez, CSsR, Resident Spiritual Father of the House, for their committed and dedicated services rendered to the seminarians and staff at College General Major Seminary, Penang. They will conclude their term end of this year.

Special thanks to Fr Simon Labrooy for also generously serving the Diocese of Penang. May God's blessings accompany them in their mission and responsibilities.

- 3. Penang Diocesan Migrant Ministry**  
My heartfelt thanks to Mr Peter Barnabas for his services and faithful commitment as Head of Penang Diocesan Migrant Ministry.

Wishing him God's blessings for his next mission at the Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam.

### 4. Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Theme and Focus for 2025

The Liturgical Celebrations for 2025 along with the overall theme and monthly focus for the year has been compiled for your easy reference. <https://shorturl.at/SS2AT>

### 5. Jubilee Year of Hope, Diocese of Penang

I am pleased to share with you some proposed events and happenings that will take place in the Diocese of Penang during the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025. As missionary disciples, let us journey together as pilgrims of hope, participating in the mission of Christ entrusted to each one of us. <https://shorturl.at/HxpWX>

### 6. The Synod Document is a gift to the People of God

On October 26, 2024, the members of the Second Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

approved the Final Document of the Synod. Pope Francis has approved its publication. The Final Document is available in the original Italian and translations in the other languages will follow. More information can be obtained from the website: <https://shorturl.at/esuJ3>

### 7. Pingat Pekerti Terpilih (PPT)

I congratulate the Board, Staff, Volunteers, Benefactors and Community of Simee Home, Ipoh for being awarded the Pingat Pekerti Terpilih (PPT) which will be received from the Sultan of Perak on November 16, 2024. Blessings for your dedication and commitment in serving the elderly.

### 8. Diploma in Nursing, Hospital Fatimah School of Nursing

I am pleased to share with you on the yearly intake for the Diploma in Nursing at the Hospital Fatimah School of Nursing, Ipoh, Perak.

The intakes are in April, July and October 2025. For more information and contact details, please go to <https://shorturl.at/ngMpc>

*Sebastian Francis*

# Gopeng chapel celebrates feast with the theme of hope

**Bernard Anthony**

GOPENG, Perak: The Chapel of St Jude marked its 105th Feast of St Jude Thaddeus with a series of celebrations from October 25 to October 28, under the theme *Pilgrims Walking Together in Hope*. Hundreds of parishioners and faithful from near and far gathered to participate in the spiritual events, which featured novena prayers, the Rosary, Masses, and procession.

Msgr Jude Miranda from Penang Island was the presider and preacher on Oct 26 and 27. In his homily on Oct 26, themed *Jesus: Hope Made Flesh*, Msgr Jude addressed the challenges of life's lowest moments. He reminded the faithful to anchor their hope in Jesus during difficult times, citing the example of Bartimaeus from the days Gospel. "When you are at your lowest, will you look to Jesus and anchor onto Him who can give you life and hope?" he asked, urging those present to seek Jesus, just as Bartimaeus did, for transformation and renewed faith.

The feast culminated on Sunday, Oct 27, with 800 parishioners converging at the chapel for the 10.00am Novena, Rosary, Mass, and a procession. The theme for the day was *Living a Hope-filled Life*. The celebration was led by Chapel Administrator, Fr Michael Dass, who is also the parish priest of the Church of St Joseph, Batu Gajah. He was joined by Fr Anthony Pillai from Bukit

Mertajam and Deacon Richard Wilson, with Msgr Jude Miranda as the main celebrant.

During his homily, Msgr Jude reflected on the congregation's devotion to St Jude, saying, "You all come to this beautiful chapel with prayers and intentions. Trust in God, for He cares, and as you seek St Jude's intercession, know that he prays for us." He emphasised the importance of sharing personal stories of encountering Jesus to inspire others to seek Him and grow the Kingdom of God.

The celebration also included a healing prayer session led by Msgr Jude, followed by a procession around the chapel grounds, where a statue of St Jude was carried in his honour. Benediction and the blessing of the congregation with the Blessed Sacrament concluded the event.

Msgr Jude, who recently celebrated his 25th sacerdotal anniversary alongside Fr Michael Dass, was presented with a cake, as the assembly sang 'Happy Anniversary'. Andrew, the chapel's chairman, thanked the priests and faithful for their participation and invited everyone to a fellowship lunch.

The feast concluded on Oct 28 with the theme *St Jude Thaddeus: Beacon of Hope*. The final Mass was celebrated by Fr David Lourdasamy from Teluk Intan, with Fr Terrance Thomas from Mentakab, Pahang, as the preacher and concelebrants

were Fr Konstend Gnanapragasam, Fr Michael Dass and Fr Francis Andrew from Sitiawan with Deacon Richard Wilson assisting.

Fr Terrance, who celebrated his 25th sacerdotal anniversary on October 2, also cut an anniversary cake after the Mass.

Prayer cards were distributed to attendees throughout the feast, and the event was hailed as a profound reflection of hope and faith in Jesus.



Msgr Jude Miranda with the blessed Sacrament



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

## A community celebration at Church of St Jude Rawang

RAWANG: The feast of St Jude held from October 17 to 28, brought together a vibrant community in a celebration of faith, unity, and hope. With the theme *Salt of the Earth, Light of the World*, the event showcased the parish's dedication to living out the Gospel through family, church, and ecological stewardship.

Preparations for the feast began with a community-wide *gotong royong* on Oct 6, as members of various zones and Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) gathered to clean and prepare the church for the festivities. This act of togetherness reflected the spirit of the feast — creating a welcoming space for the arriving pilgrims.

The official celebrations commenced on Oct 17, with a Mass presided over by Fr Michel Dass. The homily echoed the theme, inviting the faithful to reflect on their role as "salt and light" in the world, as taught by Jesus.

The novena began on Oct 18 with the

exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, followed by Mass celebrated by Fr Andrew Manickam, OFM Cap. The day's theme, *A Shared Mission Towards a Synodal Church and Ecology*, reminded the congregation of their responsibility as stewards of creation, encouraging ecological sustainability within the faith community.

The next day, Msgr James Gnanapiragasam led the Mass with the theme *Living the Paschal Mystery as Church*. His message emphasised the importance of community prayer and the strength that comes from embracing the Paschal mystery — the death and resurrection of Christ.

The multicultural essence of the parish was celebrated on Oct 20 with Tamil and English Masses, presided over by Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis and Fr Alvin Ng, SJ, respectively. The Eagles Wing Ministry, which supports individuals with different abilities, beautifully animated the liturgy, highlighting the inclusivity of the St Jude community. In



Anointing of the sick.

the evening, Fr Andre Tan from Singapore delivered a homily that focused on God's invitation to all to His heavenly banquet, urging the faithful not to miss out on this divine call. In a beloved tradition, children dressed as saints and biblical figures joined the procession, adding a joyful touch to the celebrations.

The subsequent days of the novena saw spiritual reflections led by various priests, including Fr Martin Arlando and Fr Terrance Thomas, whose 25th sacerdotal anniversary was joyfully celebrated by the community.

On Oct 25, over 2,500 people participated at the Mass presided over by Fr George Packiasamy, underscoring the congregation's yearning for spiritual renewal. The sacrament of anointing and prayers for healing brought hope and comfort to many.

The feast reached its climax on Oct 28, with the final day marked by an atmosphere of gratitude and reflection. The morning

Mass, celebrated by Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap, set a tone of thanksgiving, while the closing Mass in the evening, presided over by Fr Mitchel Anthony and Fr Frederick Joseph, drew the celebrations to a close. Parish priest Fr Vincent Thomas expressed his heartfelt thanks to the community for their unwavering support, acknowledging the efforts of key leaders.

As the St Jude flag was lowered, the community gathered one last time to reflect on the journey they had undertaken together. The feast of St Jude in Rawang was more than just a religious event — it was a powerful reminder of the importance of faith, community, and stewardship. The themes of family, church, and ecology will continue to guide the parish in the months ahead, as they strive to be the salt of the earth and light of the world, making a difference in their neighbourhoods and beyond. **Mercy Almeida Stellus**



Pilgrims walking in procession.

# Migrant Got Talent showcases cultural richness and resilience

Julie Lim

KUALA LUMPUR: The Migrants and Itinerants Ministry of the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) recently organised Migrant Got Talent with the theme, *God Walks with His People*.

The event brought together migrants and refugees from different nations to showcase their cultures via song and dance. Most importantly, to create awareness that each person is gifted regardless of their differences and background. And that these gifts come from God.

The first Migrant Got Talent was held online during the pandemic in 2021 when many migrants had lost their jobs and were feeling hopeless. The talent show was an outlet for them to cope with their anxiety. The following year, it was held at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre and was live streamed for those who could not attend in-person and for family members to watch the performances.



One of the performances during the Migrant Got Talent event.

This year the event was held on Oct 20.

The event was graced by Ambassador of the Philippines to Malaysia, H.E. Maria Angela A. Ponce joined by Consul General Roussel R Reyes and Vice Consul Kirstoff Ocampo; Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam, and

representative from UNHCR, Michelle Wong. Although Archbishop Julian Leow was away he gave a pre-recorded message. Other guests include migrants and refugee community leaders and their people from Myanmar, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal

and African nations, as well as parish migrant ministries and individual Malaysians.

There was a total of 14 performances and 9 special guest performances. After much deliberation, the judges awarded Most Favoured Award to Indonesian group, St Lourdes from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang. The performance with the best Uniformity went to Myanmar group, the Chin Bamboo Dancers from LCCM; and the Most Colourful Performance was awarded to Filipino group, The Dreamers from the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Brickfields.

Eight-year-old Kimnu from Myanmar who sang and played the piano was awarded the Live Streaming Award.

The judges of the show comprised of previous contestants, Doris Ciego and Sean Ursua; Head of International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), Pohleen Tan; AOHD Director, Gary Liew; and Malaysian actress and singer-song writer, Dato' Francisca Peter.

## Transformative experience at ME weekend

KUALA LUMPUR: The Marriage Encounter (ME) Selangor/Wilayah Persekutuan recently hosted their 185th ME Weekend at the Archdiocese Pastoral Centre, with six couples from various churches in the Klang Valley participating in the transformative programme.

The Worldwide Marriage Encounter Movement has long been dedicated to enriching marriages by teaching couples an effective communication technique aimed at fostering deeper understanding and love. This technique encourages couples to explore important areas of their relationship in an environment of openness and care.

Throughout the weekend, couples focused exclusively on each other, free from daily distractions. Many participants expressed that the experience helped them become better listeners and rediscover the beauty of their relationship. The programme provided a conducive environment for reflection, rekindling affection, and deepening their emotional connection.

"We graduated the weekend full of energy to rekindle our love and discover more about each other on a more intimate level. We highly encourage all couples who are seeking to strengthen their marriage bond to enroll for the Marriage Encounter Weekend," said Kevin and Gabrielle from the Church of the



Fr Gerard Theraviam with the couples and facilitators.

Divine Mercy, Shah Alam.

Darren and Cindy from the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya, described the weekend as transformative, saying, "The experience brought new life into our relationship. Through guided activities, we rediscovered the core of our connection and addressed areas that had grown distant over time. We left feeling closer, more connected, and excited about the next chapter of our lives together."

Shaun and Sandra from the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang, encouraged younger couples to participate, sharing, "We are so blessed to have said 'yes' to attending the ME weekend. For couples like us, five years into marriage, this experience has helped us build a strong foundation, equipped with the right

tools and community to raise our family in a positive and loving environment, and lean on the community when we face challenges."

Victor and Joanne Yong from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Kuala Lumpur, noted, "Marriage Encounter has given us valuable insights on nurturing our bond and keeping the flame alive. This powerful reminder of the sacred unity between husband and wife touched us deeply. With this newfound understanding, we are filled with faith and hope that our marriage will continue to grow stronger and more meaningful each day."

Rakesh and Jessica from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang, added, "The

Marriage Encounter weekend was a transformative experience for us. I'm excited to implement what we've learned and continue strengthening our bond, embracing love and faith in our lifelong partnership."

The Marriage Encounter weekend continues to be a vital ministry in strengthening marriages, helping couples grow together in love and faith. The organisers encourage more couples to take part in future weekends to experience the life-changing impact of this programme.

