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.

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Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

1 Thes 5:1-2



A tapestry of love and remembrance ■ P5



From peacekeepers to peacemakers ■ P7



Trees, art and bells tell a parish's 180-year story ■ P12



Church cannot ignore the POOR

VATICAN: The Church cannot remain indifferent to the poor while professing to follow Christ, Pope Leo XIV has warned, urging Christians to confront the injustice, exclusion and indifference that deprive vulnerable people of their dignity.

In his message for the 10th World Day of the Poor on November 15, the Pope called on Catholics to examine whether their communities genuinely welcome those in need or have become places where the comfortable remain sheltered from the suffering of others.

"The Church, by its very nature, is called to be poor and a refuge for the poor," he declared, stressing that Christian charity must go further than providing material assistance. It must restore dignity, foster solidarity and ensure that those on society's margins are recognised, heard and valued.

Reflecting on the theme, *The Lord is the refuge of the poor* (cf. Ps 14:6), Pope Leo condemned the corruption, oppression and exclusion that allow the powerful to dominate the vulnerable.

He warned that the loss of a sense of God was increasingly reflected in society's failure to uphold justice and compassion, with the poor bearing the greatest consequences.

"The poor are the first to suffer the consequences," he observed, noting that their numbers were growing in many societies.

The Pope also warned that the digital world was reinforcing prejudice against the poor, making it even harder for their cries for justice to be heard amid growing indifference.

"Today, the poor's cry for justice is silenced by a multitude of increasingly subtle tactics," he said.

The poor, he lamented, are often forgotten and marginalised, "robbed not only of bread, but also of a voice and a face".

Yet Pope Leo stressed that the poor are not simply recipients of assistance. Their experiences and understanding of what is essential have much to teach others, while their capacity for solidarity reminds the Church that everyone has something to give.

Pointing to Jesus Christ as the ultimate refuge of the poor, he reminded Christians that God did not remain distant from human suffering but entered fully into it through the Incarnation and the Cross.

Consequently, the Church's mission is not simply to speak about the poor but to encounter them personally, listen to their experiences and share their hopes.

The Pope posed a series of searching questions intended to challenge individual believers and Christian communities alike.

"Are we a sign of a God who is a refuge for the poor?" he asked. "Do we go where the poor are, experiencing their marginalisation? Do we listen to their thoughts and share their hopes?"

These questions, he said, demanded a serious examination of conscience about whether the Church's charitable efforts genuinely promoted justice and liberation.

Referring to his Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te*, Pope Leo reaffirmed God's preferential love for the poor and the responsibility of the Church to make room for those whom society overlooks.

He also cautioned against dividing communities into those who give and those who receive, emphasising that every person has something valuable to contribute.

Drawing inspiration from St Francis of Assisi, whose death 800 years ago is commemorated this year, the Pope described how the saint exchanged his clothes with a beggar and spent an entire day among the poor. His example challenged Christians to experience the realities of poverty rather than merely speak about them.

True solidarity, the Pope emphasised, requires humility, fraternity and a willingness to recognise the poor not as strangers or burdens, but as brothers and sisters whose dignity must be respected.

As the Church marks a decade of the World Day of the Poor, established by Pope Francis in 2016, Pope Leo expressed hope that the observance would inspire a genuine conversion of heart and help Christian communities become places where those who feel forgotten and excluded can find belonging.

His appeal underscored that the Church is called not simply to offer refuge to the poor, but to recognise them as an essential part of its own life and mission.

To read the full message, go to: *https://bit.ly/4iCnfO9*

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Don't forget to include captions that bring your images to life.
Your contributions are essential in keeping our faith community connected and informed.
Send your articles to editor1@herald.com.my

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Teach respect, challenge prejudice

Long before children learn the meaning of another religion's celebrations, they hear how adults speak about them. A passing remark, a joke or a dismissive answer can teach a child whom to respect and whom to ridicule. The lessons we give about living together begin in these ordinary moments.

A Malaysian actress recently caused hurt by misrepresenting Christmas and Easter in her comments about Halloween. She later apologised, acknowledging that she had wrongly grouped distinct celebrations.

The responsibility to learn, however, extends to all of us. In Malaysia, understanding one another's religions and cultures is part of learning to be responsible neighbours and citizens. We cannot leave that understanding to chance.

An open house can begin a friendship. Understanding grows when we also learn why the occasion matters to those celebrating it.

For Christians, Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ and the mystery of God becoming human. Easter celebrates His resurrection, the heart of Christian hope. Reducing these observances to commercial images or dismissive descriptions distorts what believers hold sacred.

The same care is owed to every community. Respect for people remains a duty even when their beliefs are unfamiliar. Learning helps us recognise how easily our assumptions can misrepresent them.

Ignorance has consequences. A misconception repeated at home can influence how a child regards a classmate. A misleading post can encourage suspicion towards a neighbour. What begins as a careless remark can become a prejudice passed on with confidence.

Children learn from our reactions: the joke at the dinner table, the dismissive label, the message forwarded without checking. They notice whose customs we treat with interest and whose we ridicule. Our everyday language can undermine every lesson we give about harmony.

Our children should not have to spend their adult lives unlearning the prejudices we casually pass on to them.

Parents can begin with a simple habit: take a child's question seriously. Explain what you know accurately. When you do not know, say, "Let us ask someone who can explain." There is integrity in admitting the limits of our knowledge.

Schools should provide opportunities, suited to children's ages, to learn about Malaysia's religious and cultural traditions. Informed teachers and members of the communities concerned can help children understand the meaning behind a celebration and ask questions respectfully.

University initiatives involving educational visits to places of worship, including those documented at the International Islamic University Malaysia, offer useful models. Interreligious dialogues also allow people to explain their beliefs in their own terms.

We should carry that spirit into everyday education and family life. A visit gains depth through preparation and reflection afterwards. An open house can include a conversation about why the occasion matters. Friendship gives us opportunities to keep learning after a programme ends.

Understanding another religion does not require accepting its teachings or participating in its worship. Conviction and courtesy can flourish together. We can remain rooted in our faith while treating another person's beliefs with care.

Catholics must examine ourselves too. Ignorance and insensitivity can also surface within our own Church circles. Some couples from different religious backgrounds attending the Catholic Marriage Preparation Course (CMPC) have remarked that presenters have, at times, put down or ridiculed other religions. Such feedback deserves serious attention.

Marriage preparation offers an important opportunity to establish the mutual respect couples will carry into their homes and family life. Presenters have a responsibility to explain Catholic teaching clearly and faithfully while respecting both partners and their religious backgrounds. Those responsible for formation should listen to couples' experiences and ensure that the language used reflects the dignity and care the Church teaches.

In *Nostra Aetate,* the Church calls Catholics to dialogue and cooperation with followers of other religions, grounded in love and fidelity to their own faith. This belongs within catechesis, parish formation and the example we set at home.

Public figures carry a particular responsibility because their words travel widely. All of us should check information before sharing it, especially claims about another community's beliefs. The speed of a post never removes responsibility for its consequences.

When offence occurs, we should correct the misrepresentation firmly and explain why it hurts. We should also make room for a sincere apology and the possibility of growth. Responding with humiliation teaches another lesson in contempt.
Malaysia's diversity requires continuing effort: listening carefully, questioning inherited assumptions and allowing others to describe what is sacred to them.

The next time a child asks about a neighbour's celebration, remember that our answer will shape how that child sees the neighbour.

Let us give our children the knowledge to understand, the humility to keep learning and the courage to treat every person with dignity.

Patricia Pereira

To see a poor person is to see Christ face to face

Reflecting on our **Sunday Readings**
with Bro Joseph Savage

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30

There's a story of a newly appointed minister of a large, 3000-member church who dressed up as a homeless man with tattered clothes, unkempt hair, and a weathered face. He arrives a couple of hours early and sits on the sidewalk near the entrance. Out of the many walking past him to enter the building, most ignored him, avoided eye contact, or gave him dirty looks. Only a handful offered him a greeting or basic kindness, and nobody gave him food or money. Ushers even tried chasing him away. When the service was about to begin, the homeless man stood up, walked down the aisle, and climbed onto the pulpit. Removing his disguise, he looked at the stunned congregation and shared how he was treated that morning while quoting Scripture passages about the poor.

We ask ourselves this question: what would we have done differently in that experiment? Anything better, just the same, or probably even worse? Would it change our response if the homeless person was of a different ethnicity than ours? Being Catholics in Malaysia, our parishes are made up of a multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual community. What sort of lens do we use to see someone who is poor, an outcast, or the rejects of society; is it with our lens of prejudice, pride, and disgust, or with the lens of Jesus Christ our God, who is compassionate, loving, and welcoming to all? Jesus Himself tells us, 'Whatever you did to one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did it to Me' (Matthew 25:40).

"To see a poor person is to see Christ face to face." It reminds us that Christ is not found only in the Eucharist, the tabernacle, the sanctuary, or the pages of Scripture. He is also present in the poor, the forgotten, the suffering, the hungry, and those whom society often overlooks. The poor are not merely people who need our help. Christian charity is not simply about giving money, food, or material assistance. It is about recognising the dignity of another human being. When we encounter a poor person, we are not merely encountering someone less fortunate than ourselves. We are encountering someone who bears the image and likeness of God. The poor are not objects of our charity but, rather, are our brothers and sisters in Christ. They are humans too and must not be reduced to anything of a lower dignity.

This weekend's Gospel speaks of the Parable of the Talents, where we see the first and second servant of their master multiplied the talents entrusted to them, while the third chose to 'play safe'. Now do note that in the time of Jesus, a talent was a unit of weight and monetary value, not a natural ability or personal skill. One talent was approximately 6,000 denarii. One denarius was roughly a day's wage for an ordinary labourer. Therefore, one talent could possibly represent approximately 16–20 years of ordinary wages! Practically speaking, if one fears losing such entrusted wealth, burying it to secure it makes perfect sense! Just like how we keep the bulk of our cash money in the bank instead of under our beds. So, why was the master angry with the third servant then? He didn't do anything wrong!

But here's the problem: He didn't do anything good either. Jesus was actually referring to how generous we are with what God has blessed us with, be it monetary, our time and resources, our skills or our intellect. We are invited not to 'bury' what God has placed in our hands. Our gifts are not given merely for our own benefit. They are entrusted to us so that someone else's life may become richer because we existed. When God looks at the life He has entrusted to us, will He find that we have multiplied His love in the world, or have we buried it out of fear? We pray for the gift of a generous heart, to not worry about suffering a loss and to not invite useless anxieties into our overburdened thoughts by assuming that to be generous is foolishness. God didn't create us to live in a me-myself- and I world, but to love one another as He loves us. Give. Share. Listen. Accept. Love. Forgive. And grow in holiness.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, how wonderful it will be if when God blesses us financially, we don't just raise our standards of living, but also our standards of giving!

Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

November

16	EXCO Meeting – Christian Federation of Malaysia
17	Meeting – Sri Seronok Board
18	Clergy Monthly Recollection
19	Meeting – Archdiocesan Finance
26	Meeting – MCCBCHST Exco

Penang Diocese

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

November

22	Closing Mass – Penang Diocesan Youth Day 6, Taiping Catholic Church at 4.00pm
24	Meeting – Professional Standards Office (PSO) @ Pusat Keuskupan Katolik at 11.00am
26	Meeting – Penang Diocesan Preservation Committee @ Pusat Keuskupan Katolik at 3.00pm
26	Meeting – Penang Diocesan Finance Committee (PDFC) @ Pusat Keuskupan Katolik at 5.00pm
30	Meeting – Catholic Welfare Services (CWS) @ College General Major Seminary, Penang at 2.30pm

Malacca Johore Diocese

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

November

15-17	1st Annual General Meeting of Caritas Malaysia – CCM, Petaling Jaya
21	Study Day – MJD Professional Standards Office @ MAJODI Centre
21	Mass – South Johor MJD Young People's Day – Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 5.00pm
24-26	MJD Annual Pastoral Assembly – MAJODI Centre
30	Catholic Welfare Services Meeting – College General Penang

Serving the poor begins with the heart



Fr Michael Raymond OFMCap reminding participants that meaningful service must be rooted in prayer and close relationship with God.

KUALA LUMPUR: Serving the poor is not simply about providing food, money or material assistance. It begins with a compassionate heart, a willingness to listen and the humility to recognise Christ in those who suffer.

This was among the key messages shared by Fr Michael Raymond, OFMCap, during a retreat organised by Samaritan Hope Home on October 24 at Cahayasuara, Jalan Pudu, in conjunction with its eighth anniversary.

Themed *Renewed in the Spirit to Serve the Poorest*, the retreat brought together approximately 60 participants of different ages for a day of spiritual renewal and reflection on the true meaning of Christian service.

Samaritan Hope Home, which provides shelter and operates a soup kitchen for people in need, has spent the past eight years reaching out to the poor and marginalised.

During his reflection, Fr Michael challenged participants to examine not only what they do for others, but also the intentions that motivate their service.

He drew a distinction between working for God and doing God's work, explaining that even acts of charity can become centred on personal recognition, appearances or pride when they are disconnected from a genuine relationship with God.

Doing God's work, however, means allowing oneself to be guided by God's will, using one's gifts and talents to serve others with humility and love.

Fr Michael reminded participants that meaningful service must be rooted in prayer and a close relationship with God. Without this spiritual foundation, even the most generous efforts risk becoming merely activities to be accomplished rather than expressions of Christian love.

He also emphasised the importance of empathy when reaching out to those experiencing poverty and hardship.

"You can only bring someone somewhere when you have been there," he said, inviting participants to reflect on the need to understand the experiences and struggles of those they seek to help.

Offering financial assistance or sharing the Gospel, while important, should never replace the simple but essential act of listening.

Behind every person seeking help is a story, often marked by hardship, rejection, loneliness or uncertainty. Taking time to hear these stories allows volunteers to see people not merely as recipients of charity, but as individuals deserving of dignity, respect and compassion.

The retreat was also a reminder that serving the poor is more than a voluntary activity or social responsibility. For Christians, it is a calling to make God's love visible through concrete acts of kindness and solidarity.

The gathering concluded with Mass celebrated by Fr Michael, bringing participants together in thanksgiving and renewing their commitment to serve with greater humility and compassion.

As Samaritan Hope Home marked eight years of service, it expressed its gratitude to the benefactors, donors, volunteers and friends whose generosity and dedication have sustained its mission.

The anniversary offered an opportunity not only to celebrate what had been accomplished, but also to reflect on the spirit in which that work continues.

Ultimately, the measure of Christian service is not simply how much is given or achieved, but the love and sincerity with which it is offered.

As Fr Michael's reflection reminded participants, the question is not merely whether we are working for God, but whether we are truly doing God's work. **Mathilda Ignathia**



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #294

F12 MJD NEWS UPDATES

Welcome dear friends,

The Diocese prepares for ***MJ-DAPA,*** Malacca Johore Diocesan Annual Pastoral Assembly from November 24-26, 2026 to discern the pastoral thrust for 2027. Ministries have been revamped to be ***more missionary, evangelising service providers*** to equip parish ministries. We exist to evangelise, said Pope Paul VI.

Local Takes! More to Ponder

More money: Google Data Centre is investing an additional RM61 billion (US$15 billion) in Malaysia over 2027–2028 to expand its data centre footprint, providing roughly 37,000 jobs and RM4.48 billion annually to the national GDP.

