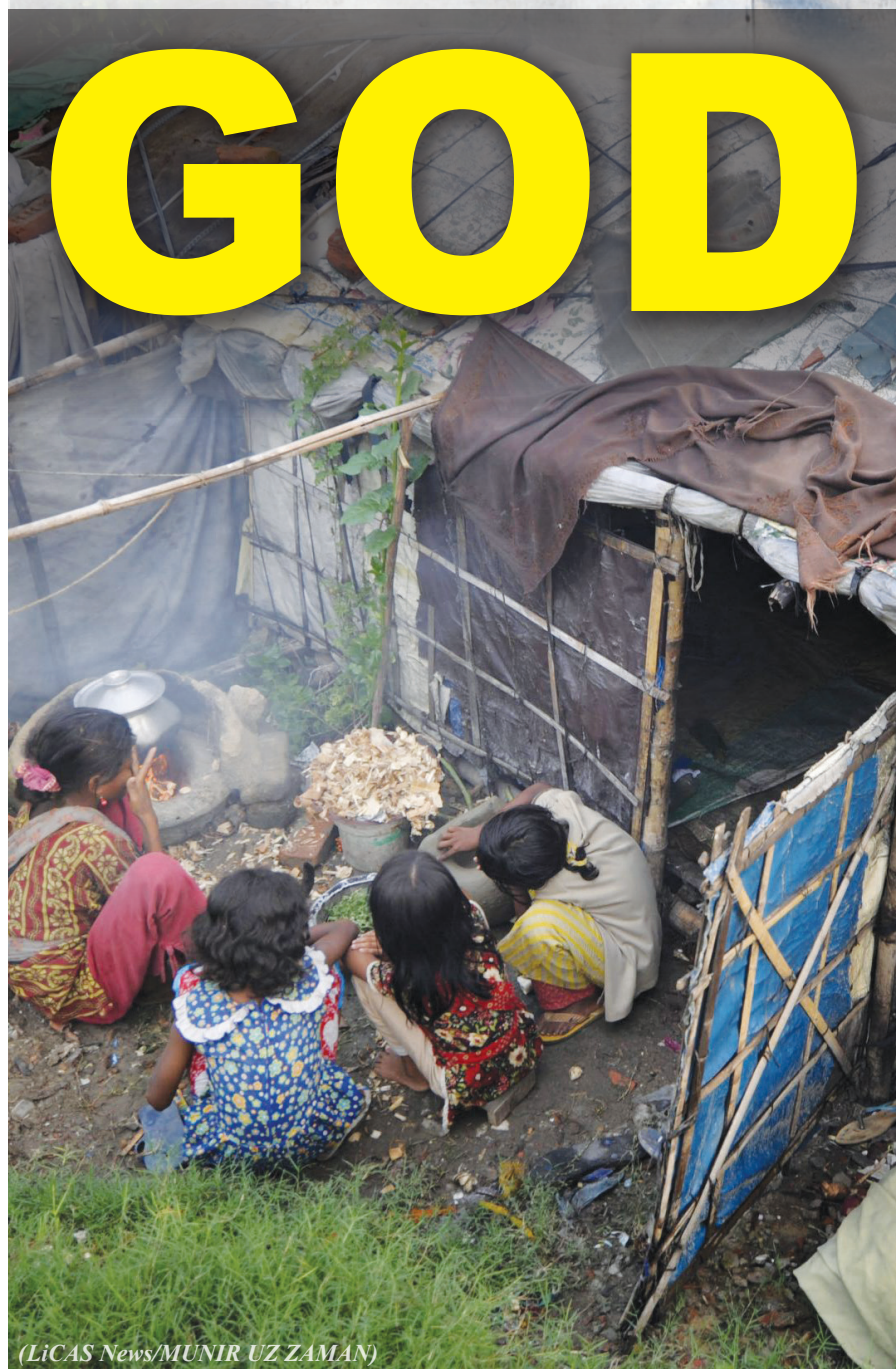


# Gravest poverty is not knowing



# GOD



(LiCAS News/MUNIR UZZAMAN)

**VATICAN:** As the Church observes the 9th World Day of the Poor, November 16, Pope Leo XIV has urged Catholics to recognise those experiencing poverty not as objects of charity but as witnesses of hope who reflect the heart of the Gospel.

The theme chosen for this year's observance, "You are my hope" (Psalm 71:5), highlights the Psalmist's cry to God and calls the faithful to rediscover Christian hope amid a world marked by instability, inequality and indifference.

In his message, the Holy Father wrote: "The gravest poverty is not to know God." When God is absent from human life, he explained, "we discover that wealth often disappoints and can lead to tragic situations of poverty, above all the poverty born of the attempt to live without Him."

Recalling how the early Christians likened hope to an anchor, Pope Leo said, "Christian hope grounds our hearts in the promise of the Lord Jesus. Amid life's trials, it is the anchor that holds human dignity fast."

He reminded the faithful that material goods, however necessary, cannot satisfy the deepest longings of the heart. Quoting his predecessor, Pope Francis, from *Evangelii Gaudium*, he reaffirmed that the worst discrimination suffered by the poor is the lack of spiritual care, since "they have a special openness to faith."

The Pope noted that people living in poverty often embody a deep, steadfast hope precisely because they face life with uncertainty and vulnerability. "They cannot rely on the security of power and possessions; their hope must necessarily be sought elsewhere," he said. "It is in their fragility that we too pass from fleeting hopes to lasting hope."

Calling attention to the structural causes of poverty, Pope Leo stated that addressing inequality is not merely a matter of generosity but of justice. "Helping the poor," he insisted, "is a matter of justice before it is a question of charity."

Quoting St Augustine, he wrote: "You give bread

to a hungry person; but it would be better if none were hungry, so that you would have no need to give it away."

The Pope lamented that "wars and inequalities often prevent" people from having access to fundamental goods, and reminded the faithful that "labour, education, housing and health are the foundations of a security that will never be attained by the use of arms."

He urged Catholics to work for the common good and to support policies that ensure equitable access to these rights, describing charity as "the greatest social commandment" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1889).

The pontiff emphasised that the poor "are not a distraction for the Church but our beloved brothers and sisters," adding that "by their lives, their words and their wisdom, they put us in contact with the truth of the Gospel."

He further invited Christians to see those in need not as passive beneficiaries but as creative subjects who challenge the Church "to find novel ways of living out the Gospel today."

Throughout his message, Pope Leo paid tribute to what he called the many "quiet signs of hope", the humble works of care that often go unnoticed but transform lives: "group homes, community centres, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and schools for low-income families." Such places, he said, "inspire others to set aside indifference and become involved in acts of solidarity."