For details on upcoming Marriage Encounter Weekend, contact James at 019-3562321, Mandy at 012-3718756, or email [wwwmeselwil@archkl.org](mailto:wwwmeselwil@archkl.org).

## Reviving a cherished tradition

PETALING JAYA: Coffee Mornings at the Church of the Assumption have been a cherished tradition, an occasion eagerly anticipated each week. More than just a delightful breakfast or brunch at a reasonable price, these gatherings embody the spirit of fellowship and connection among parishioners. It's a time when friendships blossom, laughter fills the air, and conversations flow freely — where we come together as a vibrant community.

Coordinated under BECCOT, various ministries take turns hosting these joyful mornings every Sunday, each bringing their unique flair to the experience. From introducing delightful homemade delicacies to organising exciting raffle draws and fun games, there's something for everyone to enjoy. The youth group, known as 'The Sahabats,' adds to the atmosphere by serenading the crowd with

their musical talents, creating a backdrop of joy and celebration.

Since the revival of Coffee Mornings, we have witnessed a remarkable surge in participation, reflecting a renewed sense of belonging among our parishioners. Each ministry eagerly anticipates their Sunday slot from 7.30am to 1.00pm, relishing the opportunity to connect with fellow parishioners and contribute to the mission of our church community.

Planning for these gatherings begins a week in advance, as many participants have become seasoned "professionals" in the art of Coffee Mornings. Generous sponsors and donors step forward to support these events, and the announcements are shared in the bulletin and across social media, inviting everyone to join.

This year alone, we have celebrated ap-



Assumption parishioners patronising the different stalls at the Coffee Morning.

proximately 25 Coffee Mornings, with contributions from RCIA Alumni, Catechism students, Tamil and Chinese Apostolates, the Orang Asli ministry, SSVP, Youth Ministry, and our BECs.

Ultimately, Coffee Mornings serve as a

beautiful reminder that we are journeying together as one family within the Church of the Assumption. In these moments of sharing and togetherness, we strengthen our bonds, cultivate our faith, and celebrate the joy of being part of a loving community. **Jesica Minalini**

# Archbishop Emeritus Peter Chung celebrates 70th sacerdotal anniversary

KUCHING: A Thanksgiving Mass was recently celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Kuching to honour the 70th sacerdotal ordination anniversary of Archbishop Emeritus Dato Sri Peter Chung. The milestone was further commemorated with a thanksgiving dinner on October 9, organised by the Kuching Archdiocesan Pastoral Council. This event also marked Archbishop Peter's 96th birthday and was held at the Christian Ecumenical Worship Centre (CEWC), gathering a large congregation to honour his steadfast dedication.

Originally from Macao, China, Archbishop Peter arrived in Kuching on August 21, 1954, and was ordained by Bishop John Vos a month later on September 26. He became the first priest ordained on Sarawak soil and was soon sent to serve in various parts of Sarawak as well as Brunei.

In 1970, he was appointed Coadjutor Bishop and Apostolic Vicar of Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, where he remained for five years despite enduring religious persecution.

In 1975, he was appointed Apostolic Vicar of Kuching and became the first Archbishop of Kuching with the establishment of the Ecclesiastical Province of East Malaysia in 1976. He served faithfully until his retirement on June 22, 2003, and holds the unique distinction of being the only priest and bishop

to have served Sarawak, Sabah, and Brunei.

At the dinner, Kuching Archbishop Simon Poh paid tribute to Archbishop Peter, recognising his journey from a small village in China. "With a trusting and humble heart, he learned various languages, prayed, and diligently trusted God as he laid the foundation and carved out the vision of the Church in East Malaysia," Archbishop Simon remarked.

He recounted the struggles Archbishop Peter faced in the 1970s, when he was restricted from staying within his own vicariate in Sabah. Despite this, Archbishop Peter's dedication led to the formation of the Sabah Pastoral Assembly, uniting Sabah's parishes as a Catholic community. Today, Sabah is a prominent source of priests and religious vocations in East Malaysia.

In 1980, Archbishop Peter founded St Peter's Seminary, described by Archbishop Simon as his "greatest gift," and also established the Sisters of St Francis of Sarawak (SSFS). Archbishop Peter's leadership was marked by pastoral guidance, including his first Pastoral Letter in 1977, *Our Task and Responsibility*; and a follow-up in 2001 titled *We Are the Church*, which addressed the growth, challenges, and pastoral vision of the Kuching Archdiocese. His successors, Archbishops John Ha (2003–2017) and Simon Poh (2017–present), have built upon



Archbishop Emeritus Peter Chung holds up his gift of a *Spiritual Bouquet of 100 Masses*, October 8, 2024 at the Cathedral of St Joseph, Kuching. (Today's Catholic Photo/Danison Manium)

his foundations, continuing the vision *We are the Church, Disciples of the Word, in Communion for Mission*.

In recognition of his lifelong service, Archbishop Simon presented Archbishop

Emeritus Peter with a *Spiritual Bouquet of 100 Masses* from the Kuching Presbyterium, with the priests pledging to celebrate these Masses for his intentions.

In a heartfelt speech, Archbishop Peter expressed joy at witnessing the growth and vitality of the local Church in Sarawak. He gave thanks to God for its continued strength and prayed for ongoing blessings and more vocations, hoping that the Church's mission would continue to expand into the interior regions of Sarawak. His greatest prayer is that "God will bless the Church in Sarawak... bless his bishops, priests, religious, and all of you, dear children of God."

The evening's celebrations included a video on Archbishop Peter's life journey, cultural dances, songs, and a dedication by Archbishop Simon Poh, who led the congregation in singing *I Thank My God*, composed by Frank Andersen. Archbishop Emeritus John Ha closed the evening with a prayer, asking for continued blessings on Archbishop Peter, praying that he may witness the diocese's Golden Jubilee in 2026 and celebrate his 100th birthday in 2028. **Today's Catholic**



Thanksgiving Mass to celebrate 70 years of priestly ordination of Archbishop Emeritus Peter Chung. (Today's Catholic)

## Go Mission makes third stop in Banting

BANTING: In celebration of Mission Month in October, the Archdiocesan Mission of New Evangelisation for Christ (AMNEC) and the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) organised the Go Mission event at the Church of Sts Peter and Paul. This third stop on their journey left participants with lasting impressions and opportunities for spiritual growth.

Participants shared heartfelt reflections on their experiences. Punitha remarked on the memorable insights gained during the Evangelisation session, stating, "Kindness and respect are fundamental to our humanity. The Mission Rosary deepened my prayers and reflections, and I cherished every moment of this spiritual encounter. Special thanks to Fr Eugene Benedict for his guidance, which I see as a blessing." She also expressed gratitude to Alvin Teoh from the Church of the Good Shepherd, Setapak for his uplifting energy throughout the programme.

Joanne Quah described her first experience reading from the pulpit as surreal. "I

felt calm, confident, and as though the Holy Spirit was with me. After returning home, I found a parking summons on my car, but instead of reacting with anger, I felt at peace, knowing everything would work out. This is how God's grace works in mysterious ways."

Consuela, who attended all three Go Missions, found the third session particularly special. She noted, "The main objective — to radiate Christ's love — was brought to life through concrete examples, particularly through Alvin and his prayer group. While we may not all be able to do what he does, I've learned that small deeds of kindness and charity can make a huge difference. The Praise and Worship session was gentle and soothing, fitting for someone like me who prefers quieter music. The River Jordan experience was also deeply moving and unforgettable."

Karen and Wendy expressed their gratitude for the stories, Praise and Worship, and the beautiful Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. "The entire event opened our

eyes to the everyday graces and miracles of God. Hearing the testimonies, especially from the young Bahasa couple who expressed their desire to serve the Lord, was truly inspiring. We hope more youth will join future missions. The hospitality of the Church of Sts Peter and Paul made this experience even more enriching."

The Go Mission event proved to be a spiritually uplifting experience for all involved, serving as a reminder that Christians are called to be on mission through simple acts of love, kindness, and empathy. The journey through the River Jordan and the powerful Praise and Worship sessions deeply touched many hearts and brought the community closer to God.

As the event concluded, participants were inspired to carry the mission of love and compassion into their daily lives, reflecting Christ to those around them. The hope is that this journey will encourage others to join and experience a similar transformation in their spiritual lives. **Cindy Varghese**



Fr Eugene Benedict with the Blessed Sacrament during the River Jordan experience.

# MJD permanent deacons' study day with the bishop

Deacon Dr Leslie Petrus

JOHOR BAHRU: On October 31, the permanent married deacons of the Malacca Johore Diocese convened at Majodi Centre for a study day with Bishop Bernard Paul. This gathering aimed to provide updates and facilitate reflections on the diaconate, particularly in the context of synodality. It also offered a valuable opportunity for fellowship among the permanent deacons and to spend quality time with the bishops.

The day began with morning *Lauds* and a period of silent reflection in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Following this, the study sessions commenced, focusing on the role and expectations of the permanent diaconate in the context of synodality. Bishop Bernard's personal approach and heartfelt sharing significantly impacted the deacons, making this study day truly memorable.

The first session focused on *Discernment in the Life of a Minister*. This process of discernment is founded on three



key principles: see, judge, and act. It is essential to be aware of our surroundings, understand the realities, and acknowledge true facts and knowledge. Awareness plays a crucial role in this process. Once we are informed, we must analyse the situation, seek expert advice, and utilise all available resources. Through prayer and reflection, we then act and respond. Cultivating discernment allows one to be more sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The second session addressed the topic of *Spiritual Conversation*. Engaging in spiritual conversation with the voice of the Holy Spirit fosters a deeper sense of faith and connection. As the Church embraces a synodal approach, the role of the permanent deacon in this process becomes crucial. Through the three steps of spiritual conversation, deacons are called to be bridge builders, listening to the people with an open heart. This means listening

attentively to understand others while withholding judgment. Such listening can be transformative for both the listener and the one being listened to, recognising the presence of God at work in each interaction.

In the third session on *Ministers for a Synodal Diocese*, Bishop Bernard emphasised the importance of the deacons taking their roles seriously, remaining faithful to their functions, and striving for holiness. This holiness can be at-

tained through a commitment to pastoral ministry, nourished by the Table and the Word. He also highlighted the significance of the Liturgy of the Hours, deepening one's prayer life, attending retreats, engaging in sacred studies, and seeking spiritual direction. Additionally, he encouraged the deacons to remain open to reassignments and changes as circumstances arise.

At the end of the sessions, the deacons were asked what radical changes the diocese, including the deacons, must embrace to become a synodal Church. From the spiritual conversation, three key points emerged as essential: authenticity, integrity, and humility.

Following the sessions, a Eucharistic celebration took place at the Chapel of St James, during which the deacons renewed their diacanal vows to Bishop Bernard and to the Church.

It was a memorable and special day, where each deacon, in their own unique way, experienced 'Encounter', 'Enlightenment', 'Empowerment', and a profound sense of being Evangelised.

## Pilgrim Cross, Mary icon journey through Goa parishes

PANAJI, India: A cross made of 198 pieces of wood and an icon of Mother Mary are now journeying through the parishes of the Archdiocese Goa-Daman.

"Each piece is of different size, colour and shape to show that each parish and people in the archdiocese are different but united in one cross," said Fr Jovial Fernandes, who made the cross.

The journey that began July 28 will end on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, at Talegao parish where the archdiocese will hold its diocesan youth day seven days later.

Frs Fernandes and Blaise Robert Lobo, the director of Goa's Diocesan Youth Centre, drew the idea from St John Paul II, who started the journey of the Pilgrim Cross

and icon of Mary for the World Youth Day.

Fr Fernandes said he used four different types of wood for the cross that consists of 198 pieces of wood, representing the parishes and chapels in the archdiocese.

The 34-year-old priest assisted his carpenter friend to cut the pieces.

It took 20 days to make the 5.5 feet high Pilgrim Cross.

The cross was blessed on July 28 by Auxiliary Bishop Simiao Fernandes of Goa and Daman before it began its journey through the 19 parish deaneries of the archdiocese.

The cross and portrait remain a week in every deanery, moving around the parishes. **Lissy Maruthanakuzhy, Matters India**



Pilgrim Cross

## Diocese bans *All Are Welcome*, other hymns from Catholic Masses

MISSOURI: The Diocese of Jefferson City, Missouri, will implement a formal ban on the singing of certain contemporary hymns at Mass because of doctrinal inaccuracies in their lyrics as well as a blanket ban on music by three Catholic composers who have been accused of misconduct.