More Aid: The Prime Minister announced that over five million Malaysians will receive RM1.1 billion in *Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah* (STR) phase four aid starting from November 4.

More hilarious: Names of Malaysian places that defy logic: Pulau Kentut Besar and Pulau Kentut Kechil in Kedah, Kpg Imam Lapar and Sg Bangang in Terengganu.

More special: A unique political setup: Malaysia's nine royal families, taking turns to become King of Kings, fascinates the rest of the world. They liken it to a real-life, peaceful version of 'Game of Thrones'.

Reading the Signs: Counting Our Blessings

From the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, Message for the Feast of Deepavali, on November 8, 2026: "As persons grounded in our respective religions, and as people with shared values, may we, Hindus and Christians, draw renewed inspiration from the 40th Anniversary of the "spirit of Assisi", coming together to forge pathways of peace." Wishing all Hindu friends: "A blessed Deepavali".

On the November 'Pray With The Pope' video: "Everything we have comes from the Lord, including fertile land, the talents we've received, the effort of those who came before us. Nothing is ours alone — everything is a shared gift. Yet we let the wealth we seek or attain harden our hearts, lock us in selfishness, and make us forget the most vulnerable.

Thought for the week: Our Prisons

A ***buzzard*** in a pen that is six feet by eight feet, with an opening at the top, will choose to remain a prisoner, even with its ability to fly.

Why? A buzzard always begins a flight from the ground with a run of 10 to 12 feet. Without that space to run, as is its habit, it will not even attempt to fly.

The ordinary ***bat*** that flies around at night, a remarkably nimble creature in the air, cannot take off from a level place. If it is placed on the floor or flat ground, all it can do is shuffle about helplessly and painfully. Until it reaches an elevated point to throw itself into the air, and take off.

A ***bumblebee,*** when dropped into an open tumbler, will stay there until it dies, unless it is taken out. It never sees the means of escape at the top, but persists in trying to find some way out through the sides near the bottom. It will seek a way where none exists, until it completely destroys itself. ***People*** in many ways are like the buzzard, the bat, and the bumblebee. They struggle with all their problems and frustrations, never realising that ***"all we have to do is look up".***

Lesson from the bottom: ***The solutions are nearby.*** Just look up! "Sorrow looks back. Worry looks around. But faith looks up."

QnQ? Q asks: Who is strong? What is one's strength?

The strongest people are not defined by the struggles they face but by the way they respond to them. They move forward with courage when fear appears, with faith when doubt arises, and with gratitude when life becomes difficult. Their strength lies not in avoiding storms, but in learning how to walk through them with confidence and hope. ***Paolo Coelho***

The Spirit @ work: "Recognise the power of language. Words can escalate conflict — or foster peace. By removing aggression, prejudice and hatred from our communication, we help dismantle the foundations of broader social and political violence. Peace begins with what we say and how we say it." ***Pope Leo XIV***

Something to tickle you: "The happiest people I know are people who don't even think about being happy. They just think about being good neighbours, good people.

"And then happiness sort of sneaks in the back window while they are busy doing good." ***Harold S. Kushner***

Bishop Bernard Paul

Muar parish prioritises unity, care and communication

MUAR: Building unity, accompanying vulnerable members and keeping parishioners informed emerged as three priorities at the Church of St Andrew's Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) on October 31.

Themed *Synodal Parish,* the gathering brought together 65 participants at SAC Etican Hall, including Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) members, ministry leaders and members, and parishioners.

Parish priest, Fr Jason Wong, attended with assistant priests, Fr Aaron Alammalay and Fr Louis Chin. The assembly was moderated by Sr Theresa Chew, FdCC, *pic*.



In his opening address, Fr Jason reminded participants that they were all in the same boat, which could move forward only when everyone rowed together, with Jesus in their midst. He encouraged them to speak honestly, listen to one another and remain attentive to God's Word and the Holy Spirit.

Sr Theresa explained that the PPA offered the parish community a space to listen and discern together. Rooted in prayer, the process called participants to listen from the heart and consider what God was asking of the parish.

The assembly then spent 30 minutes in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament before continuing its discussions.



Participants beginning the day with prayer.

PPC chairman, James Lee, together with Kipili Ator and Anna Chua, presented key areas for reflection. Drawing on the International Theological Commission's 2018 document, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church,* they highlighted the parish as a community where people of different generations, vocations and gifts contribute to a shared mission.

The presentation identified the need to strengthen unity across generations, language groups, social backgrounds and pastoral perspectives.

It also emphasised including and accompanying vulnerable, lonely, elderly, poor, migrant, and wounded members, along with clear communication about parish activities, major decisions, financial matters, and pastoral priorities.

Participants were divided into eight facilitated groups for Conversation in the Spirit, with each group reflecting on one question. Their subsequent sharing expressed a common desire for a united, caring parish with good communication among its members.

The chairperson of the Parish Finance Committee also presented an update on parish income, expenditure and accounts as at September 30.

Feedback from the group discussions was compiled for further consideration and appropriate action. Fr Jason concluded the assembly with a closing message, prayer and blessing.

Visitation assembly seeks a more missionary parish

SEREMBAN: A shared desire to build a more vibrant and missionary parish brought 100 participants from 13 parish groups together for the Church of the Visitation's Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) on November 1.

Facilitated by Sr Margarete Sta Maria, FdCC, and Gregory Pravin Rajah from the Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute (API), the assembly gave parishioners space to reflect on parish life, share their experiences, and discern the way forward.

Archbishop Julian Leow also joined the gathering, his unexpected presence bringing encouragement and joy to participants.

The afternoon began with Eucharistic Adoration and a Gospel reflection, placing the parish's life and mission at the centre of prayer before discussions began.

Participants then took part in Conversation in the Spirit, conducted in three rounds. The first allowed everyone to share their responses. The second invited deeper listening, with group members identifying points of agreement and shared understanding. In the final round, each group presented two key points emerging from its conversations.

Discussions focused on suggestions and recommendations for the parish's continued growth, with participants considering how its groups and ministries could contribute to a more vibrant and missionary community.

The format encouraged broad participation, allowing parishioners to express their concerns and hopes while listening respectfully to experiences different from their own. Prayer and attentive listening helped keep the focus on discerning together what would serve the parish's mission.

The findings will be presented to the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) for further reflection and consolidation. The aim is to translate the recommendations into practical action and renewed commitment among parish groups and ministries, supporting the Church's mission to form and nurture disciples of Christ.

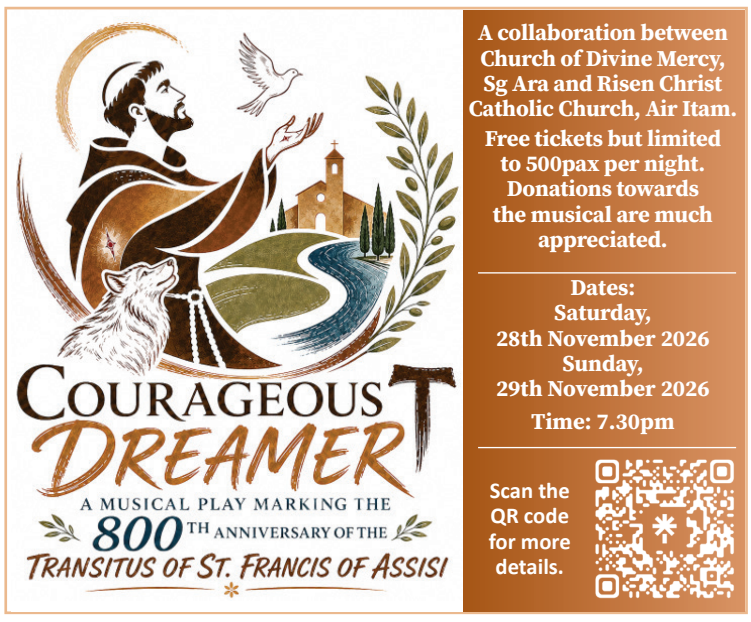
Sabrina Smith



Participants sharing their thoughts during the Conversation in the Spirit.



Sr Margarete Sta Maria, FdCC



A collaboration between Church of Divine Mercy, Sg Ara and Risen Christ Catholic Church, Air Itam.

Free tickets but limited to 500pax per night. Donations towards the musical are much appreciated.

Dates:
Saturday,
28th November 2026
Sunday,
29th November 2026

Time: 7.30pm

Scan the QR code for more details.

Women find strength in faith and sisterhood

CHERAS: Prayer, biblical reflections and activities exploring personal growth brought 56 women and members of the working team together for a Women's Retreat at the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) from October 23–25.

Themed *Encountered • Transformed • Sent,* the three-day retreat offered participants time to step away from daily responsibilities, deepen their relationship with Christ and strengthen friendships.

Speakers Margaret Lye, Fiona Biggs, Rachael D'Rozario and Irene Lewis guided reflections centred on four pillars: Holiness, Communion, Participation and Mission.

The women at the empty tomb provided the focus for holiness, inviting participants to recognise the Risen Christ in their lives and share the Good News. Communion drew on Jesus' encounter with the woman caught in adultery, highlighting mercy, forgiveness and the restoration of dignity.

The Samaritan woman inspired reflections on participation, showing how an encounter with Jesus can lead to active witness within a community. Through the stories of Esther and Judith, the mission sessions encouraged the women to respond courageously to God's call.

Prayer, praise and worship, group sharing and journaling gave participants opportunities to reflect on these themes. An *Affirmation Wall* also provided a space to encourage one another and recognise the gifts within the group.

Several activities brought the reflections into a more personal setting.

Each woman chose a flower to represent her commitment to growth in an area of her life. These intentions were offered to Jesus through Mary, expressing trust and a willingness to let go of obstacles to holiness.

A clay activity invited participants to place their hearts before Jesus, acknowledging their brokenness and allowing Him to heal and reshape their lives.



The women praying in silence.

The women also wrote personal letters to Jesus, sharing their struggles, gratitude, hopes and deepest desires. The exercise offered quiet time to reflect honestly and entrust their lives anew to Him.

There was room for celebration too. The "Glitter for Jesus" Ladies' Night brought laughter, friendship and a joyful sense of belonging, complementing the retreat's quieter moments of prayer and reflection.

A team of volunteers supported the programme through preparation, hospitality, music, meals and logistics.

The SFA Formation Ministry Team thanked Fr Paul Cheong, OFMCap, for his support and encouragement in hosting the retreat, as well as the speakers, volunteers and participants who contributed their time and talents.

The closing invitation was to carry the retreat's theme into everyday life: to recognise Christ's presence, remain open to His transforming love and share that love in their homes, families, workplaces and communities.

The women also looked forward to gathering again for the next annual retreat, continuing to grow in faith and sisterhood.

A tapestry of love and remembrance

Jenifer Yap and Gilbert Gomez

PENANG: Every name represents a life. Every photograph holds a story.

At the Church of the Divine Mercy, Sungai Ara, these memories are being brought together in a *Tapestry of Remembrance,* uniting parishioners in prayer for their departed loved ones throughout November.

Creating a special memorial for All Souls' Day and the month of November has become a cherished parish tradition. Although its form changes from year to year, its purpose remains constant: to remember the faithful departed, pray for them and affirm the enduring bond between the living and the dead.

Displayed before the sanctuary, this year's tapestry will gradually fill with remembrance cards bearing photographs, names and personal messages. Together, these individual tributes will form a visible expression of a parish family united in love, remembrance and prayer.

Some cards will honour parents and grandparents; others, spouses, siblings, children, relatives or friends. Each represents a life that was loved and someone who remains in the hearts and prayers of those left behind.

The observance reminds parishioners that Christian remembrance involves more than keeping memories alive. It calls the faithful to entrust the departed to God's mercy and love through prayer.



Parishioners pinning their remembrance card of their departed loved ones before the sanctuary.

The parish will also recite the Rosary with special intentions for deceased clergy and religious; family members and friends; children who died through abortion, miscarriage or abuse; those who died without receiving the final Sacraments; and the souls in purgatory.

A short video will explain why Catholics pray for the dead, the Church's teaching on purgatory and its biblical roots. It aims to help parishioners, especially the young, understand this prayer as an act of charity grounded in faith and hope in the resurrection.

At the heart of the *Tapestry of Remembrance* is the conviction that death does not have the final word. As it fills with faces and names, it invites the parish to turn memories into prayer and grief towards hope in the Risen Christ.

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

OLOL parishioners put teamwork to the test

IPOH: It was a day of friendly competition, teamwork and plenty of fun as 70 parishioners of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLOL) took part in the parish's inaugural Amazing Hunt.

Organised by the OLOL Sports Ministry as part of its annual activities, the event brought together parishioners of different ages, with families and friends forming teams to tackle the challenges.

Held under the theme *Healthy Body, Healthy Mind,* the Amazing Hunt offered participants an opportunity to put their teamwork and problem-solving skills to the test while strengthening friendships within the parish community.

Parish priest Fr Robert Daniel opened the event with a prayer before officially declaring the hunt underway.

Adding to the excitement, Fr Robert and assistant parish priest Fr George Vaithynathan joined in the fun, taking the lead in organising the closing treasure hunt.



Their enthusiastic involvement added a special touch to the occasion, reminding participants that parish life is also about building relationships and sharing moments of joy.

At the conclusion of the event, both priests presented certificates of participation to everyone who took part, as well as prizes to the winning teams.

Although the activities left many participants tired, they went home with happy memories, new friendships and hopes that similar events would be organised in the future.

For the Sports Ministry, the inaugural Amazing Hunt was about more than winning prizes. It was an opportunity to encourage healthy living, strengthen family bonds and foster a greater sense of belonging within the parish.

With the continued encouragement and support of Fr Robert and Fr George, the ministry hopes to introduce more sporting and recreational activities that will bring parishioners together.

As the ministry's chairman aptly reminded participants, "All sportspersons must be humble winners and gracious losers."

It was a fitting message for a day when the greatest reward was not the prize at the finish line, but the friendships and fellowship strengthened along the way.

Little saints, inspiring lessons

SHAH ALAM: The lives of the saints came alive through the eyes of children who dressed as their favourite holy men and women during an All Saints' Day celebration on November 1.

The colourful celebration offered a meaningful reminder that holiness is not reserved for a chosen few but is a calling for everyone, regardless of age.

Dressed as familiar saints and biblical figures, the children brought to life inspiring examples of faith, courage, humility and service.

Among those represented were the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Joseph, St Francis of Assisi, St Mary Magdalene, St Faustina, St Catherine of Siena, St Padre Pio, St Bernadette, St Anne, St Anthony, St Jude Thaddeus, St Gregory the Great, St Josemaría Escrivá, St Gianna Molla, St Carlo Acutis and St Teresa of Calcutta. Biblical figures such as Gideon and St Michael the Archangel were also portrayed.



Children dressed up as saints.

Each costume told a story and carried a lesson. St Francis of Assisi reminded everyone of the importance of simplicity and care for creation, while St Teresa of Calcutta exemplified compassion for the poor and suffering. St Joseph reflected quiet faithfulness and responsibility, while St Carlo Acutis showed young people that holiness is possible even in today's digital world.

The celebration also highlighted the deeper meaning of All Saints' Day, when the Church honours not only recognised saints but also countless holy men and women whose lives of faith and love may never have been publicly acknowledged.