Linking this year's World Day of the Poor to the Jubilee Year of Hope, Pope Leo urged believers not to allow the closing of the Holy Door to signal an end to compassion. "Once the Holy Door is closed, we are to cherish and share with others the divine gifts granted us," he wrote.

Concluding his message, the Pope entrusted the world's poor to Mary, Comforter of the Afflicted, and invited the Church to raise a "song of hope," echoing the ancient hymn *Te Deum*: "In you, O Lord, is our hope, and we shall never hope in vain."

**Agencies**

To read the message in full, go to: <https://https://bit.ly/4oV9XOc>

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Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur,  
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**EDITOR**

Patricia Pereira  
editor1@herald.com.my

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Sandra Ann Inbaraj  
sandra@herald.com.my

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

Amanda Mah  
amanda@herald.com.my

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

Kevin Francis  
kevin@herald.com.my

**BAHASA MALAYSIA**

Melania Liza Magnus  
liza@herald.com.my

**MANDARIN**

Adelina Wong  
yin4482@gmail.com

**ADMIN ASSISTANT**

Rachael Sharma  
admin@herald.com.my

**ADVERTISEMENT/SUBSCRIPTION**

advertisement@herald.com.my

**MEMORIAM**

memoriam@herald.com.my

**LETTERS**

letterseditor@herald.com.my

**Social Media**

[www.heraldmalaysia.com](http://www.heraldmalaysia.com)

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

# Walking with the poor, walking with Christ

Today, November 16, the Church across the world celebrates the 9th World Day of the Poor, a day that calls us to open our eyes, hearts, and hands to those who suffer silently around us. This year's theme, drawn from Psalm 71:5 — "You are my hope, O Lord" — as Pope Leo XIV reminds us in his message, is not just a prayer; it is a challenge. It is an invitation to see in the poor not objects of charity but living witnesses of hope, who remind us of our shared humanity and our call to love as Christ loves.

In his message, Pope Leo XIV reminds us that poverty is not only about material deprivation. The deepest poverty, he says, is "not to know God," and the greatest gift we can offer is to walk alongside those who struggle, helping them rediscover their dignity as children of God. This echoes the timeless teaching of the Church: that every person, created in the image of God, possesses an inherent worth that no circumstance can erase.

From Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* to Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Church has consistently taught that care for the poor is not optional — it is essential to our faith. Catholic Social Teaching reminds us of the preferential option for the poor, a principle that calls us to place the needs of the most vulnerable at the heart of our decisions, our communities, and our prayers. To be Christian, therefore, is to be responsible for one another. As St John Paul II once said, "Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion, but a firm and persevering determination to commit

oneself to the common good."

Yet this call to solidarity must go beyond words. It demands conversion — of heart, of attitude, and of lifestyle. The poor are not "the other"; they are our brothers and sisters, sharing in the same humanity and in the same hope. When we encounter them, we encounter Christ Himself: hungry, thirsty, sick, imprisoned, or abandoned (cf. Matthew 25:31–46). Our love for God must be visible in our love for those who suffer.

But how can we live this out? How can we form communities that not only give to the poor but walk with them?

First, we must cultivate a spirituality of encounter. It is easy to talk about the poor in the abstract, but true compassion grows when we meet them face to face — when we listen to their stories, share in their struggles, and recognize their gifts. Charity is not a transaction; it is a relationship. As Pope Leo XIV reminds us, "Hope is born in encounter — where hands and hearts meet."

Second, we must build structures of justice, not just moments of generosity. Giving food to the hungry is good, but ensuring that no one goes hungry because of unjust systems is better. As the Second Vatican Council affirmed in *Gaudium et Spes*, "The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the poor and of all who suffer are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ." We are called, therefore, to transform the very structures that create poverty — to be voices for fair wages, decent housing, accessible healthcare, and education for all.



Third, we must teach our children and youth to care. This is perhaps the most urgent task of all. In a world that prizes competition and consumerism, we must help the next generation discover the joy of compassion. Schools, parishes, and families should create opportunities for young people to serve others — to visit the elderly, to volunteer in soup kitchens, to stand with those on the margins. When children learn early that happiness is found in giving, not hoarding, we plant in them the seeds of a more human and Christ-centred world.

Parents, educators, and church leaders have a sacred duty to form young hearts in mercy. Let them see that the Gospel is not an abstract idea but a living call to action. Let them understand that success is not measured by wealth, but by love. In a culture that often glorifies self-promotion, the Church must raise a generation that finds glory in service.

On this World Day of the Poor, we are reminded that to ignore the poor is to ignore Christ Himself. But to serve the poor — to see Christ in them, and to let them see Christ in us — is to rediscover the heart of the Gospel.

Patricia Pereira

## Hope shines through the gloom

As we approach the end of our liturgical season, the Gospel reading has started to point us towards the celebration of Christ the King, which the Church will celebrate next Sunday. The Gospel today has a somewhat menacing but very relatable message in our world today. It speaks of the destruction of the temple, the rise of false prophets, wars, plagues, earthquakes, famines and persecution.

Although spoken more than two thousand years ago, it seems like Jesus is talking about this very time we are living in. Wars, natural disasters, plagues and all other rather disastrous signs that Jesus speaks of, we now find commonplace every time we check the news. Today, we live in a world where even our children are no longer innocent nor protected from the ills of the world. Our churches are no longer sacrosanct, where we hear of violence, destruction and desecrations happening in our churches everywhere.

Furthermore, as a follower of Christ, especially in a country where our faith is a minority religion, we cannot but feel embattled and bombarded frequently for our belief. It feels like our faith, our belief and our way of life is under siege on every front. Not only do we have to be cautious in the practice of our faith, but also contend with gradual erosion in our faith life. Living our faith is not easy; not today nor two thousand years ago. The early Christians of that time similarly faced great persecution for their faith in Christ.

Despite all these, they remained

steadfast in their faith in Christ, because of the promises spoken by Christ. They persevered in their faith, withstood the calamities and bravely faced immense persecution, to the point of martyrdom. It was the assurance of Christ; despite all the challenges and disasters His disciples would encounter, they only needed to trust in Him, as said in today's Gospel, "Your endurance will win you your lives.". Because of the perseverance of the early Christians, and their trust in Christ, the Christian faith eventually became the official religion of the Roman Empire and subsequently the largest religion in the world today. St Ignatius of Antioch once said that Christianity is at its greatest when it is hated by the world.

After all, the main message in the Gospel is faith in Christ. Regardless of our situation in our lives and the challenges that we may encounter, we are to place our unerring trust in God's providence, protection, mercy and compassion. Jeremiah 29:11, affirms the message of today's Gospel, where Prophet Jeremiah gave this message to the Israelites exiled in Babylon. It was a message of hope, providence and divine protection given at a time of great difficulties to the Israelites, assuring them of God's benevolent plans for a future filled with hope for his chosen people.