Jefferson City appears to be the first US diocese to formally align its music practices with guidelines issued by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2020, which laid out a list of problematic hymns, faulting many of them for falling short in their presentation of the Church's teaching on the Eucharist.

In a decree dated October 24, Bishop W. Shawn McKnight listed a dozen commonly used but "doctrinally problematic" Catholic songs that will be "absolutely forbidden" in the diocese after November 1.

Most of the hymns were written in the 1980s or 1990s, with the oldest dating to the 1960s.

The list includes such songs as *All Are Welcome* by Marty Haugen; *God Has Chosen Me* by Bernadette Farrell; *Led By the Spirit* by Bob Hurd; and *Table of Plenty* by Dan Schutte.

The decree also forbids the use of any music composed by David Haas, Cesaréo Gabarain, and Ed Conlin due to credible accusations of abuse against them.

Haas' music, in particular, has already been dropped by a number of publishers and banned in

his longtime Archdiocese of Los Angeles since sexual harassment allegations against him surfaced in 2020. Gabarain, a deceased Spanish priest, has been accused of sexual abuse of minors.

According to the *Catholic Missouriian*, McKnight issued the decree following a "thorough process of study and review" by the Diocesan Liturgical Commission as well as consultation with the diocesan Presbyteral Council, made up of priests who are ministering throughout the diocese. McKnight said his goal is to encourage "full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy" through a common musical repertoire.

Fr Daniel Merz, pastor of two Columbia, Missouri, parishes and chairman of the diocesan liturgical commission, told the *Catholic Missouriian* that some hymns tend to overemphasise certain aspects of the Eucharist, such as its communal and social dimensions, while neglecting other crucial elements like the sacrifice, Real Presence, and need for personal conversion.

Merz underscored the importance of sacred music that elevates and inspires, calling people to a deeper relationship with God and a higher moral standard of living.

"[This decree] is all about providing good direction and guidance. We want to foster good music for our liturgies because we recognise that music is such an important part of how we worship

God and pass along the faith," Merz said.

A set of 2020 guidelines from the US bishops, *Catholic Hymnody at the Service of the Church*, lays out criteria for evaluating whether hymns sung at Mass are accurately conveying the truths that Catholics believe.

Emphasising the formative power of music and its influence on Catholics' understanding and practice of the faith, the document warns that hymns with inaccurate or incomplete theology can lead to a distorted understanding of key doctrines. The document notes that "over the years, concerns have been raised regarding the lyrics of hymns and songs used in the liturgy that may be misleading or lacking in substance."

It gives examples of hymns that convey Catholic belief accurately as well as ones that convey it inaccurately. For example, hymns that imply that the Eucharist is merely bread and wine, rather than the true body and blood of Jesus, have no place in a Catholic Mass, the bishops said.

On this point, instead of hymns like *Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees* and *All Are Welcome*, the document recommends hymns such as *Ave Verum Corpus* and *I Am the Bread of Life*.

The document also emphasised the importance of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, criticising hymns that seemed to show a "reluctance to use the word 'Father.'" **Jonah McKeown, CNA**

# Vatican publishes first report on Church safeguarding efforts

VATICAN: Ten years since its establishment, the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors releases a report compiled by a dedicated study group that conducted extensive research across five continents from Africa to Oceania. The report identifies progress in best practices as well as steps to be taken, calls for increased transparency in data collection, and highlights imbalances in local Churches regarding the availability of reporting structures and support services for victims.

The 50-page Annual Report on Church Policies and Procedures for Safeguarding by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors is the first in an annual series that aims to provide analysis of safeguarding measures in dioceses, Catholic organisations, and religious orders globally over the next five to six years.

Released on October 29, the inaugural report found that “a significant part of Central and South America, Africa, and Asia have inadequate dedicated resources” available for safeguarding efforts.

The pontifical commission also identified a “persistent concern regarding the transparency in the Roman Curia’s procedures and juridical processes,” noting that this lack of transparency is likely to “foment distrust among the faithful, especially the victim/survivor community.”

It pointed to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) in particular for its slow processing of cases and lengthy canonical proceedings, which it said can be a “source of re-traumatisation for victims.”

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors has been a part of the DDF since Pope Francis’ reform of the Roman Curia in 2022, yet the commission has frequently underlined its independence from the dicastery.

The commission also called for a dedicated advocate or ombudsman in the Vatican to assist victims and advocated for further study on compensation policies.

The report is not an audit of abuse incidents within the Church but rather a review of safeguarding policies and procedures. The com-



Pope Francis joins the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors in prayer at the Vatican on March 7, 2024. (Vatican Media)

mission indicated that future reports could evolve to include an audit function on the incidence of abuse, including measuring progress in reducing and preventing abuse.

The commission’s pilot report evaluated diocesan safeguarding practices in a dozen countries, including Mexico, Belgium, Cameroon, and Papua New Guinea, as well as two religious orders and across Caritas’ regional offices.

The commission’s findings varied across regions. While parts of Europe displayed advanced safeguarding practices, including trauma-informed support, regions such as Central and South America, Africa, and parts of Asia face significant challenges due to limited resources and inadequate training.

The commission cited critical obstacles, from cultural and financial barriers to shortages of trained personnel in areas like canon law and psychology.

In Papua New Guinea, funding constraints restrict training for safeguarding experts, and prohibitively expensive rape kits limit the ability to gather evidence for criminal investigations. A similar lack of trained experts in canon law and psychology impedes the work of Church safeguarding offices in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Zambia, meanwhile, faces cultural obstacles, such as a “patriarchal society” and “a culture of silence,” which prevent survivors, particularly young girls, from reporting abuse.

In Mexico, cultural barriers to reporting abuse also pose a significant hurdle to justice, according to the report.

In response to gaps in safeguarding resources, particularly in developing regions, the commission introduced the “Memorare Initiative,” inspired by a traditional prayer to the Virgin Mary. This programme aims to support the establishment of centres for abuse reporting and victim services in the Global South.

Other recommendations included streamlined procedures for removing Church leaders implicated in abuse or cover-ups, as well as policies promoting fair compensation for victims.

The report also suggested that the Vatican collaborate with pontifical universities to create specialised courses of study on safeguarding for clergy and Church workers.

The annual report also presents case studies on Caritas organisations: Caritas Internationalis at the universal level, Caritas Oceania at the regional level, Caritas Chile at the national level, and Caritas Nairobi at the diocesan level. The report acknowledges the

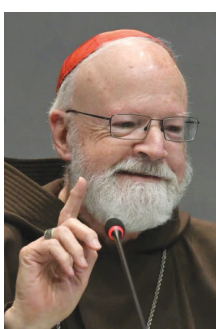
“great complexity” of Caritas’ mission and recent progress in safeguarding, while also noting “significant variations in safeguarding practices across different institutions,” a matter of concern for the Commission.

The Commission also acknowledges the importance of accompanying local Church leaders in the responsibility to implement preventive and responsive policies. It also promises “standardised data exchanges with the local bishops and religious superiors,” explaining that the review of safeguarding policies and procedures by bishops occurs through the *ad limina* process or at the special request of an Episcopal Conference or one of the Commission’s Regional Groups. Looking ahead, the commission plans to review between 15 and 20 bishops’ conferences per year during *ad limina* visits, with the goal of examining the entire Church over five to six years.

Pope Francis requested the commission to create the report in 2022. Cardinal Seán O’Malley, who has led the commission since it was established by Francis in 2014, emphasised that the annual reports are intended as both a tool for accountability and a step toward restoring trust in the Church’s commitment to safeguarding and transparency. **CNA/Vatican News**

## Church acknowledges damage of abuse but ‘celibacy is not the cause’

VATICAN: Cardinal Seán O’Malley *pic*, archbishop of Boston and president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, stressed that “celibacy is not the cause of pedophilia” but highlighted the need for more reforms within the Church to adopt a victim-centred approach to better safeguard children.



Following the presentation of the first annual report on safeguarding released by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors on October 29, O’Malley stated that he has “never seen any serious studies that have indicated that celibacy and sexual abuse is related.”

“Yes, we are aware of the incredible damage that [pedophilia] has done to the credibility of the Church and our ability to have a prophetic voice in society,” the cardinal said in response to a journalist’s question on a potential “link between celibacy and sex abuse” at the Oct 29 press briefing.

“And that only underscores the urgency of the Church to reform itself so that we can carry on Christ’s mission and be a sign of his love. And the kingdom of God is about justice and truth, and these are the core values that we’re talking about here,” he added.

Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, a jurist and international advocate for children’s rights who was appointed by Pope Francis as a member of

the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors in 2022, also stated that she did not see any relationship between celibacy and criminal sexual abuse against children.

“I don’t see any relationship,” she said. “Sexual relationships with children is a crime and the ones who commit this have a problem, which is related to their psychological state of mind.”

“There is no exception for this, no excuse for this crime. Children should be respected in their integrity — physical and moral. So whether celibate or not, it doesn’t matter. The

children should be protected,” she said.

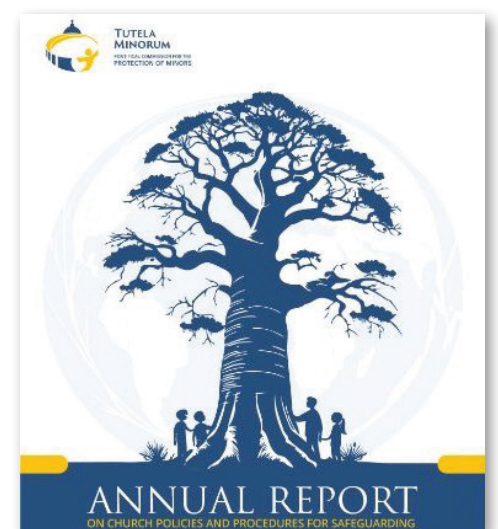
O’Malley stated that the goal of the pontifical commission, which he has headed since its establishment in 2014, is “to do everything possible” to address the lack of justice and recognition from people in the Church.

“Your suffering and wounds have opened our eyes to the fact that — as a Church — we have failed to care for victims, and that we didn’t defend you, and that we resisted understanding you when you needed us most,” he said at the Tuesday press briefing.

“We hope that this report — and those that will come — compiled with the help of victims and survivors at the centre, will help to ensure the firm commitment that these events never happen again in the Church.”

According to O’Malley the annual safeguarding report — which outlines the Vatican’s policies and procedures for the protection of minors — is intended to complement the commission’s advocacy role as well as support the work of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF).

“The work of the DDF is so central in the



Tutela Minorum annual report.

administration of justice in the area of sexual abuse, and our task is to try and bring a pastoral dimension to that and the voice of the victims,” the cardinal said.

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors marks its 10th anniversary this year. It is now a permanent institution within the Vatican tasked with accompanying and assisting local Churches’ safeguarding ministries through formation and training. **Kristina Millare, CNA**

# The conversions I had at the synod

As the Synod on Synodality was reaching its conclusion in Rome, I spoke with my *America* colleagues Zac Davis and Colleen Dulle for a joint recording for the “Jesuitical” and “Inside the Vatican” podcasts.

Colleen asked, “Do you feel the Holy Spirit present?” What instantly sprang to mind was an experience I had that day — a day before the close of the synod — when the delegates at my table were joking around: teasing one another, making bets on how many people would be in the hall that afternoon and protesting that they could not eat another of the chocolates I had brought that day, as I had done occasionally for the past few days. “Enough is enough!” thundered one cardinal-elect, laughing.

I told Colleen and Zac how much all this moved me. One year ago, I knew only one person at my table in the Paul VI Audience Hall: a US archbishop, and I did not know him well. But here we all were — people from Fiji, Indonesia, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, Serbia, the United States, Liberia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Tanzania — enjoying one another’s company. We were cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests and lay men and women. We had very different approaches to many pastoral issues. And while our Masses, liturgies and daily prayers were central to our experience, our roundtable conversations important and our coffee break conversations invaluable, it was this “down time” talk at the table that most signaled the presence of



Members of Table 25 (author on left) pose with Pope Francis in the Paul VI Aula on the final day of the Synod on Synodality. (Vatican News)

the Holy Spirit to me. “Joy,” as the saying attributed to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ goes — “is the most infallible sign of the Holy Spirit.”