Through their participation, the children reminded the community that sainthood is not merely about extraordinary deeds. Holiness begins with everyday choices — showing kindness, helping someone in need, including those who feel left out, speaking the truth and doing what is right even when it is difficult.

As the children brought these inspiring figures to life, they offered a simple yet powerful message: holiness is not just something to admire in others but something each person is called to pursue. **Vanessa Nixon**

'Saints' parade into CDM Penang

PENANG: Thirty children and adults, including an infant, came dressed as saints to the Church of Divine Mercy (CDM) for an All Saints' celebration at the sunset Mass on October 31.

Organised jointly by the parish's Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and Catholic Education Committee, the initiative invited families, through the catechism parents' WhatsApp groups, to dress as a saint and explain their choice.

The participants gathered at the church entrance before processing in with parish priest Fr Michael Raymond, OFMCap, and taking their places in the front pews. Fr Michael remarked that, for a moment, he thought he was in heaven.

"Do you think you are going to heaven?" he asked the congregation at the beginning of his homily, urging the faithful to make life with God their goal and a priority in their daily choices.

Drawing on the second reading, 1 John 3:1–3, he reminded parishioners of their identity as children of God and their call to holiness.

He then asked, "Do you want to be a saint?" The day's Gospel, Matthew 5:1–12a, offered a guide through the Beatitudes, which show how the faithful can live out that calling.

Before the final blessing, each participant was introduced to the congregation. An accompanying PowerPoint presentation highlighted the qualities of the saints they represented and the reasons for their choices.

The youngest participant, an 11-month-old baby dressed as St Francis of Assisi and carried by his mother, drew the loudest applause.



Each participant received a crystal ball souvenir, bringing the celebration to a close with a reminder that sainthood is a calling for everyone. **Dr Ivan Filmer**

SFA celebrates BEC golden jubilee, honours parish pioneers

Markus Lim

CHERAS: More than 300 Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) leaders and members, gathered at the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) on October 30 to celebrate the contributions of the parish's BECs, in conjunction with the golden jubilee of BECs in the Church in Malaysia.

Themed *50 Years Journeying Together as One Family in Christ,* the celebration was an occasion to give thanks for the past and renew the mission of BECs for the future.

In her welcoming address, BECCOT chairperson, Anita Rajoo, paid tribute to the pioneers and former leaders whose dedication laid the foundations for the parish's BECs.

She acknowledged that sustaining these communities had not always been easy, with many leaders making personal sacrifices, sometimes without recognition or appreciation.

"The BEC that we see today was built through the sweat, tears, and sacrifices of our past leaders. There were times when we felt unappreciated, but love and faith kept us together," she said.

Addressing the former leaders, she added: "You are our heroes. You laid the foundation for the BECs, and we are here today because of you."

SFA parish priest, Fr Paul Cheong, OFMCap, expressed his gratitude to those who had kept the BECs active over the years, reminding members that even small gestures of faith and kindness could make a lasting difference.

"Every prayer, every message and every word of encouragement matters. We may not see the fruits of our labour immediately, but we should never underestimate what God can do through our faithfulness," he said.

Drawing on Galatians 6:9, Fr Paul encouraged members not to grow weary of doing good, assuring them that perseverance would bear fruit in God's time.

He stressed that the golden jubilee was not merely about celebrating past achievements but also about looking ahead with renewed commitment.

"Our journey is not over. We must look forward with renewed hope and continue growing as vibrant missionary disciples. Let us make our BECs more alive and bring Christ's love to others," he urged.

Fr Mitchel Joseph, ecclesiastical assistant of the Archdiocesan Basic Ecclesial Community Animating Team (ABECAT), reminded members that Christian faith was not simply about preserving traditions, but about nurturing a living relationship with Jesus Christ.



Zone Wisdom BEC leaders with their BEC's banners.

Describing faith as "the invisible presence of invincible grace", he emphasised that Christ remained the foundation of every BEC, giving each community its strength, purpose and unity.

Quoting John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches", Fr Mitchel reminded members that apart from Christ, they could do nothing.

Referring to SFA's BECs, he offered a striking reflection on their shared identity and mission.

"We have 33 BECs, and we have 33 faces of Jesus. All of you are the face of Jesus," he said.

He reminded members that every BEC was called to reflect Christ through compassion and concern for others, while every baptised Christian had a responsibility to participate in His mission.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of commemorative plaques to former BECCOT leaders in recognition of their dedicated leadership and contributions to the parish's BECs.

A special memory lane exhibition traced the communities' history through photographs, memorabilia and records of significant milestones, while acknowledging those who had preserved these memories for future generations.

The golden jubilee cake-cutting ceremony was followed by a fellowship gathering at the church's covered car park.

The celebration reaffirmed that BECs are sustained not merely by meetings, structures or programmes, but by people willing to give their time, share their faith and care for one another.

As the Church in Malaysia marks 50 years since the introduction of BECs, SFA's celebration offered an opportunity to reflect on their continuing relevance and the need to keep them vibrant.

The challenge ahead is to ensure that these communities remain places where faith is lived, relationships are strengthened and no one is left to walk alone. Their future depends not only on dedicated leaders, but on every member's willingness to make Christ present in their homes, neighbourhoods and wider community.

Fun and fellowship fuel Visitation fundraiser

SEREMBAN: Hundreds gathered at the Church of the Visitation on October 24 for its Parish Family Day 2026, a celebration of entertainment, cultural performances, and fellowship supporting the parish's RM1.25 million Parlour Project.

The event raised RM119,115 in net proceeds after deducting expenses.

The project aims to improve facilities for meetings, counselling, pastoral care, community formation and outreach, creating welcoming and accessible spaces to serve the needs of its growing community.

The festivities began with an opening prayer, followed by an energetic Zumba session led by the Dr Y & Dr S Wellness Team and a performance by the Visitation Praise Dance Group. A colourful march past led by the St John's Alumni Pipe Band, followed by a balloon launch, added to the excitement.

The parish's cultural diversity was reflected in performances by children from the Tamil, English and Mandarin catechism groups, including a lively Sister Act-inspired presentation. The Orang Asli Ministry presented a traditional Sewang dance, while members of BEC St Anne Zone 8 entertained visitors with line dancing.

Students from SJKC Yu Chai Ulu Beranang and SJKT Ladang Senawang also contributed to the programme, adding to the celebration's multicultural character.

Musical entertainment featured Singapore performer Michael Samy, who sang in English, Tamil and Bahasa Malaysia, while Barnitus Jeffrey de Costa delighted the crowd with Elvis Presley favourites. Other performers included Chelvam Raju, also known as Richardson, Raymond Francis with the Tamil youth, the Straits Melodies Group and Troupa de Santa Maria.



Frs Xavier Andrew, Kenneth Gopal OCD, Philip Tay OCD and Edwin Peter officially launch the parish family day.

The Amazing Race and Photo Hunt offered opportunities for friendly competition and teamwork, while visitors also took part in the Best Booth competition and a contest to guess the number of entry forms.

One of the day's highlights was the grand lucky draw, when parishioner James Chong won a brand-new Perodua Bezza. As he had already left the event, parish priest Fr Xavier Andrew presented the car keys to a family representative before a call was made to inform the surprised winner of his good fortune.

Parish Family Day organising chairperson, Audry Gonsalviz said the celebration demonstrated what could be achieved when parishioners worked together towards a common goal.

"Parish Family Day is a wonderful testament to what we can achieve when we come together as one family in faith," she said.

Audry congratulated Chong and thanked the donors, volunteers, performers and supporters whose generosity and commitment made the celebration possible. She added that the event was an expression of the parish's unity and shared commitment to its future.

For information or contributions, contact the Building Fundraising Committee: Chairman Lourdes Raj (013-3946594) or Secretary Lydia Mae Hendroff (012-3135358).

Mission Rosary brings BECs together

PORT DICKSON: Prayer, multilingual reflections and fellowship brought parishioners of the Church of the Immaculate Conception together on October 31 to close Marian and Mission Month with a renewed call to live their faith in daily life.

The celebration began with the Mission Rosary at the church grotto, followed by an open-air Mass. Pleasant early morning weather provided a peaceful setting for the gathering.

With the church temporarily closed for roof replacement works, the parish's Basic Ecclesial Communities Coordinating Team (BECCOT) and BECs worked together to organise the celebration within the available safe spaces. The change of setting called for flexibility and teamwork, drawing parishioners into a shared effort of service.

A highlight was the opportunity to reflect on mission in small groups. Using questions from the Mission Rosary booklet, parishioners discussed how they could respond to Christ's call in their own circumstances.

The discussions were conducted in different languages, enabling participants to share comfortably and listen to one another. Each group then presented its reflections to the wider gathering, allowing everyone to learn from the experiences and perspectives shared.

Guided by parish priest Fr Edwin Peter, the session encouraged parishioners to recognise mission in everyday acts of listening, caring, sharing and bringing Christ's love to others.


One of the small groups reflecting on what mission means to them.

The morning concluded with a potluck meal, where food, conversation and laughter offered time to deepen friendships across the BECs. There was good timing too: parishioners enjoyed the cool morning and headed home before the day grew hot.

The celebration highlighted the unity and shared responsibility that sustain parish life, particularly when circumstances require the community to adapt.

Although Mission Month had drawn to a close, the invitation remained: to carry Christ's love into families, BECs and the wider community, wherever God calls the faithful to serve. **Jonathan Raja Kapoor**

From peacekeepers to peacemakers

Deacon Dr Leslie Petrus



Religious leaders and the delegates spending time in silence reflecting on the need for peace in a world troubled by conflict, division and suffering.

PLENTONG, Johor: Peace begins when people of different faiths choose to come together, listen to one another and recognise the humanity they share. This spirit of unity brought religious leaders and their communities together at the Church of St Joseph, Plentong, on October 30 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the World Day of Prayer for Peace.

Organised by the Diocese of Malacca Johore's Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue Ministry, the gathering brought together representatives of various religious traditions in the South Johor Vicariate, united by a common desire to promote peace, mutual respect and understanding.

The commemoration recalled the historic interreligious gathering convened by Pope John Paul II in Assisi in 1986, when religious leaders from around the world came together to pray for peace.

Leading the gathering, Fr Edward Rayappan, head of the diocesan ministry, urged participants to move beyond being merely peacekeepers to becoming active peacemakers in their families, communities and society.

Welcoming the religious leaders and their delegations, he emphasised that peace could not be achieved through words and good intentions alone. It required genuine relationships, continued dialogue and a willingness to overcome prejudice and mistrust.

Although people may profess different beliefs, he said, they share a common humanity and a responsibility to build a society rooted in respect, compassion and solidarity.

Fr Edward stressed that religion was an important part of people's identity. By creating opportunities for meaningful encounters, religious communities could deepen mutual understanding, strengthen trust and work together for the common good.

He encouraged participants to continue organising interreligious gatherings and collaborative initiatives, reminding them that lasting peace begins with the courage to reach out to one another.

Among those present were Karupiah Ramasamy, Hindu representative and chairman of the Johor branch of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST); Sikh representative Dr Kishen Singh; Taoist leader Venerable Song Hooi Peong; and Anglican representative Rev Emmanuel Nickson, together with their respective delegations.

The evening's programme began with a minute of communal silence, offering participants an opportunity to reflect on the need for peace in a world troubled by conflict, division and suffering.

Religious representatives then joined in lighting candles, symbolising their shared hope for a more peaceful and harmonious world.

Each leader offered prayers according to their respective traditions, followed by a common declaration for peace and a fraternal gesture expressing their commitment to mutual understanding and cooperation.

The exchange of peace extended to everyone present, reinforcing the message that building harmony is not solely the responsibility of religious leaders but of every individual.

The gathering concluded with Fr Edward presenting tokens of appreciation to the religious representatives, followed by a vegetarian dinner hosted by the parish of St Joseph. The fellowship provided another opportunity for participants to strengthen friendships and deepen relationships across religious boundaries.

Similar commemorations were also held at the Church of St Philip, Segamat, Johor, and the Church of St Peter, Melaka.

As the participants departed, the message of the evening remained clear: peace is not simply the absence of conflict, but something that must be nurtured through everyday acts of understanding, kindness and cooperation.

What began as a gathering of people from different religious traditions became a reminder that even small gestures of friendship can help overcome divisions and build a more harmonious society.

IJ leadership visit focuses on mission and renewal



IJ Superior General, Sr Marina Motta, with the IJ sisters and the lay members.

KUALA LUMPUR: Caring for senior sisters and discerning the future of their educational and pastoral mission were among the priorities discussed during a visit by the international leaders of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus (IJ) from October 18–31.

Superior General Sr Marina Motta, accompanied by council members Srs Kitty Ellard and Celina Wong, met the congregation's 64 sisters in Malaysia to learn more about their lives, ministries and the realities shaping their mission.

Arriving from Singapore, the leaders began their visit in the Diocese of Keningau, where the IJ sisters have served in the district of Sook for more than 30 years.

Their ministry reaches children and communities in five villages, with particular attention to the academic and spiritual formation of the young. The visitors spent three days in Keningau before travelling to Peninsular Malaysia.

Regional assemblies in Kuala Lumpur/Selangor, Perak, Penang and Melaka provided opportunities for the sisters to share their experiences, discuss challenges and reflect on the way forward. The leaders also met lay collaborators who work with the sisters in their ministries.

For Sr Marina and Sr Kitty, it was their first visit to Malaysia, offering an opportunity to understand both the local context and the contribution of the IJ sisters to the Church and society.

Discussions included the growing care needs of senior sisters, the sisters' involvement in 52 government-aided IJ schools and the future direction of the Malaysian province's mission.

The leaders visited several schools, including the primary and secondary convent schools in Melaka, where Heritage Rooms preserve the story of the sisters' educational work. At SMK Convent Melaka, they also met 70 prefects taking part in a school camp.

These encounters connected the congregation's present responsibilities with a mission that began when the first IJ sisters arrived from France in 1852. Malaya was the institute's first mission outside France, and education has remained central to its service as its approaches to evangelisation have evolved. Infant Jesus Sisters

The sisters continue to draw inspiration from their founder, Blessed Nicolas Barré, and the spirit of "Abandonment to Divine Providence" handed down through generations.

The visit also brought a wider perspective. The Malaysian sisters received updates on the experiences and challenges of their counterparts in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, strengthening their sense of solidarity with the congregation worldwide.

The exchanges formed part of a time of renewal as the sisters seek to respond to the Church's call to synodality at all levels.

The Malaysian province is also preparing to welcome a new provincial team, which Sr Marina is expected to appoint before the end of 2026.

Discovering Scripture in everyday life

KLANG: How can the experiences of people in the Bible help us understand our own struggles, choices and relationship with God? This question shaped a day of reflection for 127 participants at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL) on October 31.



Led by Samantha N (Thi Nga Nguyen), *pic*, a Catholic faith sharer from Sydney, Australia, the retreat explored the theme *From Surrender to Transformation — Living God's Will,* drawing on Romans 12:2.

Parish priest, Fr Gregory Chan, welcomed Samantha and encouraged her to give particular attention to the women of the Bible, whose courage, resilience and steadfast faith continue to speak to believers today.

Samantha, who conducts daily Bible teachings on Zoom through her *Knowing Jesus 23* platform, used expressive storytelling and relatable examples to connect Scripture with contemporary life.