Subsequently at the end of time, we too are assured the crown of glory when our time here on earth is done. Our unwavering faith in Christ, when faced

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Brother Lincoln Lee

### 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Readings: Malachi 3:19-20;

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12;

Gospel: Luke 21:5-19

with the challenges of the world will win us the victorious crown. Just like how the liturgical season that is now leading us to proclaim Christ as the King of the Universe, we too take heart, that our lives will lead us to share in His glory in the Kingdom of God, when we keep to His commandments and to trust in Him. When we remain faithful to Him, he will be faithful to us.

Therefore, despite the gloom and doom that we read in the news today, let us continue to follow the footsteps of our early church brethren. The Gospel message today, is not one of gloom and doom, but one of Hope. In today's dark casted skies, where the evils of the world are overwhelming, we remember that we are the Pilgrims of Hope. We stand not only on the shoulders of our ancient brethren in faith but also hold steadfast to the promises Christ made to us, because hope does not disappoint (Romans 5:5). After all this Pilgrimage of Hope that we are journeying together, only leads us to the glorification of the Kingdom of God, where Christ our Lord and King reigns supreme.

# 2026 Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Theme

## *Walking together towards a Synodal and Prophetic Church*

Month	Pastoral Area	Focus	Sub-themes	Pastoral Pathways
January	Family	Conversion of Relationships	Building Trust	Building trust through shared prayer, regular dialogue, and faith expressed in daily actions. The home is the first school of faith. (FD#35)
February	Church		Fostering Inclusivity	Practising inclusivity through concrete gestures and honouring the dignity of all. (FD#117)
March	Ecology		Restoring our Common Home	Renewing our relationships with creation through ecological conversion by adopting a simple lifestyle as part of our stewardship. (FD#54)
April	Society		Youth Empowerment	Acknowledging and empowering young people by including them in discernment and decision making. (FD#62)
May	Family	Walking Together	Accompaniment	Accompanying one another, sharing moments, offering comfort and praying together. (FD#64)
June	Church		Living Synodality	Practising communal discernment, building a culture of listening and collaboration. (FD#143)
July	Ecology		Care of Our Common Home	Living creation spirituality as part of our faith. (FD#19)
August	Society		Unity in Diversity	Building bridges by fostering dialogue, sharing projects for the common good, and creating spaces where culture is respected and voice is heard. (FD#121)
September	Family	Moving Outward	Reaching Out	Going beyond personal boundaries through pastoral visits and extending hands especially to those-in-need. (FD#58)
October	Church		Being Missionary Disciples	Sharing responsibilities for mission by reaching out to the peripheries and those of special needs. (FD#145)
November	Ecology		The Cry of the Earth is the Cry of the Poor	Responding to the cry of the earth by engaging in ecological activities. (FD#151)
December	Society		Living Our Baptismal Identity	Reaffirming our Catholic faith by intensifying our ecumenical and interfaith journey to build unity and foster friendship. (FD#40; FT#8)

FD = Final Document, FT = Fratelli Tutti



### KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

#### Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

#### November

- 18-19 Clergy Monthly Recollection
- 20 Focus on the Family Asia Conference
- 21-24 Human Life International Asia Pacific Congress – Sib



### PENANG DIOCESE

#### Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

#### November

- 18 Meeting – Council of Priests, Stella Maris, Penang
- 18-19 Clergy Monthly Recollection, Stella Maris, Penang
- 23 Eucharistic Celebration – 100th Anniversary of Church of Christ the King, Sungai Petani at 6.00pm



### MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

#### Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

#### November

- 19 Meeting – Diocesan Finance Council, MAJODI Centre
- 21 Mass – Opening of Peninsular Malaysia Singapore Chinese Apostolate Commission Seminar MAJODI Centre
- 22 North-Central Johor Vicariate Eucharistic Congress – Church of St Louis, Kluang



## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #248



#### Welcome dear friends,

The Pilgrim Cross journeys on. At last, the Church of St Francis Xavier, Malacca reopened after two years of restoration work. The dedication was last Sunday, November 9. It is the second oldest church in Malaysia. The Parish Pastoral Assemblies, Annual General Meetings and Clergy's Annual Discernment are coming next. Have you heard of Landings? Triumph Heart of Mary (THM)? St Peter's Cupboard? Or Job-Connect? Some parishes go beyond to serve the people.

#### Local Takes.

They call them HEROES. Two lawyers worked pro bono to help 93 migrant workers secure back pay. Perkeso's Lindung 24/7 ensures workers are protected anytime, anywhere and even beyond working hours. Fifa's dismissal of Malaysia's appeal reaffirmed that the football leadership condones forgery, falsification and institutional deceit.

With the many calls for the PM to resign for signing the trade deal with the US, the PM stood his ground, saying: "This is not about surrendering (or) betraying (our country) or (subjecting it to) a new form of colonialism.

The Finance Ministry opts for a long-term strategy i.e., to raise productivity via digitalisation, automation and mechanisation, to ensure adequate income to cope with rising costs of living, rather than one-off handouts or artificial pay increases.

Prof Emeritus Dr Balbir Singh, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak reminded the younger generation "Do something you genuinely love, not something your parents tell you to do."

#### Church In The World: Making a Difference:

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Myanmar (CBCM) gave this chilling reminder on 29 October, in their *Message of Compassion and Hope for Myanmar's Polycrisis*. For the people of Myanmar and for the prelates, the days are heavy and nights are long, they note, as they continue facing armed conflict, natural disasters, displacement, economic collapse, and a deep social fracture. Pope Leo appeals for a ceasefire in Myanmar, peace in war-torn lands.

The US Bishops urge all peoples to stand in solidarity with Caritas Haiti, Caritas Cuba, Caritas Antilles and other Catholic Relief Services, after the Hurricane Melissa havoc.

Another earthquake has hit Afghanistan again

Pope Leo explained the parable of the unjust steward, saying: "we are not masters of our lives or of the goods we enjoy — but all that we possess is a gift from God, who entrusts these gifts to our care, our freedom and our responsibility."

#### A Thought for The Week: The Happy Widow.

Her husband died of malaria and, three months later, her only son was killed by a car. She had nobody. She had nothing left. She couldn't sleep, she couldn't eat, she never smiled at anyone, she even thought of taking her own life.

Then, one evening, a little kitten followed her home from work. It was cold outside, and she felt sorry for it, and decided to allow it in. She set down a plate of food, and the kitten licked the plate clean, purred and followed her about the house.

For the first time, she smiled and thought — if a kitten could make her smile, then maybe doing something for

people could make her happy.