## Synodality works

I was never a sceptic of synodality, as some Catholics were and still are. After all, I have always believed that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone, not just cardinals, bishops and priests, and that everyone’s voice matters. Plus, how could you be against a process that is rooted in the New Testament (the Council of Jerusalem was a synod), is present throughout church history (as in the

Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon), was revived by the Second Vatican Council and has been used frequently by popes like St John Paul II? I can, however, understand some of the concerns raised about the synod. If everything is up for discernment, what’s the point of tradition, not to mention dogma and doctrine?

But everything wasn’t up for discernment. None of us wanted to change a word in the Creed, to take the most basic example. Pope Francis’ invitation to us was to ask what the Holy Spirit might be saying to the people of God about all sorts of matters — which were raised in local parishes, dioceses, bishops’

conferences and “continental assemblies” — and which formed the basis for our working documents.

It was not until this second year, however, that I saw how effective the process was. Last year, Cardinal-elect Timothy Radcliffe, OP, started our retreat by quoting St John Paul II: “Affective collegiality precedes effective collegiality.” In other words, it is easier to speak about difficult topics with friends than with strangers.

This year, the conversations were indeed easier. We knew each other, so we could not only speak more easily but also challenge each other more comfortably. One lay woman from Southeast Asia said to me: “Last year I was so worried about speaking to a bishop! Now I’m more relaxed about it. I know he’s a human being like me.” This openness, as well as the playfulness and joy I described, was not simply because we were approaching the end of the synod (though many of us, exhausted after a month of intense work, were relieved). It was, to my mind, the work of the Holy Spirit, who brings people together. In his letter to the Ephesians, St Paul asks us to strive to “maintain the unity of the Spirit which is the bond of peace” (4:2). That spirit of unity seemed to draw all of us disparate Catholics together.

So I had a bit of a conversion during the synod: I am not only open to synodality, but I believe it is a powerful way to foster unity and encourage discernment in parishes, dioceses, bishops’ conferences and all sorts of Catholic groups.



## Change is slow in a universal Church

Another conversion I experienced concerned the universal church. I am sure everyone reading this is aware that the Church in Nairobi is different from the Church in New York. But until I spent two solid months, day in and day out, listening to Catholics from around the world, I could not fathom how different, and how difficult it is to recommend something that would be helpful or even doable in every setting. One example was a simple sentence that appeared in one of our documents, which highlighted the Sunday Mass as the centre of parish life. Sounds obvious, right? It was — until one person at our table from Oceania pointed out that in her country, priests are sometimes 500 miles away from their parishes, and so parishioners may have only Mass once a month. That made that statement about the Sunday Mass less “obvious.”

Over the past two years, every delegate has had the chance to see these profound differences among cultures, practices and pastoral approaches around the world. (It also made us all feel sympathy

for the Pope who governs a worldwide Church.) We were able to see the true, beautiful, confusing, mysterious and often overwhelming “Catholicity” of the Church. It also made me understand why things take so long to change. Here is one example: I went into the synod thinking a good deal about LGBTQ Catholics because of my ministry to this community. But I also saw how tremendously different the reception is for that issue worldwide. I knew this going in, but seeing it firsthand and meeting with other delegates helped me understand it on a deeper level. This helped me to see why “slow and steady” is probably the more realistic approach to change in the Church.

I even found myself using terms other than “LGBTQ” because I knew the acronym still raised hackles among a few of the delegates. After a plenary intervention on the topic, where I talked about reaching out to people with different “sexual orientations,” one archbishop said with a smile, “Fr James, have you learned diplomacy in the past year?” I said, “No, but I think I understand the Church a little better.”

This was something of a conversion for me, someone who likes things to move quickly. Many of us want things to progress rapidly in the Church, and sometimes they do, but because of that “catholicity,” more often change takes time. I have a greater appreciation for Pope Francis’ strong desire for unity, even as he encourages the Church to move forward along the synodal path.

And, as Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ the relator general of the synod, said, change takes time because the Holy Spirit needs time. Why? Because the Holy Spirit has to convert our hearts. “That normally takes time because we put up resistance,” he said. So while Catholics may not see change immediately, in time they will see a Church “where they count, where they are important, where their talents, their gifts, their life experiences, are important because they belong to the people of the baptised.”

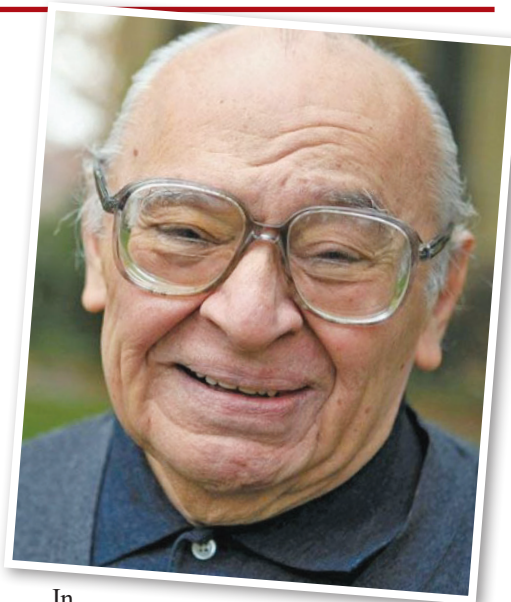
In the end, I realised that synodality works. It helps the Church to listen to everyone, trusting that the Holy Spirit has something to say through them, and it helps the Church to discern better. It is,

as we synod delegates wrote in our final document, a “path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary, so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the life of Christ.”

The big question is how to bring that spirit of openness, trust, confidence, patience and even playfulness into parishes and dioceses around the world. For me, the key is trust in the process; trust in the other person’s goodness, no matter how different they may seem and trust in the Holy Spirit’s desire for unity. The other key is patience in the Spirit’s work, which in this universal church, takes time.

On the final day of the synod, Pope Francis asked each of us to be ambassadors for synodality, but I hope that synodality itself, which asks us to become a more listening, inviting and welcoming Church, will itself help to convert people. If you step onto this path, maybe you will have a little conversion, too — and experience some of the radiant joy that we felt in the synod. **Fr James Martin, SJ, America**

# Scholars praise Fr Gustavo Gutiérrez's prophetic vision, theological influence



The overwhelming response in the United States to Dominican Fr Gustavo Gutiérrez's death October 22 at age 96 shows how the renowned Peruvian theologian's influence spread well beyond Latin America.

On Facebook alone, numerous clergy and laity posted tributes to Gutiérrez, whose 1971 book, *A Theology of Liberation* — considered one of the most influential theological texts of the 20th century — was a landmark in the development of liberation theology in Latin America and influenced similar theological movements, such as Black and feminist liberation theologies.

Sri Lankan Fr Rohan Dominic, the representative of the Claretians at the United Nations, wrote in an Oct 23 Facebook post that reading *A Theology of Liberation* during his formation years “was truly inspiring, creating an inner power to see and do things in a new way.” Dominic said Gutiérrez's “prophetic vision profoundly shaped me, teaching me to look at realities through new eyes and equipping me with tools for social analysis.”

“His message of God's preferential option for the poor and the call to transform unjust social structures has guided my missionary life ever since.” Dominic said he had hoped to meet the “great maestro” during a visit to Lima last year but was not able to.

Describing himself as “deeply moved by the news of his passing,” Dominic said that Gutiérrez's “legacy lives on in all who work for justice and liberation.”

In an interview with NCR, the Rev Kelly Brown Douglas, the canon theologian at the National Cathedral

in Washington, DC similarly said that Gutiérrez's work had tremendous reach. Even those theologians who did not make the poor central to their theology, she said, could not ignore the issue of economic poverty and injustices after Gutiérrez's contributions.

“He pointed out that poverty is not simply an economic problem. It's a moral problem” — an insight, she said, that is more relevant than ever.

She added: “You couldn't ignore Gustavo Gutiérrez,” calling him “a paradigm shifter.”

In a message to the staff of Orbis Books, editor and publisher Robert Ellsberg said that “apart from his historic contributions to the Church in Latin America and the emergence of liberation theology,” Gutiérrez's work and the theology he inspired “fundamentally transformed the work of theology in North America and throughout the world.”

Orbis, the publishing arm of the Maryknoll Society, published Gutiérrez's work in English.

Ellsberg added that Gutiérrez's theological project “is felt not only in the Church's embrace of the ‘preferential option for the poor,’ but in the many schools of contextual, post-colonial, and liberation theologies that

have emerged throughout the world.”

The Orbis publisher noted that Gutiérrez's work was often “subject to vilification and withering criticism both by many Church officials and even political figures.” But, he said, Gutiérrez “was patient and diligent in defending his work against his critics.” While the Peruvian theologian was long subjected to investigation by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, “in the end he was never singled out for reproach.”

A survey of Gutiérrez's writings makes clear why — they were always imbued with a deep sense of spirituality. *We Drink From Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, published in Spanish in 1983 and then published in English a year later by Orbis ends this way:

Spirituality is a community enterprise. It is the passage of a people through the solitude and dangers of the desert, as it carves out its own way in the following of Jesus Christ. This spiritual experience is the well from which we must drink. From it we draw the promise of resurrection.

Gutiérrez even “lived to see some vindication,” Ellsberg noted, with the conservative 2012-2017 prefect of the Vatican's doctrinal body, German Archbishop Gerhard Müller, becoming a “fan” and collaborator with Gutiérrez on the book *On the Side of the Poor*.

Moreover, to mark Gutiérrez's 90th birthday in 2018, Ellsberg noted that Pope Francis sent Gutiérrez celebratory greetings, thanking the Dominican priest “for what you have contributed to the Church and humanity

through your theological service and your preferential love for the poor and the discarded of society.”

In an introduction to a 50th anniversary edition of *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez acknowledged the various criticisms made of liberation theology. But he also took pride in the theology's impact, noting that it had “been welcomed with sympathy and hope by many and has contributed to the vitality of numerous undertakings in the service of Christian witness.”

Gutiérrez said debate about liberation theology within the Catholic Church at times caused “some painful moments at the personal level, usually for reasons that eventually pass away.”

But, Gutiérrez said, he welcomed the debate as an “enriching spiritual experience,” saying it proved to be “an opportunity to renew in depth our fidelity to the Church in which all of us as a community believe and hope in the Lord, as well as to reassert our solidarity with the poor, those privileged members of the reign of God.”

It was that solidarity which the University of Notre Dame celebrated in an Oct 23 online memorial tribute. Gutiérrez taught at

Notre Dame from 2001 to 2018 and at the time of his death was a professor emeritus of theology.

“Fr Gustavo was a beloved member of the Notre Dame community, and we join with his family and fellow Dominicans in giving thanks to God for his extraordinary life,” said Fr Robert Dowd, a Holy Cross father and Notre Dame's president.

“His invaluable contributions as a scholar and theologian and his commitment as a priest to living out the Gospel call are an inspiration to us all,” Dowd said.

In the Notre Dame memorial tribute, Holy Cross Fr Daniel Groody, a professor of theology and global affairs and vice president and associate provost for undergraduate education, said of Gutiérrez:

“The heart of *A Theology of Liberation* is God's love, God's life and God's creation. What was most important for Gustavo was not liberation theology, but the liberation of people. He combined a profound sense of the unmerited gift of God's love with the urgency of solidarity with those society considers the least important.”

Another American institution, Union Theological Seminary in New York City, similarly praised the Peruvian theologian, who was a visiting professor there during the 1976-77 academic year.

In a statement, the Rev Serene Jones, Union's president, said that Gutiérrez's “passing represents a tremendous loss for our community and the broader universe. Dr Gutierrez's incredible legacy lives on at Union and beyond through the many lives he continues to touch through his pioneering vision for the empowerment of the world's most marginalised and oppressed communities.”

Jones noted that liberation theology came “to contextualise the experiences of the poor, downtrodden, and oppressed.” She said that one of Union's most famous scholars, the late James Cone, a leading figure in the development of Black liberation theology, acknowledged that that theology was “a continuation of the conversations Gutiérrez began.”

Brown Douglas, who was a doctoral student of Cone's at Union, said that in those conversations, Gutiérrez's work was sometimes critiqued by Black and feminist theologians for its limitations in discussing race and gender issues. But, she added, Gutiérrez acknowledged those limitations and should be praised for developing the paradigm that made such critiques possible.