Rather than simply recounting biblical events, she explored the circumstances behind people's decisions, the struggles they faced and the lessons their experiences offer. Participants were encouraged to recognise something of their own fears, weaknesses and hopes in these accounts, and to consider what God's Word might be asking of them today.

The emphasis was on moving from hearing Scripture to allowing it to shape everyday choices, relationships and attitudes.

Love, joy and peace were recurring themes in Samantha's sharing. She encouraged participants to nurture these qualities through a closer relationship with Jesus and a willingness to surrender to God's will.

Such surrender, she explained, requires humility, courage and trust, particularly when circumstances are difficult to understand or beyond one's control.

Her reflections also drew a distinction between knowing about Jesus and knowing Him personally. Understanding Scripture provides a foundation, but faith grows as Christ's teachings begin to influence how people think, respond to difficulties and treat one another.

Fr Gregory's invitation to reflect on biblical women highlighted another dimension of this response to God. Their strength took many forms: decisive action, patient endurance, prayer, selfless love and obedience amid uncertainty.

These experiences remain relevant to those balancing family life, work, caregiving, personal struggles and service to the Church. They offer encouragement that God works through ordinary people who respond faithfully to His call.

The retreat gave participants time to examine their relationship with Christ and rediscover Scripture's relevance to their lives. Its challenge extended beyond the day itself: to carry what they had heard into their homes, families and communities.

Echoing the reminder in Hebrews 4:12 that God's Word is alive and active, Samantha's sharing presented Scripture as an invitation to encounter Christ and allow His love to transform daily life.

The call was to make that transformation visible through love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control — the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22–23.

Dato' Seri Ann Marianthony



DIOCESE OF PENANG

PKK/BDN/2026/11/245

Notifications and Updates

1. Relocation of Caritas Malaysia National Office to Kuala Lumpur

As approved by the Catholic Bishops of Malaysia, the Caritas Malaysia National Office will be relocated to Kuala Lumpur in November 2026. For this purpose, Fr Fabian Dicom, the national director of Caritas Malaysia, will be relocated to the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. He will take up residence at the rectory of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur and take up temporary working space at Cardijn House until the newly constructed Magnificat building at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur is ready for occupancy.

During this transition, Fr Fabian will be released from his pastoral services at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang. However, the existing space at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit and Pusat Keuskupan Katolik, Penang will be retained until the relocation is fully completed. Let us continue to pray for the mission of Caritas Malaysia.

2. Order of Friars Minor Capuchin - Diocese of Penang

The Order of Friars Minor Capuchin Custody of Malaysia-Singapore has assigned two friars, Fr Joe Matthews OFMCap and Bro Joshua Yong OFMCap, to the Fraternity of St Felix of Cantalice, Tanjung Tokong, Penang, with effect from October 1, 2026. We wish them God's blessings as they begin their mission in the diocese.

3. Incardination Process of Fr Andrew Khoo Hsien Ming

The Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has granted Fr Andrew Khoo Hsien Ming, until then a perpetually professed member of the Institute of the Incarnate Word, the Indult of Departure dated October 26, 2026 from the Institute, in accordance with canon 693 of the Code of Canon Law, releasing Fr Andrew Khoo to be incardinated into the Diocese of Penang.

4. Sr Amy Cheah Hsiao Phin

Sr Amy Cheah, a Catholic religious sister of the Institute Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará (SSVM), taking the name Sr Maria Filia Docilis, has returned to the Diocese of Penang, as she is currently discerning her vocation in her congregation. During this period of exclaustration from one (1) to five (5) years, Sr Amy has been appointed as administrative assistant to the executive secretary of the Bishop's Office with effect from October 12, 2026.

Sr Amy will also assist and collaborate in any other ministries assigned by the bishop, especially for formation and retreats in Mandarin, English, and Bahasa Malaysia. She will also work with the Social Communication Office to assist, especially in the Mandarin Apostolate. Kindly keep her in your prayers.

5. World Day of the Poor

The Diocese of Penang will observe the Tenth World Day of the Poor on Saturday, November 14, 2026, with the theme *The Lord is the refuge of the poor* (Psalm 14:6). Caritas Penang, in collaboration with Lighthouse, will celebrate this day with the Eucharistic Celebration presided by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, followed by fellowship and community activities at Lighthouse. All are welcome to partake in this celebration.

Let us remember people experiencing poverty in our prayers and renew our commitment to stand with them through compassion and practical acts of solidarity. Sharing the Message of Pope Leo XIV for the Tenth World Day of the Poor. *https://l1nk.dev/6dj3xfk*

6. Kongregasi Karmel Diocese of Penang

Sr Irene Marie P. Karm returned to the Kongregasi Putri Karmel community in Pertapaan Kaingaran, Tambunan, Sabah on November 11, 2026 and was replaced by Sr Mary Gerardine, P. Karm.

Superior : Sr Mary Geraldine, P. Karm
Member : Sr Mary Jacinta, P. Karm
: Sr Marie Carmen, P. Karm
: Sr Mary Odilia, P. Karm

We thank Sr Irene Marie P. Karm, for her contributions and wish her blessings in her new mission, as we warmly welcome the newly appointed Sr Mary Geraldine, P. Karm to the Diocese of Penang.

7. Fr Bernard Marie, CSE

We welcome Fr Bernard Marie, CSE, a newly ordained priest of the Congregation of Carmelitae Santi Eliae (CSE), to the Diocese of Penang. Fr Bernard Marie, CSE will be serving at the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus, Balik Pulau, along with Fr Dominico Evan CSE, and Fr Rudolf de Aquaviva, CSE.

8. Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026

I thank everyone who generously shared their experiences and reflections on the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC) 2026. May these sharings continue to inspire us and remind us of the grace of walking together as one Malaysian Church, united in faith and mission.

Sharing the special MPC 2026 supplement published by *HERALD Malaysia,* bringing together key moments from the Convention, insights from the keynote addresses, pastoral messages from the nine bishops of Malaysia, and personal reflections from the delegates. I invite everyone to take some time to read and reflect on the experiences shared, as we continue our journey together, guided by the Holy Spirit in our pastoral mission. *https://shorturl.at/ZxIDV*

9. Canonical Age of Retirement at 75 on November 11, 2026

As I reach my canonical age of retirement at 75 on November 11, 2026, I wish to inform all of you that I have submitted my letter of retirement as the Bishop of Penang to Pope Leo XIV as required by Canon Law.

Sebastian Francis

Cardinal Sebastian Francis



FRANIGO brings a friendship of faith to the stage



PETALING JAYA: A cannonball shattered a young soldier's leg, setting him on an unexpected path that would change the course of Church history.

That turning point in the life of St Ignatius of Loyola comes alive in *FRANIGO: The Call Beyond,* a musical presented by the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya, from November 25 to 29.

The production traces the friendship between Ignatius and St Francis Xavier, two men whose encounter would help shape the beginnings of the Society of Jesus.

Once driven by worldly ambition, Ignatius underwent a spiritual transformation during his recovery. Years later in Paris, he challenged Francis, an ambitious young scholar, with a question: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

Francis eventually answered a missionary calling that took him to Asia, including Malacca, while Ignatius remained in Rome to lead the growing Jesuit order.

For director Judith Koh, the musical explores how encounters with God, friendship and life's challenges can transform hearts and reveal unexpected callings.

FRANIGO invites audiences to reflect on their own ambitions, the choices that shape their lives and their willingness to respond to God's call, even when it leads them down unexpected paths. **Joanna Destiny**

Pope Leo meets music legend Bob Dylan

VATICAN: Nearly three decades after performing before Pope John Paul II, legendary American singer-songwriter Bob Dylan returned to the Vatican on November 4, this time for a personal encounter with Pope Leo XIV.

The meeting at the Apostolic Palace brought together the 85-year-old Nobel Prize-winning musician and a Pontiff who had recently drawn upon Dylan's lyrics to warn against the dangers of nuclear weapons and global rearmament.

Dressed casually in a black hooded sweatshirt, Dylan exchanged greetings and a few lighthearted remarks with Pope Leo during the brief audience. The Pope presented him with a rosary, while Dylan offered a copy of his autobiography, *Chronicles: Volume One.*

The encounter came as Dylan was in Italy for the autumn leg of his Rough and Rowdy Ways tour, with a concert scheduled at Rome's Palazzo dello Sport on Nov 5, followed by performances in Milan and Bologna. The concerts have attracted attention for their strict ban on smartphone recordings.

The meeting also carried a literary connection.



In July, Pope Leo had quoted Dylan's 1963 anti-nuclear protest song, *Go Away You Bomb,* in his preface to *Disarmed and Disarming: Peace Is a Gift,* a book published by the Vatican Publishing House and edited by journalist Alessandro Banfi.

Written during the height of Cold War tensions, the song addresses the atomic bomb directly, condemning humanity's creation and control of such a destructive weapon.

The composition was never officially recorded or released on an album, and its original manuscript remained largely unknown until its discovery in 2013.

By invoking Dylan's words, Pope Leo underscored the continuing threat posed by nuclear weapons and the urgent need for disarmament.

Dylan's latest meeting with a Pope recalls a memorable moment in 1997, when he performed before Pope John Paul II and approximately 300,000 young people at the 23rd National Eucharistic Congress in Bologna.

After performing three songs, including *Knockin' on Heaven's Door,* Dylan removed his cowboy hat, climbed the steps to the papal stage and greeted John Paul II with a handshake.

The Polish Pontiff subsequently drew upon Dylan's celebrated song *Blowin' in the Wind* in his address to the young people, reflecting on the question of how many roads a person must travel to discover the meaning of being human.

John Paul II offered a distinctly Christian response: "Only one. There is only one road for man, and that is the road of Jesus Christ."

Almost 30 years later, Dylan's music has once again found its way into a papal message, this time through Pope Leo's appeal for peace and disarmament.

For an artist whose songs have challenged generations to confront injustice, war and the human condition, the Vatican encounter offered another reminder of how music and poetry can speak to questions of faith, conscience and humanity's future. **Vatican News**

Churches urged to combat child trafficking

CHIANG MAI, Thailand: Churches across Asia must move from raising awareness about child trafficking to taking concrete action to prevent exploitation, protect vulnerable children and support survivors, Church leaders and advocates stressed at an international consultation in Thailand recently.

Organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), the *International Consultation on Strengthening Responses to Child Trafficking in Asia* brought together Church representatives, social workers and advocates to examine vulnerabilities and strengthen cooperation.

Rev Sandipan Sinha highlighted the Church of North India's Diocese of Durgapur, which has supported marginalised communities in West Bengal since 2011 through education, shelter and livelihood programmes.



(Matters India photo)

Its St Michael Safe Home in Malda provides shelter and education for girls who have experienced trafficking or are at risk, while livelihood initiatives help vulnerable families achieve economic independence.

Major Divinia Yaun of the Salvation Army, Philippines, stressed that child protection requires effective safeguarding policies, clear reporting procedures and regular training for clergy, staff and volunteers.

She also called for greater awareness of children's rights, abuse prevention and digital safety, alongside stronger cooperation with government agencies and child protection professionals.

Keiko Saito of Japan's Christian Women's Organisation highlighted the stigma faced by sexually exploited children, warning that blaming victims discourages them from seeking help and allows perpetrators to escape accountability.

Indonesian human rights advocate John Izaac Minotty Pattiwael raised concerns about weak law enforcement, corruption and inadequate coordination. He stressed that survivor support must include long-term rehabilitation, psychological care and legal assistance.

The speakers agreed that no single Church or organisation could address trafficking alone. Effective prevention demands sustained cooperation among Churches, governments, civil society and local communities.

Rev Irma Balaba of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines urged Churches to confront the injustices enabling exploitation, listen to children and uphold their dignity.

The consultation reaffirmed that protecting children is a shared Christian responsibility requiring practical action, accountability and lasting commitment. **Matters India**

Pope appoints France's youngest bishop



SOISSONS, France: Pope Leo XIV has appointed Fr Martial Bernard, 48, as Bishop of Soissons, making him France's youngest bishop when he receives episcopal ordination on December 20.

The bishop-designate expressed confidence in accepting his new responsibility, telling Catholic television channel *KTO:* "I have always trusted the Church, and so I say that if it calls me to this mission, I respond 'yes' with confidence."

Born on January 26, 1978, in Bourg-la-Reine, he studied at seminaries in France and Belgium before obtaining a licentiate in theology from the Catholic Institute of Paris, specialising in catechetical and practical theology.

Ordained a priest on June 25, 2005, he has held numerous pastoral and administrative responsibilities, including parish priest, cathedral rector, diocesan vocations delegate and episcopal vicar for Catholic education.

His more recent responsibilities have included overseeing the permanent diaconate, catechesis, ecumenism, interreligious relations and chaplaincies.

His episcopal ordination and installation will take place at Saint-Gervais-et-Saint-Protais Cathedral in Soissons. **EWTN News**



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One Church, a shared mission of love





Patricia Pereira

A bag of rice can help a family through the week. A school allowance can keep a child learning. A lift to hospital can make an appointment possible.

Such acts matter. For a family facing an empty cupboard or an overdue bill, practical assistance can bring immediate relief. Responding promptly and generously is an essential expression of care.

But when the groceries have been delivered and the volunteers have left, another question remains: does that family have a place in the life of the community?

For the tenth World Day of the Poor on November 15, Pope Leo XIV's message invites us to consider what it means to offer refuge. Its theme, *The Lord is the refuge of the poor* (cf. Psalm 14:6), challenges Christians to make God's care tangible through their relationships and choices.

In Jesus, God entered the vulnerability of human life. In Matthew 25, Jesus identifies Himself with those who hunger, thirst, need clothing or are strangers, sick or imprisoned. Our response to their needs becomes an encounter with Him.

This gives the Church's social mission its deepest meaning. It is central to our Christian vocation. Prayer and worship should form hearts ready to recognise Christ in those who need our care.

In Malaysia, that welcome must reach across differences of race, religion and nationality. A neighbour's need is sufficient reason to care.

This conviction also runs through the Malaysian bishops' pastoral letter, *One Church, One Social Mission, One Malaysia* which calls for a united social mission through Caritas Malaysia *(see back page)*.

The bishops have also formally mandated Caritas Malaysia as the Church's national social mission and coordination body. Its responsibilities include strengthening diocesan organisations through formation, training and shared resources, and coordinating national fundraising and responses to disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

This work is guided by subsidiarity: national cooperation should support local initiative and responsibility. Across the nine dioceses, the mandate gives existing efforts a stronger framework for collaboration and mutual support.



Volunteers working together to clean-up the flood-affected houses. (Caritas Kota Kinabalu)

The need for this shared response becomes clearer when we consider how unevenly hardship is experienced across Malaysia. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, absolute poverty affected 5.1 per cent of households in 2024. Yet the rural rate was 10 per cent, while Sabah recorded 17.7 per cent.

These figures cannot tell us how a parent decides which bill to postpone. Nor does crossing an income threshold mean that a household can withstand losing a job or facing serious illness.

Someone sitting beside us at Sunday Mass may be calculating whether the money remaining will cover food and transport until payday.

Local Church initiatives already respond to such pressures. Caritas Penang describes how volunteers at the Church of Christ the King in Sungai Petani combine food outreach with support for children's education and accompaniment of the sick. At the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Ipoh, free tuition includes meals and transport, addressing practical barriers to learning.