So, the next day she baked some biscuits and took them to a neighbour who was sick in bed. From then on, she tried to do something nice for someone. **She found happiness by giving it to others.**

*Lesson from the kitten:* The beauty of life does not depend on how happy you are; but on how happy others can be because of you; Happiness is not a destination, it's a journey. Happiness is not tomorrow, it is now. Happiness is not dependency; it is a decision. Happiness is what you are, not what you have.

#### QnQ: Q asks: Is love everything? Does it make a difference?

Generosity without love is extravagance; care without love is mere duty; fidelity without love is servitude. Vocation without love is a job. Never grow tired of loving. Let it be the seasoning in your life. **If love is the soul of Christian existence, it must be at the heart of every other Christian virtue.**

Thus, for example, justice without love is legalism; faith without love is ideology; hope without love is self-centredness; forgiveness without love is self-abasement; fortitude without love is recklessness; **Every virtue is an expression of love.** No virtue is really a virtue unless it is permeated, or informed, by love. **Richard Rohr**

**The Spirit @ work:** "The primary evidence of the Holy Spirit is a transformed life that increasingly reflects God's character.

**Something to tickle you:** Happiness is not something readymade; it comes from your own actions. **The Dalai Lama**

Bishop Bernard Paul

# Renewed in service for Christ

ALOR SETAR: The Church of St Michael recently held a training session for both new and existing Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC), led by parish priest, Fr Michael Cheah. A total of 18 participants from three language groups attended the session.

The session began with an opening prayer led by Fr Michael, invoking God's guidance and blessings upon all present. He then conducted a comprehensive for-

mation session covering:

- The role and requirements of an EMHC
- Reverence for the Eucharist
- The flow of the Mass and the ministerial role

Fr Michael reminded the participants of the importance of punctuality, reverence, and attentiveness to liturgical norms. He also encouraged ongoing spiritual formation through reflection sessions and retreats to help them deepen their faith and strengthen

their ministry.

The formation concluded with a Q&A session, which allowed participants to seek clarity and share insights. The parish expressed heartfelt gratitude to all participants, and especially to Fr Michael, for his wisdom, guidance, and steadfast support in nurturing this vital ministry.

The installation and recommissioning of the EMHC took place on Nov 1, during the celebration of the All Saints' Day Mass, pre-

sided over by Fr Michael.

A total of ten new ministers were installed, and seven existing ministers were recommissioned for another five-year term of service. These ministers play a vital role in assisting the priest in the distribution of the Holy Eucharist during Mass and other liturgical celebrations. They also extend their service to the wider community, particularly through pastoral duties such as visiting the sick and homebound and assisting during funeral services.

During the Mass, the new and recommissioned ministers publicly renewed their commitment to serve with humility, reverence, and dedication. Fr Michael expressed his appreciation for their willingness to serve and reminded them of the sacred responsibility entrusted to them as bearers of Christ's presence to others.

The ceremony was a moment of renewal and gratitude, as the parish community gave thanks for the generosity and dedication of these ministers who continue to serve God and His people with faith, love, and humility.

The Church of St Michael prays that the Lord will bless all who have answered this call to serve, granting them continued strength, wisdom, and joy in their ministry.



Fr Michael Cheah putting on the sash on the newly-commissioned ministers.



The new and recommissioned ministers renewing their commitment.

## Guiding young souls to the Eucharist

IPOH: October 26 was a truly joyful day at the Church of St Michael as six of our children received their First Holy Communion. As evangelising catechists, witnessing their smiles and reverence as they received Jesus for the first time filled our hearts with gratitude and pride. Behind that special moment, however, was a journey filled with both challenges and blessings.

Preparing children for their First Holy Communion is never a one-size-fits-all process. Each child learns differently, and as catechists, we constantly seek creative ways to help them understand our faith, especially the meaning of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Confession. In today's world, technology plays a crucial role in helping us make lessons engaging and relatable to their everyday lives, while still preserving the sacredness of our faith.

Before receiving the sacrament, we held a First Holy Communion camp themed *Seeds of Faith*. The camp was mainly designed to help the children grow spiritually and develop a deeper love for God.

During the camp, the children had a session on the Eucharist emphasising the importance and significance of it. The kids also joined a special church tour to help them feel a sense of belonging in God's house and to inspire them to serve in various ministries such as altar servers, youth ministry, children's choir, lectors, etc.



The children decorating their flower pots with the materials provided.

One of the most memorable activities during the camp was "Seeds of Communion". Each child planted a seed and decorated their flower pot with virtues like kindness and love. We explained to them that faith too needs care and nourishment as they watched their plants grow. Just like how a plant needs sunlight and water, our faith needs prayer, Mass, and Sunday school to grow strong after receiving Jesus in the Eucharist.

Seeing the joy and excitement on the

children's faces reminded us why we do what we do. It is a blessing to serve the Lord by guiding young hearts closer to Him and nurturing the next generation of His faithful servants.

As times continue to change, we also recognise the need for more young people to answer the call to serve as catechists. The Church needs passionate, creative, and faith-filled individuals who can journey with children in ways that speak to today's world. By bringing in fresh perspectives and new teaching approaches, young catechists can help bridge faith with modern life while keeping the message of Christ alive in every heart.

To all our fellow catechists, never forget the quiet yet powerful impact you make in the lives of the children you teach. Even when lessons feel challenging, or when you wonder if the children really understand, remember that every story shared, every prayer led, and every moment of patience plants a seed of faith that will one day bloom in God's time. Continue to teach with love, creativity, and perseverance. You are not just teachers of faith, but also witnesses of God's grace in action. Keep going, for the work you do is holy, and the Lord Himself rejoices in every little heart you help bring closer to Him.



Children participating in a scavenger hunt around the church compound.

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# Catechists deepen CGS formation

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Twenty-six participants from various parishes in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and Indonesia attended the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) Level 2 Part 1 (L2P1) formation held at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jalan Peel, from October 19 – 23. The formation was conducted by CGS formation leaders, Anne Diamond from Perth, Australia, and Jacqueline Lean from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur CGS team. They were ably assisted by the Archdiocesan CGS team members.

The five-and-a-half-day formation included both theory and practical sessions. At its core, it was an invitation to the participating catechists to enter into a deeper relationship with God by walking alongside children in the mystery of faith. The sessions emphasised spiritual formation, journeying with the Holy Spirit, where catechists learn to continually open themselves to the transformative presence of God in their lives.

Participants shared that a key spiritual insight from the Level 2 formation was recognising the sacred history, where the plan of God is revealed, being able to recognise the golden thread that runs through creation, redemption and Parousia. Some also shared about their 'blank pages', where they reflected on their own spiritual journey and answering God's call to be co-collaborators in His kingdom.