“I don't think any less of him for what he didn't say,” Brown Douglas said. “It's what he did say that matters. He gave us the paradigm to critique and do theology in a new way.”

She added: “It's our task to do the theology and push the boundaries that he started expanding.”

In an interview, David Lantigua, an associate professor of theology at Notre Dame and the co-director of Cushwa Centre for the Study of American Catholicism, said that one of the “real and lasting contributions of Gutiérrez's work is to really think about the option for the poor and the perspective of the poor in history. It has universal, global implications.”

He said that the work of Gutiérrez and other liberation theologians in the early 1970s were early critiques of an emerging global neoliberal capitalism — critiques that have since been embraced by the Vatican.

In the statement issued by Union Seminary, the Rev Sam Cruz, a professor of religion and society, said, “Gutiérrez prophetically called us to see how capitalism is lethal to people around the world and carrying a preferential option for the poor is where we will find God and God's people. With his passing during the times we are currently in, I am encouraged to hold his words even more true and continue his prophetic legacy.”

Lantigua, who studied with Gutiérrez as a doctoral student at Notre Dame, said that while the critique of capitalism was a cornerstone of Gutiérrez's thought, the depiction of Gutiérrez's work as politically driven “was not an accurate portrayal of his theology.”

Rather, he said, it was grounded in the idea of a “concrete encounter of the God of history through the poor, and being evangelised by the poor. This was essential for Gustavo.”

Ellsberg said that Gutiérrez was easily Orbis' best-selling author over the last 50 years. *A Theology of Liberation*, at 92,757 copies over three editions, remains his best-selling book. That would be followed, Ellsberg said, by *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, selling 49,764 copies, and *On Job*, at 44,685.

While Ellsberg recounted those numbers with pride, he said, “Those who knew Gustavo knew he was one of the kindest, humblest, most faithful disciples of Jesus that we have ever known. A brave, brilliant and holy man.”

Lantigua agreed, recalling his mentor as “incredibly humble. He was incredibly approachable. He had that way about him. He had a peace and joy about him that stood out.”

To Gutiérrez, “theology was a way of living” and best done in the company of friends, Lantigua said. “He was genuine, simple and [displayed] an endearing kind of friendship.”

“His humanity,” Brown Douglas said, “always came through in his theology.” **Chris Herlinger, NCR**

**Gutiérrez's theological project “is felt not only in the church's embrace of the ‘preferential option for the poor,’ but in the many schools of contextual, post-colonial, and liberation theologies that have emerged throughout the world.”**

*Robert Ellsberg*

**“I don't think any less of him for what he didn't say. It's what he did say that matters. He gave us the paradigm to critique and do theology in a new way.”**

*Brown Douglas*

Vincent D'Silva

**J**OHOR BAHRU: Villa Paulos is more than just an orphanage — it is a sanctuary of love and hope for children aged 7 to 17 who have been orphaned or come from impoverished backgrounds. Since opening its doors in 2008, Villa Paulos has not only offered shelter but has become a true home, where each child's growth and progress are nurtured with care. With a heartfelt vision, the home strives to create a peaceful environment, dedicated to guiding these young, bright souls through education and spiritual support, helping them blossom for the glory of God.

Speaking to *Apakhabar TV*, Paul Netto, chairman of Villa Paulos, shared, "We provide not just a home, but a haven of peace where each child is embraced as our own." Once a child enters Villa Paulos, he said, they are no longer orphans but cherished members of a much larger family.

Paul emphasised that the home is equipped with exceptional facilities and dedicated staff. "We have a committed team of educators and tutors to support the children's academic journey, ensuring that each one receives the guidance they need after school," he remarked. From handling the administrative tasks necessary for their schooling, to organising extra classes and tuition, the home goes above



Monthly birthday celebrations for the children are never missed.

and beyond to guarantee the best educational experience for every child.

"The staff at Villa Paulos pour their hearts into ensuring no child is left behind. They not only shape academic success but also nurture the children's character, instilling in them the values, motivation, and discipline they need to flourish," Paul affirmed.

Paul was candid in expressing that Villa Paulos places a strong emphasis on character development, believing that with the right blend of academic learning and life skills, these children will be well-prepared to spread their wings and embark

on fulfilling careers. "We strive to prepare them for a life of independence, where they can thrive with confidence," he said.

However, the home faces financial challenges and is in desperate need of funds to continue its vital work. Accommodating up to 35 children at a time, the monthly expenses total RM22,000, covering wages, provisions, school expenses, utilities, and vehicle maintenance. To address this, Villa Paulos, with the support of language groups from the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru, will be organising a Family Day on November 30 to raise RM200,000. The funds will go towards 'Back to School' essentials and sustaining the home's ongoing needs.

Paul encouraged the public to purchase RM50 coupons, available from Villa Paulos or through direct contact with him at: 016 7525218 or Iris Leong at: 016 7484283.

"Many of these children come from broken homes or are raised by single mothers. We hope to raise enough to cover salaries, bills, and other necessities for their well-being," he explained.

Running an orphanage is no small feat, and Paul acknowledges the heavy reliance on public generosity. He urged the community to step forward in these challenging times and help Villa Paulos continue to provide love and care to the children. Visitors are welcome, though prior arrangements must be made.

"The greatest gift you can offer an orphan is love," Paul emphasised. "A simple word of care can offer more comfort than any monetary donation, and in giving love, we expand our own hearts."

He beautifully articulated the power of selflessness, stating, "There is nothing more beautiful than making life better for others. Happiness doesn't come from what we possess, but from what we share. We make a living by what we get, but we create a life by what we give."

At Villa Paulos, the children are given the best opportunities. "We equip them with the skills to unlock their potential, become employable, and contribute to society," Paul said, highlighting education as a pillar in their upbringing.

He reflected on the hardship of children abandoned by their parents. "Most kids are nurtured and loved by both parents — a privilege denied to these orphans, who must rebuild their lives without such support," he shared.

Reflecting on the struggles faced by children who have been abandoned or left without parental care, Paul acknowledged that while their journey is often fraught with challenges, there is hope. "Many great individuals — like Nelson Mandela, Edgar Allan Poe, and Leo Tolstoy — once walked this difficult path. Their lives stand as a testament that even the hardest circumstances can be transformed into greatness."



# A Home of hope, heart and love



Routine medical check-ups are conducted by visiting doctors.

## Nun honoured for decades-long service to Indigenous People in the Philippines

**MANILA:** A Franciscan nun has been named the recipient of the 2024 St Teresa of Calcutta Award for her nearly three-decade-long commitment to the Indigenous Agta community in the northern Philippine province of Cagayan.

Sr Minerva Caampued of the Franciscan Apostolic Sisters was recognised for her dedicated service to the Indigenous people of Sta Ana town, where she has worked to preserve their heritage while promoting education and sustainable livelihoods.

The award, established in 1983 by the AY Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Yuchengco Group of Companies, and the Manila Jaycees, celebrates outstanding individuals whose selfless service reflects the charitable legacy of Mother Teresa.

The awarding organisations praised Sr Minerva's comprehensive efforts in uplifting Agta's quality of life through various initiatives, according to a report by

*CBCP News.*

"She remains a shining example of compassion, inspiring hope, and transformation—elevating lives through selfless service," the organisation said.

Her programmes encompass education, environmental protection, healthcare, and feeding initiatives, with the goal of addressing the marginalisation faced by the Indigenous community.

Sr Minerva shared her gratitude, dedicating the recognition to the Agta people. "I am not called to be successful, but to be faithful," she said.

"I dedicate it to the Agta communities, who continue to face the challenges of defending their ancestral domain, asserting their rights, and preserving their rich cultural heritage amidst marginalisation," she said.

"Their strength and resilience are a constant source of inspiration to me. This award is not mine alone, but a tribute to

their unwavering spirit," the nun added.

Sr Minerva emphasised the persistent challenges indigenous communities in the Philippines encounter, particularly the struggle to protect their ancestral lands from external threats.

She noted that the recognition was especially meaningful during Indigenous Peoples' Month. Drawing inspiration from the life and ministry of St Teresa of Calcutta and the teachings of St Francis of Assisi, she reaffirmed the commitment to continue supporting marginalised groups, including indigenous people, and to persist in the mission of serving those in need.

The St Teresa of Calcutta Award, named after the renowned humanitarian who was



Sr Minerva Caampued is seen with Agta children in Cagayan in this undated photo, showcasing her long-standing commitment to the indigenous community. (Sr Caampued's Facebook account)

awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, seeks to honour individuals who embody the spirit of service and compassion. **LiCAS News**

Growing up in the public school system, my brother Chris and I both had special friends through our secondary years. Mine was Harlizawati, while Chris' buddy was Azizi, a rangy, wiry kid who loved sports and was burnt to a deep mahogany brown from the time he spent on the football field and running track. Azizi hung out at our house a lot, and was well-loved by the family for his easy-going manner and eagerness to help. He had a big, broad smile which took over most of his face, resulting in his nickname, 'Gigi' (teeth).

Unlike Harliza who moved away from Kampung Kerinchi when she married, Gigi continued to live with his mother. He remains unmarried, and is a loving, dutiful son to his ageing remaining parent. The only thing that has changed in the near 30 years since he and my brother left La Salle Brickfields has been Gigi's weight. A series of sports mishaps have caused him to be unable to do the sports he loves, and this inactivity has made him gain weight.

As the owner of an editorial provisions firm, I am sometimes in need of photographers for projects. Gigi had become a photographer after training in graphic design. I engaged him for a project, and was happy to see the commitment which defined him in his teens continued in his professional life. However, on the next, markedly bigger and more exhausting project, I found that my old friend struggled with having to run between venues to take photos. By the end of a long day, he was hobbling, his feet throbbing in their too-tight sneakers. Yet, he was as cheerful and as earnest as ever, insisting he was okay to continue with the job the next day. Knowing the days that followed would be even more fast paced, I antagonised about what to do. In the end, though it was unplanned for, I hired another photographer

# Love in all sizes

on the pretext that the client was pushing for the photos and that two shutterbugs on the job would allow Gigi to stay in one location, sit down and process the photos taken at that venue while I ran ahead with the other cameraman for the next series of shots.

After the project ended, Gigi sent me an invoice for an amount that was 30 per cent less than the fee we had agreed on. When I called him to tease him that he was getting old and had forgotten the actual fee, he told me that he knew he had slowed down the process and knew that another photographer had not been budgeted for. He was lowering his fee to defray my costs.

I refused to entertain any talk of such a thing and told my old friend as much. As it turned out, the client was very pleased at the work produced and asked specifically who shot some particular photos. They were Gigi's, and he was asked to take on another assignment which was far less strenuous than the first. From that project's earnings he gave me back the cost of hiring the extra photographer, and expressed his thanks for my subtly helping him out.

It was hard, he said, to be limited by how heavy he was and how cumbersome the weight was in some photographic situations. He confessed that he had been desperate for work at the very time I asked him to come aboard the project, because his mother's hospital bills had been higher than expected.



## Word in Progress

KAREN-MICHAELA TAN

He also shared how ashamed he felt when he was passed over for jobs because clients needed a more agile or quick-moving photographer.

In this age of body shaming, it is so common that people with weight issues are painted collectively as having no self-control, with tendencies towards gluttony and sloth. There are no accounts in the Bible about overweight people aside from the obscure king Eglon of Moab in the book of Judges, so I do wonder

what Jesus would have thought about the epidemic of obesity sweeping the world today. Would He have equated girth with laziness, or condemned an obese person for greed?

When Jesus was asked of the blind man in John 9:1-5, "Who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

While not equating obesity with a condition as debilitating as spina bifida, or as life shortening as sickle-cell anaemia, obesity sufferers can be both pitied or condemned depending on the person in judgement. I question why there needs to be a defence of the way we address obesity if it is an illness or a disability the same as blindness.

I reckon that while blindness is viewed as a tragedy (because who wittingly stabs themselves in the eye with a sharp object?),

obesity is viewed as the result of individuals who lack the ability to stop eating. This is where most of the unforgiveness comes in. Questions like 'why don't you just stop eating?' or statements like 'exercise more' belie the complexities of the condition.

Obesity is a multifactorial disease. A disease. Not something that happens to someone who likes their *Twisties* a little too much. It can be caused by a lifetime of subsistence on cheap, ultra processed foods because a person or family lives in such economic insecurity that even if there was the availability of fresh vegetables and meat, the lack of proper cooking facilities, or even cooking gas might make it impossible to prepare healthier food.