In Sabah, Caritas Kota Kinabalu and partner parishes returned to flood-affected communities in Paitan earlier this year, assisting families whose recovery was hindered by limited infrastructure and existing hardship.

These efforts deserve gratitude, especially when volunteers serve quietly, month after month. Their local knowledge and trusted relationships provide a foundation for the shared mission.

Through stronger cooperation, a volunteer could access specialist advice, a parish could learn from an effective initiative elsewhere, or concerns from a remote community could receive wider attention. The mandate provides a framework through which such support can grow.

This shared mission must also address the pressures that keep people vulnerable: insecure work, the marginalisation of migrants and refugees, and uncertainty facing young people in a changing economy.

These pressures, compounded by transport costs and unpaid caregiving, can leave families struggling despite their best efforts. Pope Leo similarly connects the suffering of the poor with injustice, corruption and exclusion.

A parish cannot solve every problem. It can help someone navigate services, connect with trained support or pursue education. Catholic employers and professionals can contribute through fair wages, prompt payment and opportunities for training and employment.

The Church's own employment practices, spending priorities and programme costs also belong in this examination of conscience.

Respect for human dignity must guide our efforts to change unjust conditions and shape every personal encounter. At a Caritas Malaysia formation programme for the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur earlier this year, Fr Fabian Dicom, Director of Caritas Malaysia, expressed this clearly: "Dignity is given, not earned."

A person's worth does not rise with a salary or diminish with a request for help. We honour that dignity by protecting privacy, seeking permission before sharing someone's story and ensuring that assistance never becomes humiliating.

Parish life should make such dignity visible. Can a young person join an activity without publicly explaining why the cost is unaffordable? Discreet assistance and thoughtful planning can make participation possible.

People experiencing poverty also bring abilities, judgement, faith and generosity. A parent receiving support may recognise needs that a parish committee has overlooked. They should help shape the responses that affect them.

Their experience of persevering through uncertainty can deepen a community's understanding of trust and solidarity. Their skills, friendships and service can enrich parish life. Receiving assistance should leave room for these contributions to be recognised, without making anyone feel obliged to repay the help received.

Pope Leo asks: "Do we listen to their thoughts and share their hopes?"

That question belongs in our parish councils, BECs and ministry meetings. It asks whether we are willing to learn from the people we hope to serve.

The bishops' appeal for volunteers gives this listening a practical direction. November 15 can be a beginning: offering time and skills, making regular visits, removing a financial barrier or accompanying a family through a clearly identified difficulty. Each commitment can become part of a shared mission sustained throughout the year.

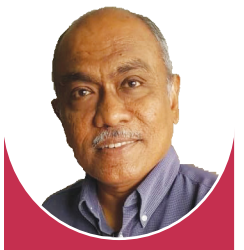
When we next bring groceries to a family, may we also make time to know them. May our care open the way to friendships in which their hopes matter and their gifts are welcomed.

And may they come to know that this community is their home, too.



The Sahabat Orang Asli team providing a meal for the Orang Asli children.(St Michael Church, Ipoh)

Catechesis on the Liturgy



Echoing the Faith

Dr Steven Selvaraju

In the last article, I examined the relationship between catechesis and liturgy. I stated that both Church functions are closely interrelated. In general, this relationship may be seen from two perspectives: catechesis on the liturgy and catechesis in the liturgy. In this article, I will discuss the first perspective.

Liturgy as content for catechesis

In the early centuries of the Church, liturgy was mostly experienced rather than taught in a catechetical setting. Believers learned the faith directly through their participation in the liturgy. If there was any type of "teaching" to be done, it was through the homilies preached by the bishops. These took the form of catechetical or mystagogical homilies. Even during the Middle Ages, the main form of "teaching" was the homilies preached by priests at Holy Mass.

It was many centuries later, especially after the 16th-century Protestant Reformation, that the liturgy itself became a form of content for catechesis. As Protestant reformers and the Catholic Church produced standardised written catechisms, both groups wanted to clarify the meaning of the liturgy and the sacraments for their members. The Catholic Church, for her part, published the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (1566), wherein the content of faith was structured according to the four pillars of the Catholic faith: Profession of Faith (Creed), Liturgy (Sacraments), Moral Life (Commandments), and Prayer.

Over the subsequent four centuries, liturgy was more often taught conceptually as part of the catechetical syllabus. The main intention was to prepare children and teenagers for the Sacraments of Initiation. The theoretical meaning and significance of the liturgy and the sacraments were overemphasised, and little attention was given to the fact that the liturgy itself is catechetical in nature. However, modern liturgical movements, particularly in the 20th century and through the Second Vatican Council, helped restore unity between catechesis and liturgy while stressing that the liturgy itself is a core form of catechesis.

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) — which Pope St John Paul II called "a sure norm of teaching the faith" and "a sure and authentic reference text for preparing local catechisms" (*Laetamur Magnopere,* 1997) — the content of faith is also structured according to the four pillars mentioned above. However, in this instance, the Church points out that its purpose is not merely to lay down the content of faith to be taught, but to present the faith in an organic manner and in its entirety. In this way, she stresses that liturgy cannot be viewed apart from the Creed, Commandments, and Prayer.

Liturgical education as a task of catechesis

Since the Second Vatican Council, the term used for teaching the liturgy in catechesis has been "liturgical education" or "liturgical catechesis". In general, liturgical education is concerned with explaining the meaning of the liturgy and the sacraments, the different signs and symbols, the liturgical year, the sacramentals, and the proper ways of participating in the liturgy.

In catechetical directories published in recent years, liturgical education is codified as one of the six official tasks of catechesis. According to the *General Catechetical Directory* (1971), liturgical catechesis must promote knowledge of the meaning of the liturgy and the sacraments among the faithful and help educate them "for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for praying in confidence and for community spirit," as all of these are necessary for a true liturgical life (GCD, 25).

The *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997) points out that liturgical catechesis, besides explaining what Christian liturgy and the sacraments are, must also "offer an experience of the different kinds of celebration and make symbols and gestures, etc. known and loved" (GDC, 87).

The *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) states that liturgical catechesis has the task of assisting Catholics to comprehend and experience the liturgy. Through this task, catechesis "helps the believer to understand the importance of the liturgy in the Church's life, initiate him into the knowledge of the sacraments and sacramentals, especially the Eucharist" (DC, 81).

The same directory also points out that catechesis must educate believers in the attitudes required in liturgical celebrations. These include a sense of community, attentive listening to the Word of God, confident prayer, praise and thanksgiving, awareness of signs and symbols, and others (DC, 82). In addition, education regarding the liturgical year and the significance of Sunday as the Lord's Day is a task of catechesis, as well as helping foster an appreciation for popular piety.

Continued fragmentation between catechesis and liturgy

In spite of the efforts made to re-establish the relationship between liturgy and catechesis, the Church acknowledges that the manner in which catechesis is carried out even today often shows "a weak and fragmentary link with the liturgy". This can be seen in "the limited attention to liturgical symbols and rites, scant use of the liturgical fonts, catechetical resources with little or no connection with the liturgical year; the marginalisation of liturgical celebrations in catechetical programmes" (GDC, 30).

In the document *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), Pope St John Paul II pointed out that while catechesis plays a crucial role in preparing the faithful to receive the sacraments, it is essential that the link between the way the sacraments are taught and the sacraments themselves is closely maintained. According to the Pope, "... sacramental life is impoverished and very soon turns to hollow ritualism if it is not based on serious knowledge of the meaning of the sacraments, and catechesis becomes intellectualised if it fails to come alive in sacramental practice" (CT, 23).

The *Directory for Catechesis* highlights the fact that there is still a tendency to view the role of catechesis as mainly preparing children and teenagers for the Sacraments of Initiation. The faithful are reminded that liturgical catechesis must lead all believers — children, youth, and adults — to a meaningful and active experience of the liturgy. Catechesis can only reach its true fulfillment when the person being catechised takes part in the liturgical life of the community in a meaningful way (DC, 96).

Conclusion

The liturgy, as the summit and source of the Church's life and action, is an essential aspect of catechesis. In this regard, catechesis must take seriously its important role in helping all the faithful — children, youth, and adults — come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the liturgy, enabling them to engage in active, conscious, and genuine participation in the liturgical life of the Church.

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



Without families, what future do we have?

Declining birth rates and changing attitudes towards marriage and parenthood are raising serious questions about society's future. More young people are choosing to remain single, while some married couples opt not to have children, embracing their pets as part of the family instead.

The implications extend far beyond individual households. Ageing populations, shrinking workforces and growing demands on healthcare and social support systems pose significant challenges worldwide. Yet economic realities also influence these decisions, as rising living costs, financial insecurity and the expense of raising children make starting a family increasingly daunting for many young couples.

But the concern is not merely demographic or economic. At stake is the place of the family as the foundation of society and a community where love, responsibility and solidarity are first learnt.

Pope Francis repeatedly encouraged families to welcome children. More recently, Pope Leo XIV, recalling the Second Vatican Council's *Gaudium et spes,* reaffirmed the dignity of marriage as a lifelong communion of love and mutual self-giving.

Marriage is not sustained by romantic attraction alone. It requires fidelity, tenderness, sacrifice and the willingness to face difficulties together. Children are precious gifts, and parents share in God's creative love through the responsibility of nurturing and educating them.

The Church also recognises that responsible parenthood requires prayerful discernment, taking into account the circumstances and well-being of each family.

Protecting family life is therefore a shared responsibility. Couples need encouragement, understanding and practical support, particularly when facing financial pressures, relationship difficulties and the demands of raising children.

Let us help young people recognise the beauty of marriage and family life, while encouraging spouses to persevere in love, mutual respect and commitment.

A society that neglects its families risks weakening the very relationships on which its future depends. **Cardinal Felipe Arizmendi, Exaudi News**

● ***Cardinal Felipe is the bishop emeritus of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Mexico.***



Trees, art and bells tell a parish's 180-year story

Benedict Tang

SINGAPORE: A missionary's gravestone, a fruit tree planted more than six decades ago and seven new bells tell different chapters of the same story at the Church of St Joseph in Bukit Timah.

About 20 visitors discovered the parish's rich heritage on October 31 during a free two-hour guided tour of one of Singapore's oldest Catholic communities.

The tour was organised by the Catholic Architectural Guild with the parish's heritage guides. A lay apostolate of Catholic architects, the guild welcomes Catholics and non-Catholics to discover the faith through church architecture. Previous tours have included Novena Church.

St Joseph's traces its beginnings to 1846, when Fr Anatole Mauduit of the Paris Foreign Missions Society built a small chapel near the Kranji River for Chinese Christians working on plantations. The community moved to its present hillside site in 1853.

In the Rosary Garden, his gravestone records that he served as a missionary "for 12 years on this mountain". He died in 1858, and his remains now lie in the parish columbarium. The archdiocese describes the parish as the final resting place of many early missionaries.

A guide added another detail to his story: he planted nutmeg trees and sold their fruit.

The present church, distinguished by its Chinese-style green roof, was expanded under Fr Joachim Teng, who served the parish from 1949 to 1972. It was blessed on August 30, 1964. This year, the parish is marking its 180th anniversary with a plenary indulgence granted by Pope Leo XIV.

Even the trees have stories to tell.

A velvet apple tree was brought from the old seminary in Punggol and planted in 1962 by Msgr Francis Lau, then a young priest on his first posting and now 93. The guide said she had checked the story with him.

Nearby stands a roughly 70-year-old fig tree, moved from Thomson Road by a Catholic couple, and a bilimbi tree estimated to be 70 to 80 years old. The parish's Society of St Vincent de Paul also grows vegetables for the families it assists.

Inside the church, artist Dianne Minnaar painted the Scriptural Stations of the Cross on kneelers salvaged from old church pews, retaining their worn edges and nail holes "to symbolise Christ's suffering", according to an accompanying plaque.

This form of the devotion was used by St John Paul II on Good Friday in 1991.

The parish's newest addition is its bell tower. Architect Thomas Lew, who designed it with his wife, explained how practical constraints helped shape its form.

Height and space restrictions, rail safety requirements and parking needs shaped the design. An initial proposal for seven towers, one for each bell, was reduced to four to save space and cost.

The parish linked the four towers to the four marks of the Church professed in the Creed: one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

Named after saints including St Joseph, St Francis Xavier and St Carlo Acutis, the bells ring before the noon Angelus, weekend Masses and funerals.

"When you hear the church bell ring, you know you are near the church. You feel good," Lew said.

Jason Wong, 55, an Anglican whose parents and siblings are Catholic, had joined the tour out of curiosity.

What struck him was "the effort put in to start the church, the history and how the Bukit Timah location was chosen". He was also impressed by the growth of the Catholic faith and the commitment evident throughout the parish, extending even to the trees planted on its grounds.

The tour ended at the bell tower just before noon, as all seven bells rang.



Church facade. (photo/Benedict Tang)

● Those unable to visit can explore the church through its virtual tour: *https://bit.ly/4zltexK*

Benedict *is a Catholic writer in Singapore and a graduate of the Diploma in Theology programme at the Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore.*



Bell tower. (photo/Benedict Tang)



Scriptural Stations of the Cross. (photo/Benedict Tang)



The velvet apple tree in the Rosary Garden of the Church of St Joseph (Bukit Timah), planted in 1962 by Monsignor Francis Lau.

Wartime windows recall a parish's resilience

KAJANG: Fifty pilgrims exploring the heritage of the Church of the Holy Family on October 31 discovered three stained-glass panels that survived wartime bombing and a bell dated 1903.

Members of the Golden Elders Ministry (GEM) from the Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam accompanied by Fr George Harrison, visited the parish as part of its 125th Anniversary Jubilee celebrations.

Their guided walk brought them into contact with objects preserved through generations of parish life, each offering a glimpse of the community's faith and perseverance.

The jubilee marks 125 years since the consecration of the first stone church on the grounds in 1901. Although the parish's buildings have changed over the decades, reminders of its early years remain.

Among them are the three stained-glass panels, each depicting a member of the Holy Family. Dating from 1901, they survived the bombing of the church and school grounds on January 12, 1942, sustaining only minor damage despite the severe damage to the church.

Today, the panels are displayed at the rear of the sanctuary, linking the present congregation with those who worshipped in the earlier church.

The old bell, dated 1903, provided another tangible connection with the parish's past. Preserved through the decades, it recalled the generations who gathered for worship and the place of the church in their lives.

The visit also offered an encounter with the example of Sts Louis and Zélie Martin, the parents of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus, whose first-class relics are permanently housed at the church for public veneration.

Honoured as secondary patrons of the parish, the couple offer a model of holiness rooted in marriage, parenthood and everyday family life. For the Golden Elders, their witness was a reminder of the lasting importance of faith, love and family relationships.

Following the historical tour, the pilgrims gathered for Mass celebrated by Fr George, giving thanks and praying for their families, ministry and the wider Church. They also met parish priest, Fr Michael Chua, who welcomed the group.

A fellowship lunch provided time to share impressions of the visit and strengthen friendships before the pilgrims departed at about 12.30pm.

GEM member Casey Sathasivam described the pilgrimage as a grace-filled and memorable experience. The Jubilee walk, Mass and veneration of the relics had offered opportunities to renew faith and deepen fellowship.

He expressed appreciation to Fr George, Fr Michael and the Holy Family team for their hospitality, and to Raymond and Linda for organising the visit.