The CGS is a Montessori-based religious formation for children aged 3 to 12, which was developed in Rome about 70 years ago by Dr Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi. This beautiful catechesis creates a sacred, hands-on space

called the atrium, for children and catechists to come together and discover the mysteries of God through Scripture and liturgy. CGS respects the child's natural spirituality and seeks to nurture the child's relationship with God, responding to the child's plea, "help me to come closer to God by myself". This is achieved through age-appropriate presentations and materials.

The Level 2 Part 1 formation specifically prepares catechists to work with the 6-9-year-old child. The formation equips catechists with the ability to meet the developmental and religious needs of this age group through deeper biblical and liturgical themes, such as the liturgical calendar, the Mass, sacraments (Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist), and the parables. The course includes guidance on setting up a Level 2 atrium, preparing album pages, and using supporting materials. It also introduces a model for sacramental preparation for First Confession and First Holy Communion.

## Participant's sharing - Ari Herdi Wibowo

The Level 2 Part 1 Formation was truly a gift from the Good Shepherd. Over five and a half days, I was invited to pause, listen, and enter more deeply into the mystery of the Kingdom of God. The sessions opened my heart to the beauty and depth of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, especially as we reflected on the child in the second plane of development — now more aware of the wider world and, with a reasoning mind, beginning to ponder their relationship with God, others, and creation in new and deeper ways.

Through the presentations and scriptural reflections, we discovered how the History of the Kingdom of God unfolds through Creation, Redemption, and Parousia — the great plan of God that stretches from the beginning of time to all eternity, until God is all in all. It was humbling to see how the materials, gestures, and silence in the atrium can speak so profoundly to the heart of the



Catechists learning how to meet the developmental and religious needs of the children aged between six and nine years old.

child — and to my own heart in particular.

This formation reminded me that the catechist, too, is always being formed by the mystery. The call is not only to prepare materials or to guide the child, but to listen and

meditate — on the Word, to the Holy Spirit, and on the quiet voice of the Good Shepherd who leads us ever deeper into His love. I was also deeply touched by the sense of community among the participants. Though we came from different places, we were united by a shared desire to serve the Good Shepherd's little ones. Together we prayed, reflected, and shared our insights, discovering that this work is truly a collaboration with God's grace.

As the formation came to an end, I felt a renewed sense of peace and purpose. I left Kuala Lumpur with a heart full of gratitude — for the gentle guidance of the Holy Spirit, for our formation leaders and companions, and for the sacred call to serve in the atrium.

*Ari Wibowo is a CGS catechist from the Church of St Helena's in Indonesia. She travelled from Tangerang, Banten in Indonesia to attend the formation.*



## Orang Asli pilgrimage unites communities in faith

**PORT DICKSON:** The Church of the Immaculate Conception opened its doors and hearts on October 26 to 115 faithful from five Orang Asli villages — Kg Orang Asli Sunggala, Kg Orang Asli Bukit Kepong, Kg Belihoi, Kg Tekir, and Kg Sebir — who

came together for a meaningful pilgrimage of faith and unity.

The day began with a serene Rosary Walk, as participants journeyed side by side in prayer and reflection. Each step echoed a shared devotion, weaving together hearts in faith and hope.

While the adults prayed, children filled the grounds with joy and laughter through engaging activities designed especially for them, a beautiful reminder of the simple, vibrant faith that springs from the hearts of the young.



The faithful praying the Rosary.



The children during one of the activities.

The pilgrimage culminated with a celebratory Mass and fellowship, a time to give thanks, share stories, and rejoice in God's goodness. The spirit of communion was deeply felt as the Orang Asli community from the five villages came together, not as separate groups, but as one

family in Christ.

The pilgrimage was a journey of the heart, a moment of encounter, renewal, and belonging. It reminded all present that faith flourishes when it is shared, and that God continues to walk with His people, guiding every step with love and light. **Eddie Je**

# Nurturing hope together

Irene Ng

PETALING JAYA: After months of preparation, *Nurturing Hope Together*, an event focused on Walking with the Excluded finally came alive on October 18 in a beautiful celebration of compassion and camaraderie. The event was organised by the Church of St Francis Xavier, in conjunction with the Petaling District Pastoral Council's Pilgrims of Hope 2025 initiative.

Walking with the Excluded is one of the four Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP) identified by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) as privileged paths of mission for ten years (2019-2029). It is a desire to walk alongside those individuals and communities who are vulnerable, excluded, marginalised. The universal apostolic preferences seek to deepen our personal, communal, and institutional conversion.

The UAP event involved coordinated efforts across various ministries within SFX including the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP), the Prisons Ministry, the Migrant Ministry, Care for Creation, Social Communications, as well as scores of volunteers to ensure smooth and comprehensive execution.

Invited guests included friends from underprivileged and marginalised communities — the poor, the migrants, children from SSVP education homes, and individuals who are in the midst of rebuilding their lives.

They arrived in great numbers, filling the main hall with warmth, joy, and anticipation. Each was presented with a tote bag containing a reusable cutlery set to promote care for our environment, and a chocolate chip



Participants working together to recreate Mother Mary's image using coloured bottle caps.

cookie, symbolising love and sweetness in fellowship.

The event opened with a multilingual welcome remark by SFX's parish priest, Fr Alvin Ng, SJ, with Tamil translation by the Rumah Pengajian Xavier SSVP (RPX) administrator. A short video presentation showcasing the works of the relevant ministries followed, setting the tone for the day.

Next came an energetic drum circle — an ice-breaker that filled the air with rhythmic beats, joyful clapping, and laughter, breaking down all barriers and bringing everyone

together in harmony.

Participants were then ushered to various activity zones — from dance therapy and mosaic art in Loyola Hall (Level 2) to Mandala drawing therapy, creative paper art, and stone painting on Level 1. Meanwhile, the children had their own fun-filled session in Xavier Hall, enjoying music, games, and another lively drum circle.

The event ended with a sumptuous nasi lemak lunch and a lucky draw, with each guest receiving a gift pack.

doing the Mandala, I feel like I want to do more. It was really a nice day. Spread joy and love."

"Praise the Lord, sister! We enjoyed ourselves and are very happy to join this event. Everyone was so friendly, loving, and caring. Hope to join again soon. Thank you so much for all the love you've shown us!"

From our facilitators:  
"The children were so happy during music therapy — some even asked if they could come again next week! Seeing their laughter and joy is the greatest reward. Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam."

"I truly enjoyed the session. The participants were creative and engaged. Thank you for inviting me. God bless — the team did a great job!"

From our volunteers:  
"UAP truly came alive! It was inspiring to see our community friends and their children enjoying themselves; while volunteers served joyfully together. Well done to the committee for organising this event with so much heart. I'm blessed to be part of the team. Thank you and God bless!"

The event was truly a blessing for facilitators, volunteers, and the entire organising UAP team from SFX. Guided by the Holy Spirit from planning to execution, everything came together beautifully despite the minor challenges that often come with any big event.