The packing on of weight can also be psychiatric. Women who have been sexually abused have been known to eat themselves into a protective shell of fat so as to make themselves abhorrent to men, thus preventing the likelihood of another physical attack. Less than healthy coping mechanisms, reactions to stress and a slew of other mental health conditions can also drag a person down to the underworld of obesity.

Our challenge as Christians is not to judge. Even if our inner Pharisee brands an obese person a drain on society and a waste of health care resources, as followers of Jesus we are taught to have compassion. For underneath the extra weight is a person made in the image and likeness of God who deserves the chance to make a sustainable living for themselves and their dependents, and be judged on the merit of their work and not their size.

*Karen-Michaela Tan is a poet, writer and editor who seeks out God's presence in the human condition and looks for ways to put the Word of God into real action.*

## Mental health, work and the workplace

Jane (not her real name) sought treatment for anxiety and depression after experiencing severe stress at her workplace. Her superior was unkind to her and was harassing her. She was deprived of a proper workstation and a personal computer, and she was often humiliated by her superior in front of her colleagues.

John (not his real name) was diagnosed to have mixed anxiety and depressive disorder by a psychiatrist

after he experienced stress at his workplace. He was good at his work but an increasing workload, including added responsibilities because of a promotion, was burdening him. In addition to depression and generalised anxiety, he also suffered from panic attacks.

Jane and John are typical examples of people suffering from mental health disorders because of stress in the workplace.

The theme for World Mental Health Day 2024 is *It's Time to Prioritise Mental Health in the Workplace*. This year's theme recognises the increasing trend of people suffering from mental health disorders in the workplace.

The most common reasons for stress, anxiety and depression occurring in people at the workplace are an unmanageable workload, difficulty in adapting to new roles and responsibilities, interpersonal difficulties with colleagues, superiors and subordinates, and difficulty in managing changes at work. An example of such a change is the transition from working from home to a return to working on-site, as is the norm after the COVID-19 pandemic. Another



## Informed Opinion

PROF XAVIER V. PEREIRA

difficult change is the transition of working with hard copies or handwritten documents to soft copies or online documents.

Many companies, especially MNCs (Multi-National Companies), are addressing this issue of stress and mental health challenges among their employees by providing Employee Assistant Programme (EAP) services. EAP services allow staff to access counsellors and clinical psychologists. Some companies also provide medical insurance so that their staff

can access psychiatric help. It is common these days for institutions and companies to conduct stress management and mental health awareness programs. These programs assist employees to manage their stress and identify symptoms of mental health disorders early. Early intervention in addressing mental health disorders provides a better outcome to treatment.

At times individuals who are diagnosed with more severe forms of mental health disorders require a long period of rest in addition to treatment. I often recommend Prolonged Illness Leave of about three to six months for such individuals. The first three to six months of Prolonged Illness Leave is often fully paid medical leave. Rest and treatment allow individuals to fully recover and return to work.

Certain groups of people are more often exposed to unfavourable work conditions than others. These individuals often suffer both physically and mentally. One such group are junior doctors.

Junior doctors often work in challenging circumstances. I can personally vouch that

the most difficult period of my working life was when I was a junior doctor. It has been reported that the dropout rate among Malaysian house officers is about 30 per cent. A heavy workload, insufficient rest, burnout and bullying by senior doctors are some of the contributory factors to mental ill health. There are now specialised services to cater for house officers and medical officers who experience mental health challenges. This is a proactive step by the Ministry of Health to assist junior doctors manage stress, receive counselling, and psychological therapy, and access psychiatric treatment.

Another group of people who are exposed to very trying work conditions are migrant workers. Migrant workers have become the mainstay of the labour force in many middle- and high-income countries and often are involved in the three D jobs, which are Dirty, Demanding and Dangerous. The plight of migrant workers was thrown into the spotlight during the preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. Many human rights groups called for a boycott of the World Cup because of the deplorable conditions that the construction workers had to work and live in. Many workers suffered physically and mentally, and some died. This forced the Qatari government to take measures to address the welfare of the workers. Thankfully these measures were effective in reducing morbidity and mortality amongst the workers.

Migrant workers are often exploited and are deprived of their rights to good working and living conditions in many countries across the globe. Advocacy plays an essential role in ensuring that these rights are upheld. NGOs have advocated for migrant workers over the years, pushing

for the state to take on the responsibility of ensuring good working and living conditions for migrant workers.

Slavery is the worst form of forced work or labour and has been prevalent since the beginning of human existence. In the Bible, the book of Exodus details the story of Moses leading the Hebrew people, who were slaves in Egypt, out of captivity. These slaves endured much physical and mental suffering.

Shockingly, modern-day slavery exists, it refers to institutional slavery that continues to occur in present-day society. The International Labour Organisation estimated that close to 40 million people are in some form of slavery today. These include people who are in domestic work, work in construction, and agriculture. Many are also in forced sexual exploitation and forced labour imposed by state authorities.

Modern-day slavery is inhumane and strips a person of his or her dignity. It is often associated with human trafficking and the experience of severe stress and trauma that can result in mental health disorders like PTSD, Anxiety, Depression and Self-Harm (*Human Trafficking and Mental Health: A Primer*, Pereira XV, Verghis S, 2016)

Human trafficking and modern-day slavery need to be abolished.

It is also imperative that we promote mental health in the workplace and provide healthy work environments for all.

*Xavier V. Pereira is a medical doctor, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, and an adjunct professor at Taylor's University School of Medicine. He is also co-founder, director and pro bono psychiatrist of Health Equity Initiatives, an NGO that serves refugees with mental health challenges.*



Fr Ron Rolheiser

# A universal creed

Creeds ground us. Within a short formula they summarise the main tenets of our faith and keep us mindful of the truths that anchor us.

As a Christian, I pray two creeds, *The Apostles' Creed* and *The Nicene Creed*. But I also pray another creed which grounds me in some deep truths which are not always sufficiently recognized as inherent in our Christian creeds. This creed, given in the Epistle to the Ephesians, is stunningly brief and simply reads: *There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God who is Father of us all.*

That's a lot in a few words! This creed, while Christian, takes in all denominations, all faiths, and all sincere persons everywhere. Everyone on the planet can pray this creed because ultimately there is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who created and loves us all.

This has far-reaching consequences for how we understand God, other Christian denominations, other faiths, sincere non-believers, and ourselves. There is only one God, no matter our denomination, particular faith, or no explicit faith at all. The one same God is the loving creator and parent of everyone. And that one God has no favourites, doesn't dislike certain persons, denominations, or faiths, and never disdains goodness or sincerity, no matter their particular religious or secular cloak.

And these are some of the consequenc-

es: First, Jesus assures us that God is the author of all that is good. In addition, as Christians we believe that God has certain transcendental attributes, namely, God is *one, true, good, and beautiful*. If that is true (and how could it be otherwise?), then everything we see in our world that is integral, true, good, or beautiful, whatever its outward label (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, New Age, Neo-Pagan, or purely Secular), comes from God and must be honoured.

John Muir once challenged Christianity with this question: *Why are Christians so reluctant to let animals into their stinky heaven?* The creed in the Epistle to the Ephesians asks something similar: *Why are Christians so reluctant to let other denominations, other faiths, and good sincere people without explicit faith into our stinky concept of God, Christ, faith, and the Church? Why are we afraid of faith fellowship with Christians of other denominations? Why are we afraid of faith fellowship with sincere Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and New Age religious? Why are we afraid of paganism? Why are we afraid of natural sacraments?*

There can be good reasons. First, we do need to safeguard precisely the truths expressed in our creeds and not slide into an amorphous syncretism in which everything is relative, where all truths and all

religions are equal, and the only dogmatic requirement is that we be nice to each other. Although there is, in fact, something (religious) to be said about being nice to each other, the more important point is that embracing each other in faith fellowship is not saying that all faiths are equal and that one's particular denomination or faith tradition is unimportant. Rather, it is acknowledging (importantly) that, at the end of the day, we are all one family, under one God, and that we need to embrace each other as brothers and sisters. Despite our differences, we all have the same radical creed.

Then too, as Christians, we believe that Christ is the unique mediator between God and ourselves. As Jesus puts it, *no one goes to the Father, except through Me*. If that is true, and as Christians we hold that as dogma, then where does that leave Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists, Jews, Muslims, New Agers, Neo-Pagans, and sincere non-believers? How do they share the kingdom with us Christians since they do not believe in Christ?

As Christians, we have always had answers to that question. The Catholic catechisms of my youth spoke of a "baptism of desire" as a way of entry into the mystery of Christ. Karl Rahner spoke of sincere persons being "anonymous Christians". Frank de Graeve spoke of a reality he called "*Christ-ianity*", as a mystery wider

than historical "*Christianity*"; and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin spoke of Christ as being the final anthropological and cosmological structure within the evolutionary process itself. What all of these are saying is that the mystery of Christ cannot be identified simplistically with the historical Christian churches. The mystery of Christ works through the historical Christian churches but also works, and works widely, outside of our churches and outside the circles of explicit faith.

Christ is God and therefore is found wherever anyone is in the presence of oneness, truth, goodness, and beauty. Kenneth Cragg, after many years as a missionary with the Muslims, suggested that it is going to take all the religions of the world to give full expression to the full Christ.

*There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God who is Father of us all*—and so we should not be so reluctant to let others, not of our own kind, into our stinky heaven.

**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)**

## Reaching the oasis of prayer means accepting the sands of the spiritual desert



The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides a beautiful summary of the different ways of praying. After summarising the different approaches, the heart can use to reach God, the *Catechism* provides an entire chapter on the tradition of prayer.

Whenever we pray as believers, we do not pray alone. We are united with all other believers, both with those who are living in this life and those who have gone to eternity. When we pray, we join the long line of those who sought to walk the difficult path of the interior life. Since they have reached the destination of heaven, we can rely on their witness, teachings, methods, and wisdom to pursue and seek to learn the way of prayer.

The *Catechism* is not coy with us. It has an honesty at times that borders on bluntness. When it comes to the spiritual life, there is no room for fluff. The stakes are too high and the demands are too real to be coddled.

The *Catechism* teaches: "Prayer cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring

of interior impulse: in order to pray, one must have the will to pray."

If we want to pray, we need to accept the tradition of prayer, learn from those who have mastered the art of prayer, and allow our wills to be strengthened by a desire and discipline for prayer.

The desire to pray is a good beginning. It is an initiative of God, as He calls us to speak and listen to Him. But desire by itself will not carry the demands of interior life. We also need discipline. We need the will to pray.

As the Lord Jesus taught us, we need to put our hand to the plough and not look back.

The idea of needing discipline for prayer can shatter the fantasy and idealism that sometimes surrounds the notion of prayer. While some euphoria can be good initially, it needs to be matured and fortified if it's going to persevere through the purgative way of prayer.

The *Catechism* further teaches: "Nor is it enough to know what the Scriptures reveal about prayer: one must also learn

how to pray. Through a living transmission (Sacred Tradition) within 'the believing and praying Church,' the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God how to pray."

By learning from the Sacred Scriptures and by placing ourselves within the living tradition of the Church, we allow ourselves to encounter the Holy Spirit and enter into his school of prayer. The Spirit wants to instruct and guide us in the ways of God. He wants to reveal and teach us the mystery and the methods of prayer. The Spirit is present within the sources of God's revelation and within our own hearts as we humble ourselves and seek to be taught and disciplined in the way of prayer.