For the ministry, whose motto is "Growing Older, Living Bolder", the pilgrimage connected an appreciation of Christian heritage with the continuing call to prayer, gratitude and service.

The stained glass and old bell preserved the memory of earlier generations. The pilgrims' prayers and fellowship reflected the faith that continues to give that heritage life.

Linda Raymond



Members of the Golden Elders Ministry participating in the guided walk of the parish.



The stained-glass panels of the Holy Family.

Applause at Mass: Appreciation or distraction?



...The Church Mouse

There are moments during Mass when the solemnity of the liturgy gives way to an increasingly familiar sound — applause.

Perhaps the choir has delivered a particularly moving hymn. A visiting priest has been introduced, a distinguished guest acknowledged, first-time visitors welcomed to the parish, or parish volunteers thanked for their dedication. Almost instinctively, hands come together in appreciation.

Such gestures are usually well intentioned, springing from genuine gratitude, admiration, hospitality or joy.

But they raise a question worth reflecting upon: Is applause always appropriate during Holy Mass?

We live in a culture where applause has become almost automatic. We clap at concerts, speeches, performances and celebrations. It is our way of saying, "Well done!" or "Thank you!" Understandably, that same instinct sometimes finds its way into our churches.

Yet the Mass is unlike any other gathering.

It is not a concert, an awards ceremony or a community function, even though music, thanksgiving and communal participation are integral to its celebration. At its heart is the Eucharist, the sacramental making-present of Christ's one sacrifice on Calvary.

Everything within the liturgy — prayers, readings, music, gestures and sacred silence — is intended to direct our hearts towards God.

So, when applause breaks out, whom are we applauding?

Writing in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI, offered a challenging observation: "Wherever applause breaks out in the liturgy because of some human achievement, it is a sure sign that the essence of liturgy has totally disappeared and been replaced by a kind of religious entertainment."

Although Ratzinger was addressing theatrical performances introduced into the liturgy, his underlying concern remains relevant: when does our appreciation of human talent begin to overshadow the One whom we have gathered to worship?

Consider the choir.

A beautifully sung hymn can move us deeply, sometimes even to tears. We admire the harmony, dedication and countless hours of practice behind the music.

But sacred music is not simply an artistic performance inserted into Mass. It is an expression of prayer, intended to draw the congregation into deeper communion with God.

When the final note fades, should our instinct be to applaud the singers, or allow their prayer to continue resonating within us?

This does not diminish the choir's contribution. Indeed, their greatest achievement may be helping us forget the performers and turn our attention towards the Lord.

Perhaps the deeper question is not why we applaud, but why we sometimes feel compelled to do so.

Have we become so accustomed to expressing appreciation through clapping that we have forgotten the value of silence? Must every beautiful hymn receive an immediate response? Must every act of service be publicly acknowledged?

Or have we forgotten that some of life's most meaningful moments leave us speechless?

The same applies to priests, lectors, altar servers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, hospitality ministers and the many volunteers who serve our parishes.

Their dedication deserves genuine appreciation. Yet within the liturgy, the emphasis should remain not on those who serve, however generously, but on the God whom they serve.

Of course, this should not become another argument about what Catholics may or may not do.

The Church does not impose a universal prohibition on applause during Mass, nor should every spontaneous expression of joy be considered irreverent. There are occasions when applause expresses genuine communal thanksgiving, particularly during significant parish celebrations. Cultural sensitivities and pastoral circumstances also deserve consideration.

Nevertheless, something being permissible does not necessarily make it appropriate at every moment.

The question is not simply whether we can applaud, but whether doing so deepens our participation in the liturgy or distracts us from its sacred purpose.

There is also something worth rediscovering about silence.

In our increasingly noisy world, we seem uncomfortable with quiet, accustomed as we are to filling every pause with conversation, music or some form of acknowledgement.

Yet sacred silence is not an absence of participation. It is itself a form of prayer.

Reverence does not demand silence at every moment. The liturgy calls us to sing, respond and acclaim. But it also teaches us that there are moments when silence expresses what words and gestures cannot.

Imagine a choir completing a moving hymn, followed not by applause but by a few moments of prayerful silence.

Would that response be any less appreciative? Or might it better reflect what the music was intended to accomplish?

None of this means we should stop thanking those who serve. Our parishes depend upon countless people who generously give their time and talents, often without recognition.

A sincere word of thanks or personal expression of gratitude can sometimes mean far more than applause. Where public acknowledgement is appropriate, it can be reserved for a suitable occasion after the dismissal or outside the liturgical celebration.

Ultimately, this reflection is not about policing behaviour or measuring anyone's reverence by whether they clap.

It is about remembering why we gather around the altar.

We come not to be entertained, impressed or recognised, but to encounter Christ and be transformed by the Eucharist we celebrate.

Perhaps the next time we feel moved to applaud during Mass, we might consider a different response.

Could our prayerful silence sometimes speak louder than our applause?

Preparing for the one thing we cannot avoid



Encountering Faith

Thomson Emmanuel

Recently, I seem to have been hearing about death more often. Sometimes it comes through news of someone who has passed away, a conversation about someone who is unwell, or a reminder that someone we once knew is no longer here. When these moments come close together, they make you think.

I suspect many of us are the same. We know death is inevitable, yet we keep it somewhere in the background. There is always something more immediate: work, messages, plans for next week.

And yet, we prepare for almost everything else: examinations, interviews, weddings, holidays and retirement. Pilots spend hours in simulators preparing for situations they hope will never happen.

But there is one event every human being is guaranteed to experience, and strangely, it is the one we spend much of our lives avoiding.

Death.

Perhaps what frightens us is not simply that life will end. Death asks something we spend much of our lives resisting: surrender. Our possessions. Our plans. Our time. Our control. Eventually, even the version of ourselves we present to the world.

At death, there is finally nothing left to hold on to. Perhaps this is why the Christian life has always been teaching us how to let go.

When the masks fall

Throughout life, we become remarkably good at managing how others see us. We explain our failures, justify our decisions and hide certain wounds.

Sometimes we do the same before God.

The Church teaches that at death, each of us faces the particular judgment, when our life is brought fully before Christ.

Imagine that encounter as standing in perfect light.

Nothing hidden. Nothing edited. No excuses left to make. No reputation left to protect.

Perhaps part of our fear of death is really a fear of such total transparency. Yet God already knows who we are. The question is whether we are willing to stand before Him honestly now.

Practising surrender

This is where familiar Catholic practices begin to look different.

In Confession, we bring precisely what we would rather conceal. We stop defending ourselves and name our sins.

The mask comes down. And instead of humiliation, we encounter God's mercy.

The examination of conscience teaches us to look honestly at our lives in God's presence. In the Eucharist, we approach with empty hands and receive Someone we could never earn.

Perhaps these are not merely religious obligations. They are rehearsals in surrender.

To confess is to surrender pride. To forgive is to surrender resentment. To pray is to surrender the illusion that everything depends upon us.

Every surrender does more than change what we do. It changes who we are.

The person we are becoming

Many of us quietly assume there will be time later.

One day, I will pray more. One day, I will forgive. One day, I will loosen my grip on recognition and control. Then, when death comes, perhaps I will be ready for God.

But there is no spiritual reset button at death.

The person who will meet God then is the person being formed now.

We take ourselves into eternity. Our habits shape what our hearts desire. Forgiveness enlarges our capacity for mercy. Surrender loosens our need for control. Resentment and pride can shape us too.

Heaven is not simply a prize at the end of a successful Christian life. It is eternal communion with God. Our life now is already preparing our hearts for that communion.

We are allowing grace to retrain the soul's palate. Faith is not an insurance policy against Hell. It is allowing grace to form us for eternal communion with God.

And that formation happens in ordinary life too.

The time we never owned

Someone arrives late. Traffic ruins our schedule. Plans change without our permission.

And we become irritated.

Sometimes it is worth asking what lies underneath:

This is my time. My evening. My plans. My future.

Yet every morning we wake up to hours we did not create. We cannot buy another yesterday or guarantee ourselves tomorrow.

Time is given. We are its stewards, not its owners.

Eventually, there will be a tomorrow that is not given to us. If life belongs entirely to me, death feels like robbery. But if life has always been gift, death begins to look different.

What was entrusted is finally returned.

Perhaps all those smaller acts of surrender have been preparing us to place everything back into God's hands.

But the final surrender is not made into emptiness.

We do not die alone

We often imagine death as a lonely crossing into the unknown. Yet Scripture speaks of being "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1).

The Communion of Saints reminds us that Christian life has never been simply "me and God". From Baptism onwards, we belong to a Body extending beyond what our eyes can see.

Perhaps death is not like stepping alone into an empty room.

Perhaps it is discovering that the room was crowded all along.

The saints. The faithful who went before us. And, above all, Christ Himself.

Perhaps, then, the question is not simply, "Am I ready to die?"

Maybe a better question is: Am I learning how to surrender?

Perhaps the best preparation for death is not anxiously thinking about dying. It is surrendering ourselves to God in a thousand small ways, so that our final surrender is not our first.

Then, when the masks fall and there is nothing left to defend, possess or control, the One before whom we stand completely known will not be a stranger. He will be the One into whose hands we have spent our whole lives learning to surrender.

Thomson Emmanuel Wong *is from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang. He enjoys exploring the depth, beauty, and meaning of the Catholic faith, inviting readers to discover its richness with fresh eyes and a deeper appreciation.*



Fr Dr Clarence Devadass

The Church needs faces, not just screens

Some weeks ago, someone came to see me and enthusiastically showed me a new parish app. It was impressive. Through the app, parishioners could check Mass times, register for activities, download forms, make Mass or meeting room bookings, and access various parish activities. Much of what previously required a phone call, a visit to the parish office or a conversation with a member of the parish ministry could now be done with a few taps on a screen.

I could not help but admire the possibilities. Technology has certainly made many things easier, and there is much to be grateful for.

But after the excitement of seeing what the app could do, another thought came to mind: if we can now do almost everything through an app, what happens to the other things that can only happen through an encounter with another person?

It reminded me of Cliff Richard's 1979 song *We Don't Talk Anymore.* The song is about a relationship in which conversation has broken down, but its title seems remarkably appropriate for our digital age. We have never had so many ways to communicate, and yet there is a growing sense that we are actually talking to one another less and less.

Many conversations have been reduced to emails, text messages, WhatsApp replies and voice notes. We send messages while walking, eating, working, or even sitting with other people. Sometimes conversations that deserve our attention are reduced to a few words on a screen, accompanied by an emoji to express what we supposedly feel.

There was a time when talking meant actually sitting down with someone. We looked at the other person. We listened not only to the words but also to the pauses, expressions, and tone of voice. We noticed when someone was uncomfortable, worried or simply needed someone to listen. A conversation took time, and perhaps that was precisely its value.

I remember during the first few years of my priesthood how parishes were rushing to establish websites. Baptism and wedding forms could be downloaded online. Mass times and parish activities could be accessed without having to call the parish office. It was, in many ways, a welcome development.

Today, not having such facilities can make a parish appear archaic. A parish should make good use of the tools available to it. But perhaps, somewhere along the way, we have confused efficient communication with meaningful communication.

A parish can have an excellent website, an active WhatsApp group, regular social media updates and even an app through which almost everything can be arranged. Yet parishioners may still not know one another. Information may be flowing constantly while relationships are becoming weaker.

People increasingly come to church only on Sundays. They attend Mass and then leave. There may be few opportunities to drop in, sit quietly, speak informally with the priest or simply spend a few moments in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

The parish runs the risk of becoming simply a digital service centre. But a parish is not merely an organisation that communicates information. It is a family of faith. And families cannot be built entirely through screens.

Consider what happens when someone is sick in hospital or at home. It is wonderful that technology allows us to reach them immediately. A message can assure them that we are thinking of them. A voice message can convey our prayers. A video call can bridge physical distance.

But sometimes the message is all we offer.

"Hope you are feeling better."

"Praying for you."

"Take care."

These words are good, but there are moments when a person needs more than another message. They need someone to sit beside them.

They need a warm smile. They need someone to listen without looking at a screen. They may need a comforting embrace, a prayer whispered beside their bed or simply the quiet presence of another human being.

These things cannot be downloaded.

The same is true within parish life. A parishioner who has been absent from Mass for several weeks may not need another automated reminder. Perhaps someone needs to notice their absence and ask, "Is everything all right?"

A young person who seems withdrawn may not need another parish announcement. Perhaps someone needs to sit down with them and listen.

An elderly parishioner may appreciate a WhatsApp message wishing them well, but perhaps what they really need is someone to visit them.

This is where pastoral ministry recovers its true meaning. Ministry is not simply about transmitting information. It is about presence, encounter and relationship.

Artificial intelligence can now help us do many things. It can draft letters, translate languages, organise information and assist us with tasks that once took considerable time. These are remarkable possibilities, and we should not be afraid of them.

But technology, including AI, cannot replace human presence. It can produce words, but it cannot take our place in accompanying another person through the ordinary joys and struggles of life. The Church must therefore embrace technology without allowing technology to determine what the Church becomes.

Jesus did not communicate salvation through a text message. He walked with people. He sat at their tables. He listened to their stories. He touched those who were hurting. He ate with them, wept with them and rejoiced with them.

This is especially important as we seek to become a more synodal Church. Synodality is not simply better communication. It is the willingness to listen, to encounter, to discern together and to walk with one another.

We cannot become a synodal parish simply by creating another WhatsApp group.

We must never forget that the Church is not a website, an app, a WhatsApp group or a digital platform. The Church is people.

Therefore, the true measure of a parish's "success" is not how many followers it has on social media, but whether there is a vibrant community where people know and feel at home with one another, speak with one another and genuinely care for one another.

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



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Love and Hate

Hate isn't the opposite of love; indifference is. Hate is love gone wrong, and how easily that happens.

D.H. Lawrence once wrote a poem he called *History*, which reads like this:

The listless beauty of the hour
When snow first fell on the apple trees
And the wood-ash gathered in the fire
And we faced our first miseries.

Then the sweeping sunshine of noon
When the mountains like chariot cars
Were ranked to blue battle-and you, and I
Counted our scars.

And then in a strange, grey hour
We lay mouth to mouth, with your face
Under mine like a star on the lake
And I covered the earth, and all space.

The silent, drifting hours
Of morn after morn
And night drifting up to night
Yet no pathway worn.

Your life, and mine, my love
Passing on and on, the hate
Fusing closer and closer with love
Til at length they mate.

At the beginning of every love, romantic or not, the dream for that love is connected to an ideal of purity, mutuality, and respect. Every real love begins with the idea that this time we'll get it right, that we won't make the mistakes we've made other times, that this time love will sustain its magic. And in the early stages of love, that ideal is spontaneously respected, as is the other person.

In the stage of attraction, flirtation, and infatuation, love takes its roots in the poetic imagination and enrobes itself, figuratively, in whiteness, in purity, in all that's best inside us. Figuratively, it puts on a baptismal robe because it senses that here, finally, there will be rebirth.

There's nothing as potentially life-giving and redeeming as falling in love. It recolours the world completely. As the great novelist, Iris Murdoch once said: "The world can change in fifteen seconds, when you fall in love."

But the world, as we know, can also turn indifferent, dark, and angry in fifteen seconds, or fifteen years. Most of us won't die like Romeo and Juliet, still in the grip of that bliss-producing, soul-searing, divine fever we call "falling in love", where dying for love seems not too high a price to pay.