Praise the Lord for His blessings and love that continue to inspire us to serve others joyfully and wholeheartedly.

## Voices of Gratitude From our community friends

"I was not interested in art at first, but after



Children enjoying the music.



Participants learning the Mandala art therapy.

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# Rediscovering family spirituality

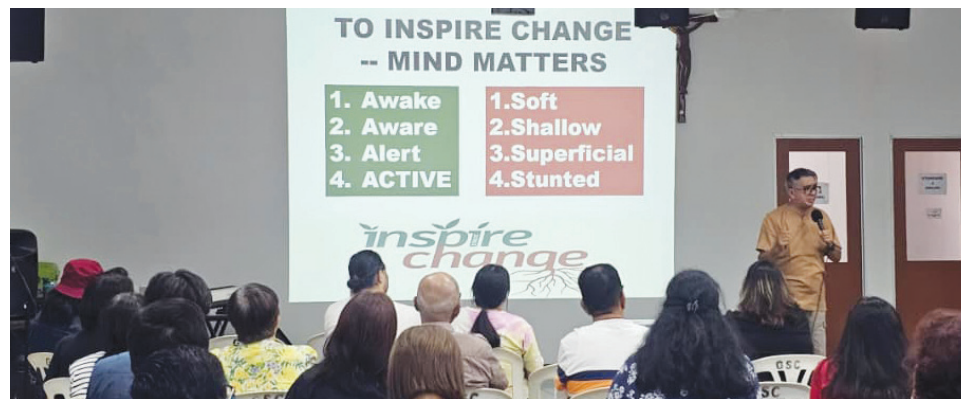
Christine and Christopher Cheong

KUALA LUMPUR: More than 65 parishioners of the Church of the Good Shepherd (GSC), Setapak, attended a day of recollection on 'Family Spirituality', which many described as "an inspiring, insightful, and incredibly different session on how to be an empowered family in today's challenging world."

The participants were welcomed by parish priest Fr Mitchel Joseph who emphasised the need of building strong, stable, spiritual and supportive families, when confronted by the changes and challenges of the day.

In his introduction, speaker Martin Jalleh commended the parish's Family Life Ministry (FLM) for organising the event and for choosing such a timely and relevant theme. "To me, the most important ministry in a parish today is the FLM, for if the well-being of the family, the 'domestic church,' is okay, the parish will be okay. The parish is a 'family of families.' When families are strong, they contribute to the strength and substance of the entire parish," he said.

In the first session, titled *The Family – One of God's Greatest Gifts*, Martin reminded



Parishioners participating in a recollection session by Martin Jalleh.

participants to always see their family as a precious gift from God and never take it for granted. He quoted the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who said, "You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them."

Sharing their reflections, Nicole and Octavianus Hadi, together with their children Carmen and Hans, said, "Our family learned so much about Family Spirituality! Our children's main takeaway was that family is a gift – one of God's greatest gifts – of one to another, never to be taken for granted.

Both of us realised that our life begins with family and ends with family, with God at the very centre. Family Spirituality consists of the paradox of putting God first and making family first."

Participants were encouraged by the positive and affirming understanding of "family" shared during the session — especially in today's world where such values can often be overlooked. They were particularly moved by a quote from the late Stephen Covey, who observed, "When I ask audiences worldwide what the three most important things in their lives are, 95 per cent put family relationships on the list, and 75 per cent put family first. Our deepest joys and our deepest heartaches surround what is happening in our family life."

Participants were captivated by the insights shared on the meaning of family through the teachings of Popes St John Paul II, Francis, and Leo XIV. One quote that particularly resonated with many was Pope Francis' reflection on the Incarnation: "God came into the world in a family because this family was a family that had its heart open to love, that had the doors open to love."

Martin highlighted that "by choosing to enter the world through a human family,

Jesus gave a renewed spiritual dignity to the family unit. The family is a place sacred enough for the Son of God to be born in and to live in."

Before exploring the meaning and necessity of family spirituality today, Martin offered a clear explanation of spirituality itself, comparing it to religion in a way that many found enlightening. Christine Chua shared, "I have always felt that family spirituality is not something purely religious. As Martin explained, we need to go beyond rites, rituals, and rules and be moved by a personal, inner, and holistic dimension of spirituality. His sessions affirmed and reinforced my belief."

Martin went on to explain that spirituality today is often understood in both religious and non-religious contexts. While some tend to contrast religion with its structure and institutional nature against spirituality's more personal and interior focus, he emphasised that the two should work in harmony. A synergistic relationship between religion and spirituality, he said, is essential in nurturing true family spirituality.

In the final session, Martin shared the key characteristics of Christian family spirituality. Every Catholic family, he said, needs a spirituality of interiority, one where God is a personal presence at the very centre of family life and given utmost priority.

He concluded by stressing that family spirituality must be holistic, one that integrates the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of each person. Such an approach, he said, promotes overall well-being not only for individuals but also for the wider community, reflecting the interconnectedness of faith and life.

The recollection ended on a note of hope, with families leaving strengthened in their faith, renewed in their love, and inspired to make God the heart of their home.



## Parish talents take the stage

CHERAS: The grand finals of the *BEC Hidden Talent 2025: Shine Like a Star!* held at the Church of St Francis of Assisi showcased an evening of remarkable talent as the top finalists competed for the winning title.

The event began with a welcome address by Maria Santhana, IGNITE Programme Lead, followed by a speech and opening prayer from parish priest, Fr Paul Cheong OFM Cap.

One highlight of the night included a special guest appearance by renowned singer Francissca Peter, who performed and also served as one of the judges. Her presence added a special touch to the occasion.

Hosting the evening were energetic emcees Gabriel Ramiah and Faustina Pier P'ng, who kept the atmosphere lively as the audience participated enthusiastically, especially during the voting segment.

The Top three winners were:

- Ethan Sylvester (BEC St Luke)
- Frances Chidimma (BEC St Martin de Porres)
- Michael Christian (BEC St John Bosco)

Participants placing 4th to 9th (in no particular order) were Jessie, Nicholas, Sathesh, Peter, Gabriella, and Patrick. All finalists were commended for their courage and performances.

The evening also featured special performances by Frances and Stephanie, the Chong Sisters, the Dancing Girls, and the duet of Sathesh and Faustina, adding artistic richness to the programme.

BECCOT Chairman, George Ramiah, expressed gratitude to the organising team, volunteers, supporters, and all participants for making the event a memorable success.