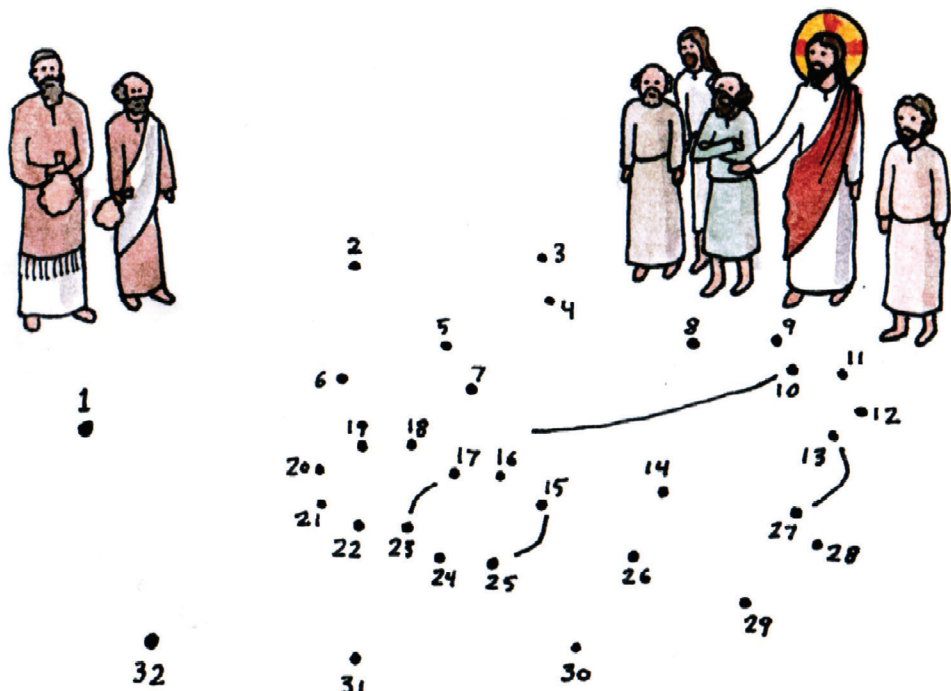
The *Catechism* explains: "The tradition of Christian prayer is one of how the tradition of faith takes shape and grows, especially through the contemplation and study of believers who treasure in their hearts the events and words of the economy of salvation, and through their profound grasp of the spiritual realities they experience."

The tradition of prayer gives impetus

and structure to the tradition of faith. Believers can grow in both prayer and faith by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead them through the twists and turns of the interior life. When we accept the call and begin to reflect upon the revelations of God—upon His deeds and words in the midst of the human family—we are spiritually accompanied by the holy ones and the people of prayer before us who meditated and reflected upon those same revelations.

As we dive into the revelations of God, we experience God Himself. We see how He speaks and how He acts. The ways of God are not strange to us, but become a part of us and the way we speak, think, and act. As we drink from the oasis of prayer and accept the sands of the spiritual desert that comes with it, we are given an extreme access to God and an innermost, incommunicable understanding of who He is. Through the discipline and consolations of prayer, we are able to touch the Face of God and to know of His immense love for us and for all creation. **Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, Crux**

# Little Catholics' corner



Mark 12:38-44

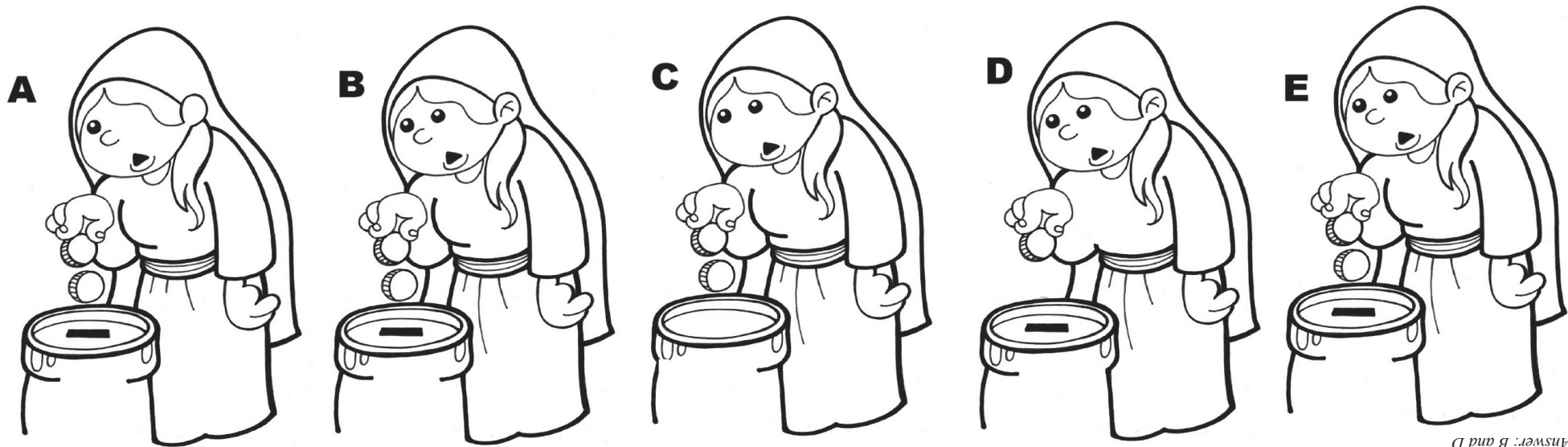


In today's Gospel reading Jesus saw a poor woman putting everything she had into the Temple treasury. How much was it? Connect the dots to find out!

**Let's Colour**

**The Widow's Mite**  
(Mark 12: 38-44)

Look carefully at the picture below. There are two identical images. Can you identify them?



Answer: B and D

Dear children,  
The Gospel reading this Sunday tells us a story about Jesus and His disciples, who were sitting in the temple, watching people drop their money in the offering box. As they watched the people come by, they saw some who were rich putting in large amounts of money.

The disciples were very impressed to see the large offerings the rich people gave. Then along came a poor widow. She put just a small amount into the box. When Jesus saw her, He called His disciples together and said, "This poor widow has given more than all the others have given. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has."

Children, when we give our offerings of money or time or talent to God, He doesn't compare our offerings to those of other people. Some of us have more time or more money than others to begin with. God looks at what we have to start with, and God looks at the attitude we have about giving. When we give with a generous and thankful heart, God is pleased and happy with us. I am glad that God doesn't judge us by how much money we have, aren't you?

Love  
Aunty Eliz



# CHOICE Asia 17th Conference

## Behold I Make All Things New

**R**AWANG: CHOICE Asia held its 17th CHOICE Asia Conference (CAC) from October 9 to 13 at the MBS Recreation and Training Centre. With the theme Behold I Make All Things New, the event brought together 146 young adults from eight countries — Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and Fiji.

The event was organised by a dedicated team of 43 young adults, couples, and priests from West and East Malaysia, with guidance from Archbishop Julian Leow and Archbishop Simon Poh.

The conference began with Mass celebrated by ASAYO Director Fr Simon Lau, joined by local priests and visiting clergy from the participating countries.

Enlightening input sessions featured Fr Francis Andrew, who presented *Christus Vivit: Choosing Life in Christ through CHOICE*, and Sr Retta Savarianna FDCC, who explored *Theology of the Body: Life's Meaning as a Gift of Self*. These sessions provided profound insights, encouraging participants to embrace a deeper faith-driven purpose.

On October 11, Archbishop Simon Poh travelled from Kuching, Sarawak, to meet the participants. Archbishop Simon is the bishop-in-charge of the Episcopal Commission for Youth of which CHOICE is a part of. The prelate joined them for a visit to the Church of the Holy Rosary, Brickfields. The delegates



then continued their tour to Central Market and Petaling Street.

In discussions held at the conference, participants shared their challenges in promoting CHOICE within their respective countries, exchanging ideas on innovative ways to engage young adults.

The following day saw delegates delve deeper into country-specific issues, while others participated in the *Make a Difference* (MAD) Project, held at Pusat Penjagaan Kanak-Kanak Cacat and PERCH. Here, they interacted with residents, assisted with colouring activities, and engaged in cleaning, gardening, and painting, fostering a spirit of compassion and service.

The event concluded with Mass celebrated by Fr Martin Arlando from the Diocese of Penang, followed by a handover ceremony from the outgoing CHOICE Asia team (Taiwan) to Malaysia. The Gala Cultural Night Dinner rounded off the conference, featuring vibrant performances from participants that highlighted local and international culture.

The CHOICE Asia Conference concluded on October 13 with a final Mass led by CHOICE Indonesia. The 18th CHOICE Asia Conference will be hosted by Singapore in 2027, promising continued growth and inspiration for single adults across Asia.

**C**HOICE is a single adult ministry under the Episcopal Commission for Youth in Malaysia, overseen by Archbishop Simon Poh as the bishop-in-charge. Earlier some dioceses placed CHOICE under the Family Life Commission. However, during the MCYMC meeting in Miri last year, Archbishop Simon proposed a return to CHOICE's original vision within youth ministry. This vision recognises that youth ministry serves not only students and campus youth but also working young adults who are not yet married.

CHOICE provides pastoral care for single working adults, offering CHOICE weekends that support their spiritual and community needs. Consequently, it is now under the Youth Office rather than Family Ministry, where single adults can find support until they transition to pre-marriage and engagement programmes as they prepare for family life. This approach mirrors the structure in the KL Archdiocese's ASAYO, which serves single adults, including young working Catholics.

In alignment with this vision, Archbishop Simon and diocesan youth ministers have agreed to place CHOICE within each diocese's youth commission, where it is seen as an integral part of youth ministry rather than as an independent group. Archbishop Simon himself has been actively involved in CHOICE since 1986, presenting across languages in various dioceses and continuing to support the ministry after his appointment as bishop in 2015.

This renewed structure ensures the Youth Commission's support for young Catholics at every stage—"from school to campus, and into working life as a Catholic youth."



# “Vocation Weekend Away”

## Bro Pius Kallang, OFM Cap

CHERAS: The Church of St Francis of Assisi became a vibrant gathering place for the Archdiocesan Vocation Promotion Team’s “Vocation Weekend Away,” welcoming 48 participants from across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. The camp, held October 25 to 27, helped the participants explore their unique calling through various sessions and discussions.

The participants were from the parishes of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mentakab; St Jude, Rawang; St Paul the Hermit, Bestari Jaya; Assumption, Petaling Jaya; St Ignatius, Kelana Jaya; St Francis of Assisi; Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam; Holy Redeemer, Klang; Our Lady of Fatima, Brickfields; Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang; Sacred

Heart, Jalan Peel; and St Anthony, in Kuala Lumpur. Additionally, there was one participant from St Joseph, Bidor, Perak.

The weekend provided insights into diverse vocations within the Catholic Church such as the priesthood, religious life, married life, and single blessedness. Fr Albert Tan, SJ, shared practical tools such as the Examen and Ignatian discernment principles to help them discern their calling, emphasising that each vocation is a pathway to serving God and the community.

The weekend was also a unique opportunity for participants to hear inspiring vocation stories from the religious sisters, diocesan and religious priests, a married couple, and the auxiliaries. This firsthand sharing



Religious sister and diocesan priest sharing their vocation stories.

fostered a supportive environment where participants could ask questions and connect deeply with others on their faith journeys.

One participant, Rachel from the Church of the Divine Mercy, reflected on the experience, sharing, “Vocation is a unique calling for everyone. I hope in the future, even more congregations and groups can join us to broaden the experience.”

Matthew from the Church of the Sacred Heart expressed a similar sentiment, encouraging other young people to join future retreats. “More young people should seriously consider joining in the future and not be afraid,” he said, adding that he found the

experience to be both welcoming and transformative.

Another attendee, Hendrick, also from Sacred Heart parish, admitted he wasn’t sure what to expect at first but left feeling grateful for the experience. “This camp is eye-opening,” he shared.

As the weekend concluded, participants left with a renewed sense of commitment and community, feeling supported and inspired to continue their faith journeys. Buoyed by the success of this event, the Archdiocesan Vocation Promotion Team hopes to make Vocation Weekend Away an annual gathering, inviting more young people to explore their faith and discover how they are called to serve.



SHAH ALAM: The youth of the Church of the Divine Mercy Shah Alam (CDM) came together on October 12 to host RISE UP, a special youth experience designed to reignite faith and foster a strong sense of community among young people. Held in St. Faustina Hall, the event drew 67 participants, aged 18 to 35, primarily from CDM and surrounding parishes, all eager to reconnect with their faith in an engaging, supportive environment.

The day began with a warm welcome, as participants registered at 9:00 am and enjoyed light refreshments at the cafeteria. Emcees Raphael John and Faustina, from the organizing team, then set the tone with a short briefing, outlining ground rules and the day’s schedule. Highlights included sessions led by two main facilitators, team-building games, and lively praise and worship led by the Cornerstone Disciples. The day concluded with a rosary session and Mass, where the newly formed Youth Core team were commissioned by parish priest, Fr George Harrison.