However, time, familiarity, differences, restlessness, old immaturities, wounded pride, a wandering eye, and simple selfishness soon enough begin to work at dispelling the magic. Where we once couldn't get enough of each other, where we swallowed our hurts and pride and were willing like Romeo and Juliet to die for each other, we now begin to count our scars, to let things drift, and no longer search habitually for the path towards the other's door. Hate begins to fuse with love, resentments creep in, and we slowly reclaim our singleness.

What D.H. Lawrence so brilliantly describes in this poem is how gradually and imperceptibly love can lose its purity, its divine fever, and its divine intent, even in its most intense expressions.

And what he is referring to is not that (healthy) innate structure within the very dynamics of love itself, love's night of the soul, where love pressures us toward maturity beyond infatuation, illusion, and selfishness.

He is referring to a disease that can creep into a relationship when, for whatever reason, familiarity begins to breed contempt and disrespect, and the ideal that originally triggered that love is lost. Milan Kundera once said that when the idea that a love was founded on dies, then the love dies too. More accurately, it doesn't die but it begins to fuse with hate.

Real love is always founded on the ideal of purity, mutuality, and respect. In our heart of hearts, we want what's right, what's best; we don't want to stain what we love. And this implies things far beyond sex.

When we first say the words, "I love you," and mean them, our hearts connect us to an ideal, a dream, a divine form, and a purity rooted in what's best in us. But once we begin to compromise that ideal through any kind of disrespect or infidelity, we begin the slide down that slippery slope that Lawrence describes here, and no expression of intimacy, the sexual bed included, will easily redeem the initial dream for that love. Our love then begins imperceptibly to sleep with hate, until we can no longer tell the difference. Our relationship then will produce as much resentment as delight, and we will soon find ourselves becoming strangers to each other.

When we are baptised, we are clothed in a white dress to symbolise purity, and words are spoken over us to remind us that this white garment is the outward sign of our inner dignity, and our challenge is to bring that dignity unstained into eternal life. But unless we die young, this is not an easy task. Even so, what's symbolised by our baptismal robes must be the poetic dream for every love in our lives, complete with the challenge of bringing that love home without the stain of hatred.

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

LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER

Dear children,

Have you ever been given a special gift or talent? Perhaps you are good at singing, drawing, playing football or helping others. Did you know that God has given each of us special gifts to use?

In the Gospel today, Jesus tells a story about a man who was going on a journey. Before leaving, he gave three servants money to look after. He gave five talents to one servant, two to another and one to the third. In Jesus' time, a talent was a large amount of money. The servants were expected to make good use of what their master had entrusted to them.

The first two servants put the money they received to good use. But the third servant was afraid and buried his money in the ground. He did nothing with it. When the master returned, he was pleased with the first two servants because they had faithfully used what he had entrusted to them. However, he was disappointed with the third servant for not making use of what he had received.

Jesus' story reminds us to make good use of everything God entrusts to us, including our own gifts and abilities. Some may be good at studying, while others may enjoy sports, music or making friends. We should not compare ourselves with others or think our gifts are not good enough.

Sometimes, we may feel afraid to try something new or worry about making mistakes. We can ask God for courage and take a small first step.

God does not expect us to be good at everything. He wants us to use our gifts faithfully and with love. This week, choose one gift God has given you and use it to help someone.

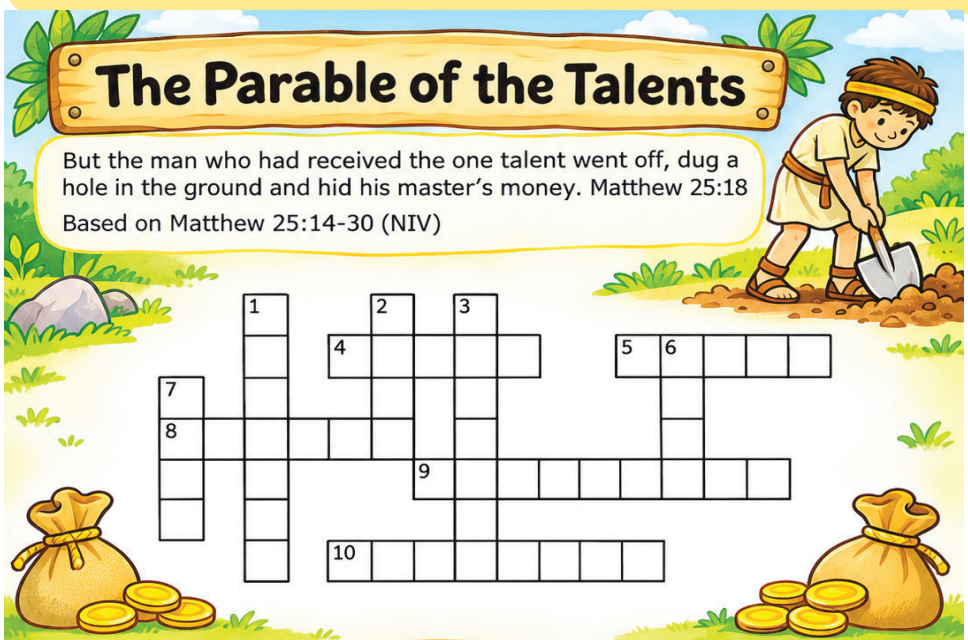


Love, Aunty C

The Parable of the Talents

But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. Matthew 25:18

Based on Matthew 25:14-30 (NIV)



ACROSS

4. The coins and bills that are used to buy things
5. To divide or use something with others
8. To be filled with fear
9. A feeling of pleasure, satisfaction, or joy
10. To be trusted or loyal

DOWN

1. A trip, especially one over a great distance
2. The opposite of bad
3. A person who is employed to do work for another person
6. Put something in a place where it cannot be found
7. Not willing to work

AFRAID	HAPPINESS	LAZY	JOURNEY	FAITHFUL
GOOD	HIDE	SHARE	MONEY	SERVANT

Bible Memory Verse



MERTSA _ _ _ _ _ _ (1)

GNAIED _ _ _ _ _ _ (4)

NEOMY _ _ _ _ _ (5)

TSRVNEA _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (2 6)

AZLY _ _ _ _ (3)

Don't bury your _____. ANSWER: _ _ _ _ _ _ (1 2 3 4 5 6)

For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

Matthew 25:29 (NIV)

ANSWERS

master gained money servant lazy talent

Don't Bury Your Talent!



COMPLETE THE SENTENCE

1. God gave me the gift of _____.
2. I can use this gift to _____.
3. Instead of hiding my gift, I can _____.

Matthew 25:29 (NIV)

YOUTH



Pope's WYD message

HAVE COURAGE, BRING CHRIST'S LOVE TO THE WORLD

VATICAN: Open your hearts to Christ and allow His courage, peace and love to win over the darkness and suffering in our world, Pope Leo XIV told young people in a message released on November 3 for the 2026 World Youth Day, celebrated on November 22.

"Bring to Christ your questions and your wounds, but also the wounds that tear apart your societies and set your countries against one another," the Pope wrote.

"Bring to Him this creation that groans and suffers, the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, which Pope Francis taught us to hear."

World Youth Day is celebrated annually at the diocesan level. The next international gathering is scheduled from August 3 to 8, 2027, in Seoul, South Korea, with the theme: *Take courage! I have overcome the world* (John 16:33).

Signed on Oct 22, the feast of St John Paul II, Pope Leo's message invited young people to prepare not only for their journey to Seoul, but also to prepare their hearts.

"Do not wait until you are perfect before opening yourselves to Him. He comes to meet you just as you are. Open your lives to Christ. Open your communities to Christ. Open the paths that lead to the hearts of the people you will meet," the Pope insisted.

Christ walks with us across life's troubled waters

The Pope acknowledged that taking courage is not always easy, as many young people carry questions and concerns that weigh heavily on their hearts.

He reflected on anxieties about the future, the pressure to succeed, comparisons with "curated images on social media," and feelings of loneliness or not being good enough.

Pope Leo called on young people not to despair, recalling how the disciples were frightened when caught in a storm on a lake.

"Even before you begin to seek Christ, He is already seeking you, walking across the troubled waters of life," he explained.

"Christ himself certainly did not live a life free from storms, nor does He promise us one. Yet no darkness or suffering is stronger than His love. He will never abandon you."

Bring Christ's gentle courage to wounded world

The Pope recalled how Jesus came to the disciples' aid by walking on water, encouraging them to take courage as He had overcome the world.

"This courage does not come from your own determination or strength of character. It comes from trusting in the One who goes before you; it is born of faith in Jesus Christ," the Pope stressed.

"Christ does not call you to flee from this world, but to see it through His eyes and touch it with His love, which heals all things."

"Jesus did not love the world from a distance," he reminded young people.

In a world "marked by injustice, tensions and fears," Pope Leo urged Christians to show love in the face of harshness, choose peace over confrontation and promote hope amid cynicism.

Victory of giving oneself out of love

The Pope reflected on what "victory" over the world means for Christians. It is not about being stronger than others or proving our worth, but loving freely "without counting the cost," as Christ did.

"Have the courage to be your true selves before God and others. Your dignity does not come from the image you manage to create for yourselves. You are precious because you have been created in the image of God, known by Him and loved by Him."

Discovering this love, he explained, allows us to move beyond ourselves and give generously to others.

Courage of seeing our limitations

The Pope then focused on the "courage of humility," allowing Christ to enter our lives and change them.

He warned against the belief that we must do everything on our own, constantly striving to improve ourselves, which can lead us to think we are our own saviours.

Instead, the Gospel calls us to accept help, acknowledge our limitations and allow ourselves to be saved by Christ.

"Opening your hearts to Christ will not cause you to lose yourselves. On the contrary, you will discover more deeply who you are in God's eyes and come to know yourselves as He sees you," the Pope assured young people.

"Everything is transformed by love. Many regard love as a form of weakness, but Christ shows us that it is a source of freedom and strength."

Break down the doors of your hearts and communities

Lastly, the Pope recalled that faith does not "dispel the darkness" but neither does it "leave us alone in it," just as Christ appeared to the frightened disciples locked in the Upper Room.

"Perhaps there are doors in your own hearts, and in the communities to which you belong, that remain closed because of disappointments, wounds, resentments or feelings of guilt," the Pope wrote. "Christ comes to offer you His peace and to reconcile you with one another."

"The gift of His peace fills us with a courage that the world cannot give, a courage through which, despite our wounds, fear no longer has the final word." **Vatican News**

St Carlo named patron of Tanjung Malim parish youth



TANJUNG MALIM: The Church of the Most Holy Redeemer has chosen St Carlo Acutis as patron of its children and youth, hoping the teenage saint's love for the Eucharist and use of technology to share the faith will inspire a new generation.

Parish priest Fr Vincent Paul blessed a new statue of St Carlo, placed at a corner of the sanctuary, during the parish's All Saints' Day celebrations.

A second-class relic, temporarily on loan, was placed beside the statue for veneration over the weekend. The parish also plans to obtain a first-class relic.

Fr Vincent said he hoped St Carlo would offer a relatable example of holiness to the young people of the 66-year-old parish. These include members of the Catholic Undergraduate Teachers' Society (CUTES) at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Orang Asli children and youth, and other young parishioners.

Known as the first millennial saint, Carlo used his computer skills to create a website documenting Eucharistic miracles, sharing his devotion to Christ's Real Presence with people around the world.

He died of leukaemia in 2006, aged 15, and was canonised on September 7, 2025. He drew strength from the Eucharist, which he described as his "highway to heaven".

Depicted in his familiar casual attire, the statue offers a reminder that holiness can be lived amid the ordinary interests and challenges of youth.

Fr Vincent encouraged young parishioners to follow Carlo's example by using technology with faith, joy and purpose, while keeping Christ at the centre of their lives.

During the Sunset Mass, several children and youths dressed as saints, with Fr Vincent introducing the figures they represented to the congregation. The activity encouraged the young to see the saints as examples they could follow.

In his homily, Fr Vincent reminded the faithful that the saints had once lived on earth, facing choices and challenges just as people do today. With earthly life limited, he urged parishioners to live meaningfully, remain faithful to God and examine how their daily choices reflected their beliefs.

"Don't water down your faith and values," he said.

He encouraged the congregation to listen attentively to Scripture, deepen their relationship with God through the sacraments and follow His will, as Mary and the saints had done.

Fr Vincent also invited those who had drifted from God to return to Mass and renew their relationship with the Lord.

A short video about St Carlo was screened after Mass, reinforcing the invitation to grow closer to Jesus and deepen devotion to the Eucharist.

"May St Carlo pray for our young, pray for our youth and pray for all of us," Fr Vincent said. **Bernard Anthony**

STAY CLOSE TO CHRIST, bishop urges confirmands



MUAR: Holiness is a calling for everyone, Bishop Bernard Paul reminded 21 confirmands during an All Saints' Day Mass at the Church of St Andrew on November 1.

The Bishop of Malacca Johore presided at the celebration, concelebrating with parish priest Fr Jason Wong, assistant priest Fr Aaron Alammalay and Fr Louis Chin.

More than 400 parishioners attended the 10.00am Mass. Of the 21 candidates, 15 were from St Andrew's, Muar; three from the Church of St Matthew, Tangkak; and one each from the Church of St Philip, Segamat, Church of St Simon, Labis, and Rumah Besar Katholik, Bekoh.



In his homily, Bishop Bernard urged the confirmands to strive for holiness in their daily lives and remain faithful to Christ, even unto death.

He emphasised that living a holy life enables people to transform negativity into positivity, noting that a change in attitude can bring about a change in circumstances.

With most of the candidates in Form Five and preparing to move on to college, he encouraged them to remain steadfast in their faith by attending Mass regularly and receiving the Holy Eucharist.

He also urged them to speak to Jesus often through prayer, assuring them that He would give them the strength to face life's challenges.

"Emphasising the importance of embracing the cross in following Christ, Bishop Bernard quoted Thomas à Kempis, the spiritual writer best known for *The Imitation of Christ:*

"Many love His heavenly kingdom, but few His cross.

"Many desire consolation, but few care for trial.

"Many share His table, but few take part in His fasting.

"All desire to be with Him, but few wish to suffer anything for Him.

"Many follow Him to the breaking of bread, but few to drinking the chalice of His Passion.

"And many revere His miracles, but few embrace the cross."

The celebration concluded with refreshments and fellowship in the church hall.

ARE WE CALLED TO BE SAINTS?

BALIK PULAU: The Catholic Church celebrated the Solemnity of All Saints on November 1. On this special occasion, the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus (HNJ) held a combined First Holy Communion and Confirmation Mass, presided over by Fr Anthony Liew.

A total of 12 children received the sacraments: six received their First Holy Communion, while another six received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Parishioners and family members gathered to witness this important milestone in the children's faith journey.

The Solemnity of All Saints commemorates all the saints who are now in heaven, enjoying the presence of God. It also reminds us that holiness is not reserved for a chosen few, but is a calling for every Christian.

In his homily, Fr Anthony began with a thought-provoking question: "Am I called to be a saint?" He invited the congregation to reflect on whether they, too, were willing to become saints.

He reminded the faithful that through Baptism, we become children of God and are given the grace to strive for holiness. If we have been blessed to become God's children, why should becoming saints be beyond our reach?