The showcase served as a beautiful re-



Ethan Sylvester, winner of BEC Hidden Talent.

minder of the gifts within the community. "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Peter 4:10)



## ORDO 2025-2026



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# Indonesia's vibrant Church inspires hope for Europe

JAKARTA: Outgoing Apostolic Nuncio to Indonesia, Archbishop Piero Pioppo, lauded the “vitality and joyful witness” of Indonesian Catholics, calling their faith a source of renewal for Europe’s declining churches.

Speaking at the opening of the 5th National Assembly of the Catholic Church in Indonesia (SAGKI 2025) on November 3 in North Jakarta, Archbishop Pioppo expressed gratitude for his eight years of service in the country. “The faith and dynamism of the Indonesian Church have strengthened my spirit,” said the Vatican diplomat, who now takes up his new post as Apostolic Nuncio to Spain and Andorra.

He said the youthful enthusiasm and deep devotion of Indonesian Catholics “will serve as an inspiration for Europe, which is called to rediscover the freshness of faith.”



Bishops celebrate the opening Mass of the 5th National Assembly of the Catholic Church in Indonesia (SAGKI 2025) in North Jakarta. (LiCAS News/Stefanus Budi Handoyo / TichTV-Sesawi.Net)

Recalling that Spain once sent missionaries to Indonesia, he added, “Now, the living faith I have encountered here can bring renewal to Europe.”

In his address, Bishop Antonius Subianto Bunjamin, OSC, president of the Bishops’ Conference of

Indonesia (KWI), stressed that synodality lies at the heart of the Church’s identity. “One essential element of SAGKI is the call to be a synodal Church — a Church that listens. The young must listen to the old, and the old to the young,” he said.

Themed *Journeying Together as Pilgrims of Hope: Becoming a Synodal and Missionary Church for Peace*, the Nov 3–7 assembly brought together 374 delegates from 38 dioceses and the Military Ordinariate.

Bishop Antonius urged partici-

pants to open their hearts to the Holy Spirit with humility and courage, warning that a synodal Church cannot exist if it is “closed to the Spirit or trapped in self-centred pride.” He emphasised that synodality requires “inner freedom, prayer, and trust.”

The opening Mass reflected Indonesia’s cultural diversity, with prayers in Papuan, Javanese, Balinese, and Dayak languages. Bishop Antonius reaffirmed the Church’s commitment to the Istiqlal Declaration signed by Pope Francis and Grand Imam Nasaruddin Umar, saying it continues to guide efforts for justice, peace, and care for creation.

He concluded with a call for action: “This assembly must not end as a formality. It should bear fruit in decisions rooted in love and justice, bringing hope and peace to those on the margins.” LiCAS News

## Religions join to tackle rising suicides among South Korea’s elderly

SEOUL: Religious groups in South Korea have joined hands to address the country’s alarming rise in suicides and solitary deaths among middle-aged and older people, a demographic increasingly affected by isolation and mental health struggles.

Representatives of Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, and Won Buddhists attended an October 26 discussion focused on the suicide crisis among people aged 40 and above — the age group with the highest suicide rate in the country — and called for stronger community and policy interventions.

“Suicide and solitary deaths among middle-aged and older men have become particularly severe since the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Professor Hwang Soon-chan of Inha University in his keynote address.

He cited growing social isolation driven by economic instability, health problems, and “traditional masculinity that avoids seeking help.”



According to a report published in the Journal of the Korean Medical Association, nearly 10 senior citizens took their own lives on average each day from 2019 to 2023.

The study, led by Oh Dae-jong of Kangbuk Samsung Hospital, found that 18,044 people aged 65 and older died by suicide during the period — roughly 3,000 deaths per year.

The suicide mortality rate among seniors in 2023 stood at 40.6 deaths

per 100,000 people, 45 per cent higher than the rate among those aged 15 to 64, The Korea Herald reported.

The country’s senior population surpassed 10 million last year, according to official data.

During the panel discussion, Lee Dong-ho of the Seoul Catholic Social Welfare Association said the group’s Yeon-Go Project has supported socially isolated households since 2023 by building “dense community networks to help isolated neighbours achieve self-reliance.”

Protestant participants said churches have been operating community kitchens and lunchbox delivery programs for people living alone in *goshiwon* (small shared rooms).

“It’s important to reach out directly,” said Pastor Choi Seok-jin of Life Hope Church, who has set up counselling spaces in such neighbourhoods.

Venerable Hyeon, vice president of the Buddhist Counselling Development Institute, stressed that older adults should “feel alive by helping others,” urging them to engage in volunteer work, self-help groups, and education.

“True respect for life begins when one changes from being a recipient to a co-creator of life,” he said.

The Won Buddhism Round Heart Counselling Research Centre shared case studies of counselling programmes that have helped middle-aged and elderly participants rediscover purpose and resilience.

Launched in 2018, the annual multi-faith forum seeks to strengthen cooperation among South Korea’s major religions to promote suicide prevention and foster community solidarity. [ucanews.com](http://ucanews.com)

## Vietnam bishops call for faith-rooted, modern Church communications

SAIGON: Vietnam’s Catholic bishops have called on Church communicators to strengthen collaboration, digital readiness, and faith-driven commitment as they face the challenges of an evolving media landscape.

The appeal came during the Media Gathering 2025, organised by the Commission for Social Communications (CSC) of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Vietnam (CBCV) at the Pastoral Centre of the Archdiocese of Saigon.

The event brought together Bishop Joseph Nguyễn Tấn Tước, outgoing CSC chairman; Bishop Dominic Nguyễn Tuấn Anh, the new chairman; along with 31 priests, one seminarian, and one nun serving in diocesan media ministries nationwide.

Opening the gathering, Bishop Dominic Nguyễn Tuấn Anh reminded participants that faith must remain central to the Church’s media work. Citing St. Paul, he said, “All things work for good to those who love God,” adding that the phrase includes “unfortunate events, failures, and losses” — a message he described as “an immense challenge, especially for those working in media.”

He recalled the witness of the late Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận who, even in prison, realised that “God is greater than all His works.” What appeared as failure, the bishop said, “became a source of inspiration for the world” through the cardinal’s writings in *The Road of Hope*.

“The Church’s communication ministry only bears true fruit when

it flows from love for God and the Church,” Bishop Dominic said. “That love transforms hardship into opportunity and the ‘crooked lines’ of trial into the ‘straight lines’ of divine grace.”

The gathering also marked a leadership transition, with participants expressing gratitude to Bishop Joseph Nguyễn Tấn Tước for his years of service and welcoming Bishop Dominic to the post.

Sessions explored how the Church could harness technology for evangelisation. Presentations included *Methods for Studying Target Audiences in Evangelisation* by Antoine Phan Quang Thịnh, *Digital Transformation in Church Life* by Fr Paul Hoàng Mạnh Huy and Fr Joseph Nguyễn Xuân Dương, and *Networking and Crisis Management* by Fr Peter Huỳnh Thế Vinh.