Reflecting on the day, participants and a parent shared their heartfelt experiences: “I met a participant today after RISE UP, and he said it was a profound experience... thanking God for each of you who, as one body, helped touch the hearts of all who came to encounter Him.”

“It’s an incredible mission! I really wanted my daughter to attend, and she came because a friend invited her. Afterward, she shared how much she enjoyed the sessions and music. It was an answered prayer.”

“Attending RISE UP was unforgettable! From the moment I arrived, I felt a sense of belonging. Seeing familiar faces was comforting, and soon I met new friends who shared their unique perspectives. Through worship, fellowship, and prayer,

# “RISE UP” to reconnect youth with faith and community



I felt Jesus’ touch in my heart. I left with a renewed spirit and so much joy, grateful for this faith community.”

For the organising team, the overwhelming response and positive feedback were a testament to the success of RISE UP. Energised by this experience, the newly commissioned CDM Youth Core team is already planning future events to continue their mission of connecting young people with their faith and nurturing a supportive, faith-driven community.



Group sharing.



Praise and worship.

# She was “amma” to hundreds of Muslim women

MANGALURU: Church leaders have mourned the death of a well-known social worker and reformer, who had become “amma” (mother) to hundreds of women, mostly Muslims, in Kerala’s Malappuram district.

Apostolic Carmel Sister Marienie succumbed to cancer on October 21 at a private hospital in Kozhikode, Kerala. She was 58.

“Her passion for the people of Nilambur [Kerala] was palpable in everything she dreamt and did for them,” said Sr Maria Nirmalini, Apostolic Carmel superior general.

Sr Marienie was a crusader of women’s empowerment in Nilambur, a town in Kerala’s Malappuram district, as the director of Fatimagiri Social Service Centre since 2010. She had worked tirelessly for their welfare and brought several changes in their lives, Sr Nirmalini said.

Sr Marienie was the recipient of awards for her social work from the Kerala Catholic Bishops’ Council, the Deepika League and several local and national organisations.

“Her empowerment of women, awareness programmes and relief and comfort during floods were well appreciated,” said Sr Nirmalini who termed Sr Marienie’s “untimely death” as a big loss to their congregation as well as to the people of Kerala.

Bishop Varghese Chakkalackal of Calicut, who presided over the funeral services at Apostolic Carmel provincialate on October 22, recalled that Sr Marienie had touched people with her love and healing wherever she worked and whomever she served.

Carmelite Fr Roy Kannanchira, who interviewed Sr Marienie for a TV programme, said the Catholic nun had brought a new phase of social empowerment to especially the Muslim women in Malappuram region. She had taken the ministry beyond social or religious differences, he added.

“She saw the needs of the people as needs of God and served them with passion and dedication,” said



the priest.

Sr Marienie had done her masters in Social Work at School of Social Work, Roshni Nilaya, Mangalore. She took over Fatimagiri Social Service Centre in 2010 as its director.

“A great student and of course a great social worker and inspiration,” said Sr Juliet Joseph, who was Roshni Nilaya director when Marienie was a student.

The Daughters of the Heart of Mary recalled that Sr Marienie had “tremendous zeal for social work” as a student in her institution under her maiden name, Marykutty Joseph.

“I was privileged to teach and guide Markutty in her field work at Link De-addiction Centre. I had noticed her commitment that brought transformation in the lives of many persons suffering from the aftereffects of addiction,” said Sr Juliet, who is now the congregation’s South provincial.

Sr Juliet said she had witnessed Sr Marienie organising the self-help women’s group even when she had been suffering. “She was a mother to so many women whom she empowered,” she added.

Thousands of people from all walks of life, especially the members of her women’s self-help groups, attended Sr Marienie’s funeral. **Thomas Scaria, Matters India**

## MEMORIAM

For enquiries, please contact:  
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Tel: 03-2026 8291

In Loving Memory of  
Our Beloved

BEATRICE  
BOEY YOKE  
PHENG

ESTHER  
BOEY YOKE  
MOY



4 July 1940 –  
10 November 2015

15 October 1957 –  
27 September 2021

9th Anniversary 3rd Anniversary

In remembrance of a life of grace.  
Forever cherished, never forgotten.

*Deeply Missed and  
Always Remembered in Our Hearts  
The Family Members,  
Relatives & Friends.*

“ETERNAL REST GRANT  
UNTO THEM, O LORD.  
AND LET THY PERPETUAL  
LIGHT SHINE UPON THEM.  
MAY THEIR SOULS REST IN PEACE.  
AMEN.”

13th Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of



**Jais Fernandez**

Returned to Jesus on  
12 November 2011

*Absolve, we beseech thee,  
O Lord, the soul of thy  
servant — Jais Fernandez  
from every bond of sin that,  
in the glory of Resurrection,  
he shall rise to a glorious  
and eternal life with the  
Angels and Saints, through  
Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

Deeply missed and always  
remembered by wife Sarah,  
family and loved ones.

35th Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of



**Aleykutty James**

Departed: 12-11-1989

*Upright and just in all her ways,  
Loyal and true  
through all her days,  
Silently suffered patiently borne,  
God took her home  
to suffer no more.*

Always remembered by  
loving children, grandchildren  
and loved ones.

May she rest in peace.

21st Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of



**Teresa Avila  
Fernandez**

Departed: 11-11-2003

*“I will walk before  
the Lord in the  
land of the living.”  
— Ps. 116.9*

Fondly remembered by  
Son - Christopher Joel  
and loved ones.

4th Anniversary  
Always in Our Hearts

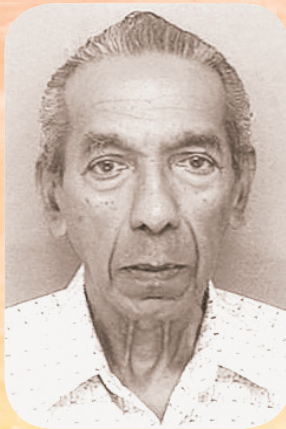


**John Fernandez**

17 August 1930 -  
9 October 2020

*Nothing can separate us  
from His Love  
Romans 8:39*

Deeply missed by wife,  
children and grandson.



In Loving Memory of  
**SOOSAI SANTHANASAMY**

15 Nov. 1929 to 14 Nov. 2016

8th Anniversary

Memorial Mass is offered on Tuesday,  
14th November at 6.00pm at St Ignatius Church,  
Taman Plaza, PJ.

*Fond memories of our Beloved One  
who has touched our hearts in one way or another,  
by his own way of life. In him was love, charity,  
respect, patience and a deep concern for one another.  
He was ever ready to assist and serve where required.*

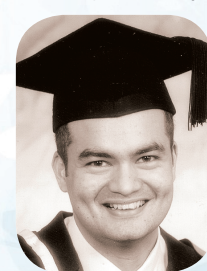
*I am the Resurrection and the Life, he that believeth in Me, even if he dies shall live forever.  
Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord, May the perpetual light shine on him.*

May his soul rest in peace.

Remembered by:

Sister, Son and Daughter-in-law, Grandchildren, nephews, nieces and loved ones.

22nd Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of



**Eric Singh Lahre**

16-04-1969 ~ 13-11-2002

*O Death,  
Where is thy victory?  
O Death,  
Where is thy sting?  
— 1 Cor. 15:55.*

Deeply missed  
and forever remembered  
by Mum and Rod

THIRD ANNIVERSARY  
IN EVER LOVING MEMORY OF



**GEORGE MICHAEL EDWIN VALLADARES**

(6.5.1935 - 13.11.2021)

*Malachi 4:6: “He will turn the hearts of the fathers  
to their children, and the hearts of the children  
to their fathers.”*

Forever in our hearts and deeply missed by  
family and friends.

6th Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of



**Joseph Marcel Gomez**

Departed:  
15 November 2018

*“I have fought the good  
fight, I have finished the  
race, I have kept the  
faith.” — 2 Tim 4:7*

Always remembered  
and loved by  
your wife, son, family,  
relatives and friends.

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BUILDING OF MONUMENTS • SUPPLY OF CONDOLENCE WREATHS

6th Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of

**Joseph Marcel Gomez**  
Departed:  
15 November 2018

*“I have fought the good  
fight, I have finished the  
race, I have kept the  
faith.” — 2 Tim 4:7*

Always remembered  
and loved by  
your wife, son, family,  
relatives and friends.

**FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST A CHILD**  
We pray that all parents who mourn the loss of a son or daughter find support in their community, and may receive peace of heart from the Spirit of Consolation.



# Pope to open Holy Door at Rome prison on feast of St Stephen

VATICAN: Two days after opening the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica to inaugurate the Holy Year 2025, Pope Francis will travel to a Rome prison to open a Holy Door as a "tangible sign of the message of hope" for people in prisons around the world, the Vatican announced.

The Pope will go December 26 to Rebibbia prison on the outskirts of Rome, "a symbol of all the prisons dispersed throughout the world," to deliver a message of hope to prisoners, Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation's section for new evangelisation and the chief organiser of the Holy Year 2025, announced at a news conference October 28.

Pope Francis will open the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica Dec 24. He will then open the Holy Doors at the major basilicas of St John Lateran Dec 29; St Mary Major Jan 1 and St Paul Outside the Walls Jan 5.

In his "bull of indiction," the document formally proclaiming the Holy Year 2025, Pope Francis wrote that, during the Holy Year, he will have close to his heart "prisoners who, deprived of their freedom, feel daily the harshness of detention and its restrictions, lack of affection and, in more than a few cases, lack of respect for their



The official mascot for the Catholic Church's 2025 Jubilee Year is named "Luce," which is Italian for "light."

persons."

In the document, the Pope also called on governments to "undertake initiatives aimed at restoring hope" for incarcerated persons during the Holy Year, such as expanding forms of amnesty and social reintegration programmes.

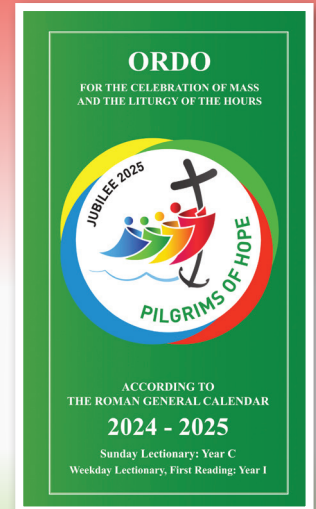
Archbishop Fisichella announced that the Vatican had signed an agreement with Italy's minister of justice and the government commissioner for Rome to implement reintegration programmes for incarcerated individuals by involving their participation in activities during the Jubilee Year.

Archbishop Fisichella also unveiled the official mascot of the Holy Year 2025: "Luce" (Italian for light), a cartoon pilgrim dressed in a yellow raincoat, and mud-stained boots, wearing a missionary cross and holding a pilgrim's staff. Luce's glowing eyes feature the shape of scallop shells, a traditional symbol of pilgrimage and hope.

The mascot, he said, was inspired by the Church's desire "to live even within the pop culture so beloved by our youth."

"Luce" will also serve as the mascot of the Holy See's pavilion at Expo 2025, which will take place in Osaka, Japan, from April to October 2025. The Holy See pavilion — which will be hosted inside of Italy's national pavilion — will have the theme "Beauty brings hope," and display the 17th-century painting "The Entombment of Christ" by Caravaggio — the only one of his works housed in the Vatican Museums.  
Justin McLellan, CNS

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## Severing UNRWA in Gaza is cruel and dangerous



(Unsplash/Mohammed al Bardawil)

JERUSALEM: Israel's parliament has voted to pass to a ban on the humanitarian activities of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Israel, including east Jerusalem where the agency has its headquarters, two days after UN Humanitarian Chief, Joyce Msuya, warned: "the entire population of north Gaza is at risk of dying".

William Bell, Christian Aid's Head of Middle East Region, said: "Severing this lifeline in Gaza as winter threatens to exacerbate an already desperate situation is cruel and dangerous. By obstructing UNRWA's operations instead of facilitating

them, Israel is breaching the provisional measures to prevent genocide ordered by the ICJ.

"In addition to the physical hardship this ban will impose, this is part of the Israeli state's ongoing challenge to the eligibility of Palestinian refugees to claim the right of return to their former homes across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

"Once again international leaders have either been unable or unwilling to protect the most basic rights of Palestinians, including their existence as a sovereign people."  
Christian Aid

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