The key, he said, is whether we are willing to live a saintly life by turning away from sin, keeping God's commandments and drawing closer to God each day.

Speaking about the Sacrament of Confirmation, Fr Anthony explained that the sacrament strengthens us through the gift of the Holy Spirit. He encouraged everyone to rely on the Holy Spirit, especially when facing difficulties, struggling to forgive others or feeling hurt. At such moments, we should pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen us so that we do not easily fall into discouragement or sin.

Turning to the children receiving their First Holy Communion, he used a simple yet memorable comparison to highlight the importance of the Eucharist.

"When we feel unwell, we remember to take Vitamin C. But what about our souls? Do we remember to take our spiritual Vitamin C — Christ?"

He reminded the congregation that every time we receive Holy Communion, we draw closer to Christ and become united with Him. The Eucharist also allows us to have a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. He encouraged the faithful to participate in Mass regularly and receive Holy Communion so that their lives may continue to grow in union with Christ.

Towards the end of his homily, Fr Anthony invited everyone to examine their own faith journey. Are we truly willing to become saints? Are we ready to repent, seek peace and place our trust in God? He then led the congregation in a moment of silence, inviting everyone to reflect sincerely on their lives and pray for God's help to draw closer to Him.

For the 12 children, receiving their First Holy Communion and Confirmation marked an important step in their journey of faith. As they continue to grow, the message of All Saints' Day serves as a reminder that they, too, are called to holiness through their daily choices, their love for others and their relationship with God. **Michael Yip**

"The Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes." – Psalm 118: 23-24



Taiping youth council celebrates a decade of youth ministry

TAIPING: A decade of faith, service, and fellowship culminated in an evening of gratitude as the Parish Youth Council (PYC) of the Taiping Catholic Church commemorated its 10th anniversary on October 24.

The council'' beginnings can be traced to Kairos Asia 2015 in Manila, Philippines, where several young people, including Aron Azariah, Alvinus Bryan, Casey Gomez and Julianna Selvanayagam, were selected to participate. Inspired by the experience, they returned with a shared vision of continuing their faith journey through meaningful activities and service to the parish.

During Msgr Jude Miranda's tenure, the initiative took shape with the aim of bringing all parish youth, including altar servers, language group youth and catechism students, under one united body. The PYC was officially formed in 2016.

Gathering in warmth and fellowship, past and present youth leaders and members of the PYC gathered for a milestone dinner that looked back on ten fruitful years of ministry while casting vision for the journey ahead.

Addressing the dinner, parish priest, Msgr Stephen Liew, offered words of encouragement, praising the youth for reviving the life of the parish.

"I would like to thank all the youth here for making our parish young and alive," Msgr Stephen said, drawing nods across the hall. "Thank you very much for all your activities, and thank you for all the support you have given to the parish, even to me, I pray that you will continue to be as vibrant in the future as you are now."

Throughout his address, Msgr Stephen touched upon the challenges facing young people in an era taken over by fast technology change and negative social currents. Yet, echoing the timeless advice of past popes to the youth, he mentioned that fear has no place in Christian discipleship.

"The recurring words are always: do not be afraid," he reminded the attendees. "Because the youth now live in a very dangerous age, not only with the advance of technology and AI, but negativity. But at the same time, a very adventurous age."

"Whether it is dangerous or adventurous, we need not be afraid, because we never walk alone. That is our consolation. We walk together as brothers and sisters, and at the same time, we walk with Jesus, our eldest brother."

Opening the evening's reflections, current PYC chairperson, Joshua Joel, opened the evening's reflections with anecdotes from his early days in the ministry, recalling the friendships, laughter and challenges that shaped the council. He highlighted its resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, when physical gatherings were disrupted.

"When COVID came, the whole country shut down, but the youth of Taiping did not," he remarked. "We were scattered, yet we continued to meet, communicate, and serve. If we had taken a break back then, this 10th anniversary would not have happened. We came through that mountain together, and I urge all of you to keep on inspiring young people."

Then, the evening also paid tribute to the council's roots, with founding chairperson Aron Azariah taking the floor to unfold the grassroots journey that brought the ministry to life a decade ago. He recalled how, prior to the council's formation, parish ministries functioned largely in silos, with altar servers and young adults remaining separate rather than operating under a cohesive youth body.

"Back then, there was nothing for the youth," Aron recounted, while reminiscing the history of the council. He also expressed his appreciation to the parish leadership, highlighting the symbiotic partnership that allowed the ministry to flourish: "The parish priest sets the direction, and the parishioners set the pace. When the priest gives us space and direction, it creates a wonderful mission where we work well together." He also expressed gratitude to past and present parish leaders and Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) chairpersons for their support.

As the evening gave way to shared stories and renewed friendships, the anniversary brought together generations of youths who had contributed to the parish over the past decade, reaffirming their commitment to faith, fellowship and service in the years ahead. **Sharmin Ong Yen Kym**

More than a doctor, he gave families hope

Remembering Dr John Wong Kar Lin





For couples who had spent years longing for a child, the late Dr John Wong Kar Lin offered more than medical advice. He offered reassurance, encouragement and compassion when the waiting became unbearable.

His sudden death on October 25, when a landslide struck his home in Taman Seri Rambai, Paya Terubong, Penang, has left a void among those whose lives he touched. He was 73.

A retired occupational health doctor, Dr Wong was highly regarded within Penang's occupational safety and health community. His commitment to helping families also found expression through the Penang Diocesan Family Life Commission and the Billings Ovulation Method services of Malaysia (WOOMB Malaysia), as well as his interest in NaProTechnology and the Creighton Model FertilityCare System.

His funeral Mass was celebrated on Oct 28 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang with eight priests concelebrating.

In his funeral homily, Fr Aloysius Tan recalled that Dr Wong had spent the evening before his death guiding couples preparing for marriage through the Weekend Marriage Preparation Course.

"On the final evening of his life, he was still giving himself for the lives and happiness of others," Fr Aloysius said.

Valerie, who married in 2014, had struggled for years with fertility-related health problems, including polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), low vitamin D and insulin resistance.

Referred to Dr Wong by the late Friar Arul Sagayaraj Mariadass OFM, she found not only medical guidance but also encouragement through the heartbreak of a miscarriage. In 2020, she welcomed her first son, Asher, followed by Brendan in 2024.

Grateful for the care she had received, Valerie introduced me to Dr Wong in 2025.

After four years of marriage, a miscarriage and consultations at a dozen fertility clinics, he became the first doctor to diagnose my PCOS.

What distinguished him was not simply his medical knowledge but his genuine concern for the person behind the diagnosis. He regularly checked on my progress, offered advice and shared encouraging stories of other couples he had accompanied.

He often sent Bible verses, reminding me to seek God first and trust in His divine timing. Three weeks before his death, he referred me to Dr Chan Lek Lim of WOOMB Malaysia, assuring me that I would be in good hands. For reasons I could not explain, I thanked him for accompanying me over the past year. I never imagined it would be our last interaction.

His compassion extended across religious boundaries.

For safety and health officer Azly Ahmad and his wife, Eliana Abdullah, the longing for a child had stretched over 12 years. With Dr Wong's guidance in their fertility care, they eventually welcomed their child, Anaqy.

To Azly, Dr Wong was more than a doctor. He had become a father figure and, in his eyes, a grandfather to Anaqy.

"Every time I look at my child, I will remember you and miss you. You will always be part of our story," he said.

Dr Wong's concern for others was not confined to couples seeking to start a family. Fr Aloysius recalled meeting him at a nursing home the previous month, where he continued volunteering even after retirement.

His dedication also extended to the Church, devoting years to catechesis and faith formation. At the Church of the Risen Christ, he served in various capacities, including many years as chairman of the parish liturgical committee.

On the morning of his death, he had been preparing to participate in a Confirmation celebration — another reflection of his continuing commitment to parish life.

Reflecting on Dr Wong's sudden death, Fr Aloysius reminded mourners that readiness to meet God was not simply about the final moments of life, but about how one lived each day.

Dr Wong, he said, had demonstrated that readiness through a lifetime of service, helping others build families, deepen their faith and draw closer to God.

The priest also reminded those gathered that, for Christians, life is transformed rather than destroyed by death. He encouraged them to honour Dr Wong's memory by continuing the goodness he had lived.

Dr Wong's legacy was never simply about successful pregnancies. It was about helping people feel heard, supported and valued, even when their hopes remained unfulfilled.

He may no longer witness the milestones of the children whose families he helped. But in their laughter, their parents' gratitude and the lives of those he served, his compassion continues to bear fruit. **Christina Lazaroo**

MEMORIAM

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Inár gcroí go deo
In our hearts forever

Mary Kate Khoo (Mai)

Born: 11.07.1932
Departed: 16.11.2025

Beloved Wife, Sister and Aunt

18th Anniversary
In Ever Loving Memory of



LOURDES PITCHAIMUTHU, AMN

Departed: 16-11-2008

Your life was a blessing, Hands that never stopped giving, A heart that never stopped loving and a soul that never stopped believing.

Deeply missed by Husband, Paul Nathan and Son, Anthony Paul Raj, Relatives and Friends.

2nd Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Wilson Peter
Aug 5, 1965 – Nov 19, 2024

Two years have passed since we lost a loving husband, father, and now grandfather, but your warmth and presence live on in the family you built.

We hold tightly to the beautiful memories we shared, comforted by the enduring love that binds us together across heaven and earth.

Deeply missed, forever loved, and always remembered by your family, friends, and relatives.

15th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Jais Fernandez
Returned to Jesus on 12 November 2011

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants." Psalm 116:15

Rest in eternal peace. Amen.

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

In Loving Memory of

19th Anniversary



Anthony Raj Manikam

Born: 19 July 1961
Departed: 10 November 2007

18th Anniversary



Mdm Jeyarakini Manickam

Born: 15 November 1930
Departed: 7 May 2008

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him, bless his name! (Psalms 100:4)

Deeply missed and always remembered by family and friends.

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10th Anniversary Memorial

Rose Veronica Barnaby

7 February 1931 – 16 November 2016



10 years on we praise and thank God for the grace and blessings you poured into our lives as wife, mother, sister and friend.

Always loved, remembered and missed by her husband, children, relatives and friends.

Her children rise up and praise her, her husband, too, extols her: Many are the women of proven worth, but you have excelled them all.
Proverbs 31:28

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1st Anniversary
In Loving Memory of Margaret



Born: 24 January 1955
Departed: 11 November 2025

As we lovingly remember Margaret on the first anniversary of her passing, we honour her beautiful life and the precious memories she left behind.

Deeply missed and forever cherished by her loving husband, Selvarajah; her children, Paramjothi and Veronica Rowena; Son-in-law, Rubendran and her beloved grandchildren, Jaydonn Kaanie and Ezraa Nathaniel.

Though a year has passed, your love, kindness, and gentle spirit remain forever in our hearts.

Forever Loved • Forever Missed • Forever Remembered

The Catholic Weekly
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FOR THE PROPER USE OF WEALTH
We pray for the proper use of wealth, that not succumbing to the temptation of selfishness, it may always be put at the service the common good and solidarity of those who have less.

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November 15, 2026

Bishops urge united social mission

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's Catholic bishops have called for a more coordinated national response to social challenges through Caritas Malaysia, urging Catholics to volunteer in a mission serving the common good of all Malaysians.

The call came in *One Church, One Social Mission, One Malaysia,* a pastoral letter issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia on November 15, World Day of the Poor. The letter was signed by conference president, Archbishop Simon Poh.

The bishops said they were strengthening Caritas Malaysia's role as the Church's unified national social mission arm to coordinate and support diocesan initiatives and provide stronger national representation on issues affecting human dignity.

"Our social mission is not for Catholics alone," they said, emphasising that the initiative was outward-looking and rooted in Christ's command to love one's neighbour.

"We are moving from working in silos to acting as one body."

The bishops explained that the national approach would strengthen existing diocesan efforts, "not to replace the local efforts that define our diocesan life, but to amplify them, coordinate them".

Drawing on St Paul's description of the Church as one body with many parts, they highlighted the diverse cultures, languages and experiences of Malaysia's nine dioceses across the peninsula, Sabah and Sarawak.

Challenges such as the digital divide, insecure work, the marginalisation of migrants and uncertainty among young people, however, required cooperation across diocesan boundaries.

While acknowledging the opportunities created by economic growth and technological change, the bishops warned that prosperity was not being shared equally.

They highlighted the circumstances of gig workers whose livelihoods are increasingly shaped by algorithms, migrants and refugees left on the margins of digital safety nets, and graduates facing employment difficulties and uncertainty in an economy being transformed by artificial intelligence.

The bishops stressed that these challenges affected people whose dignity and well-being demanded the Church's attention.

Citing Pope Leo XIV's encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas,* they emphasised that the Church's social mission was central to its vocation. They urged Catholics to reflect on the direction of national development and whether it upheld the dignity of every person.

The Church, they said, was called to be "the conscience and the heart" of Malaysia's progress.

The letter invited Catholics to become volunteers in a national movement bringing Christ's love to others. It called for creativity and renewed commitment to projects that create opportunities for encounter, strengthen relationships and help people experience love and acceptance in their cities and villages.


(HERALD filepic)

The bishops also expressed gratitude to the thousands already serving through soup kitchens, advocacy for migrant rights, youth initiatives and other forms of outreach.

Their dedication, they said, was the foundation on which the next chapter of Caritas Malaysia would be built.

"You are the 'Civilisation of Love' in action," they told volunteers.

Calling for a Church that is present, proactive and united, the bishops invited the faithful to support the mission through prayer and by sharing their time and talents.

Together, they said, Catholics could help build a nation that upheld every person's dignity and made God's love "a reality we live for every Malaysian".



Holy Land youth festival fosters unity

JERUSALEM: In a land scarred by conflict, fear and division, more than 300 Hebrew- and Arabic-speaking young Catholics came together for a festival celebrating their shared faith and hope for unity.

Organised by the St James Vicariate, which serves Hebrew-speaking Catholics under the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the annual Youth Festival brought together participants from parishes across the Holy Land for prayer, workshops, a shared meal and fellowship.

For Fr Piotr Żelazko, Patriarchal Vicar for Hebrew-speaking Catholics in Israel, the gathering offered a rare opportunity for young people from divided communities to encounter one another as members of the same Church.

Many carry emotional wounds from years of conflict, uncertainty and suffering, he acknowledged. Having lived in Israel for nearly 20 years, the Polish priest said he, too, felt the effects of a society deeply affected by violence and mistrust.

Young people may be resilient, he observed, but the burdens they carry cannot be ignored. Fear and grief often make reconciliation difficult, even when the desire for peace remains strong.

"As Christians and Catholics, despite all our differences, we are united in Christ," he stressed. "If Jesus does not unite us, then our faith is not authentic!"

Fr Żelazko described the festival as possibly the only occasion when Hebrew- and Arabic-speaking Catholics gather to pray together in both languages.

The event had previously been interrupted by conflict, but organisers remained determined to revive it, encouraged by a ceasefire that made the gathering possible.

For these young people, gathering across linguistic and cultural divides was itself a powerful testimony that faith can build bridges where conflict has created barriers. Their presence offered a simple but compelling message: even amid hostility and suffering, the bonds of faith can nurture understanding, friendship and the courage to seek peace. **Vatican News**



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