On the second day, Fr Joseph Vũ Hữu Hiền, CSC secretary general, urged communicators to keep alive “the joy of the Gospel and the fire of love,” rooted in the conviction that “nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.”

The two-day assembly concluded with the approval of the Final Resolution of the Media Gathering 2025, setting pastoral priorities for training, collaboration, and professionalisation in Catholic communications.

Participants left “rekindled with zeal,” confident that the Church’s voice in Vietnam can meet the challenges of a fast-changing digital age with faith, competence, and unity. LiCAS News

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# Get to know the Lord, be like Him

VATICAN: Marking the 400th anniversary of the archdiocesan seminary in Trujillo, Peru, Pope Leo XIV thanked God for all the men whose ministry was nurtured there.

"My own footprints are also part of that house, where I served as a teacher and director of studies," he told the current students of the Seminary of San Carlos and San Marcelo. From 1989 to 1998, he taught canon law and other subjects at the seminary.

The purpose of the seminary has been the same for 400 years: to help men "be with the Lord, to let Him form them, to know and love Him in order to become like Him," the Pope wrote in the letter, which was released by the Vatican November 5.

In the letter, Pope Leo offered advice to the students.

"Prayer and the search for truth are not parallel paths, but a single road leading to the Master," he wrote. "Piety without doctrine becomes fragile sentimentality; doctrine without prayer becomes sterile and cold."

Prayer and study, then, must be cultivated "with balance and passion, knowing that only in this way will you be able to authentically proclaim what you live and live coherently what you proclaim."

And while a seminarian's spiritual and intellectual life are indispensable, he said, as preparations for ordained ministry, "both are directed towards the altar — the place where priestly identity is built and revealed in fullness."

In the Mass, he said, "the priest learns to offer his life as Christ did on the cross. Nourished by the Eucharist, he discovers the unity between ministry and sacrifice and understands that his vocation is to be a victim along with Christ."

"When the cross is embraced as an inseparable part of life," Pope Leo wrote, "the Eucharist ceases to be seen merely as a rite and becomes the true centre of existence."

Seminarians also are preparing for a life of spiritual fatherhood, the Pope told them.

"A true father does not live for himself,



Pope Leo XIV greets seminarians during their Jubilee (Vatican Media)

but for his family; he rejoices when his children grow, suffers when they are lost and waits when they stray," he said. "So, too the priest carries the entire people in his heart, intercedes for them, accompanies them in their struggles and sustains them in faith."

Priestly fatherhood, he said, is expressed

through acts of "self-giving: celibacy as undivided love for Christ and His Church; obedience as trust in God's will; evangelical poverty as availability for all; and mercy and strength that accompany the wounded and support those in pain." **Cindy Wooden, OSV News**

## Catholic Church 'seeks closer ecumenical ties' in response to world needs

WADI EL NATRUN, Egypt: Catholics are strengthening cooperation with other Christian denominations amid global challenges, Church delegates said, at a major ecumenical gathering marking the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

Held from October 24 to 28 at the Coptic Orthodox Church's Logos Papal Centre, the sixth World Conference on Faith and Order brought together 400 participants from the World Council of Churches (WCC), representing 356 member denominations and more than 580 million Christians worldwide. A Vatican delegation led by Cardinal Kurt Koch, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, participated in the conference, which focused on the theme "Faith, Mission and Unity."

Coptic Orthodox Pope Tawadros II opened the five-day event, joined by Rev Dr Jerry Pillay, WCC general secretary, and Rev Dr Stephanie Dietrich, moderator of the Faith and Order Commission.

In his address, Cardinal Koch emphasised the enduring ecumenical significance of the Council of Nicaea, held in A.D. 325, which produced the Nicene Creed — a shared declaration of faith still professed by all major Christian traditions.

"Nicaea is of particular ecumenical importance because it took place before Christianity was wounded by divisions," he said. "Its Creed remains common to all Christian churches and communities, uniting



The Catholic delegation to the sixth World Conference on Faith and Order October 24-28, 2025, is pictured in Wadi El Natrun, Egypt, where the conference was attended by 400 participants from the 356 member-denominations of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches. (OSV News photo/courtesy Myriam Wijlens)

them to this day."

He expressed hope that the anniversary would inspire "an ecumenical spirit" and renewed commitment to restoring Christian unity.

While the Catholic Church is not a formal WCC member, it has been a full participant in the Faith and Order Commission since 1968, contributing about 10 percent of delegates. The Church also co-organises a Joint Working Group with the WCC, which continues to develop new "ecumenical tools" for dialogue and cooperation.

Professor Myriam Wijlens, a Dutch-born theologian and canon lawyer who co-organised the conference, said the gathering reflected the Church's growing "synodal spirit" and new momentum in ecumenical engagement.

"Our recent Synod declared that the Church wishes to be more ecumenical — if the Holy Spirit was at work then, the same is true now," she said. "The signals suggest we are all walking the same path in a world crying out for unity and peace."

Wijlens noted that Article 138 of the 2024 Synod of Bishops' final report identified ecumenical dialogue as essential to synodality and encouraged shared consultation and discernment among Christian traditions.

She observed that the Egypt conference drew a new generation of participants, many from the Global South, and said its spirit of prayer and dialogue mirrored the Catholic Church's own synodal journey.

The conference concluded with an "Ecumenical Affirmation" and a "Call to All

Christians," urging believers to live out unity through shared mission and prayer, rather than merely through official documents.

"In a world fractured by wars, injustice and division, our faith undergirds our journey towards a common vision of the Church and shared action," the statement said.

It also called churches to repentance for past complicity in "enslavement, colonialism, and power," and to reorient their mission towards justice and reconciliation.

Wijlens added that WCC documents are adopted by consensus, allowing for theological diversity while maintaining communion.

She also highlighted Pope Leo XIV's upcoming visit to Turkey (Nov 27-30) for the Nicaea anniversary, which will include a joint declaration with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, as a sign of continued progress since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

"The Catholic Church now sees other churches not as schismatics, but as true Christian communities," said Wijlens. "Over the past six decades, popes have consistently built these relationships. This world conference was a powerful expression of the Church's renewed synodal and ecumenical spirit."

The event concluded with WCC leaders meeting Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who commended the churches' role in promoting peace and coexistence. **Jonathan Luxmoore, OSV News**

## Amid loneliness crisis, 'men need a mission'

WASHINGTON, D.C.: At the *Symposium on Young American Men* on November 3, Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly of the Knights of Columbus said that young men are "lost" and need "purpose and mission."

The symposium highlighted the mental health crisis, social isolation, digital addiction, and other struggles young men face today.

Panellists — including Sen James Lankford, R-Oklahoma; Sen Ruben Gallego, D-Arizona; Sen John Cornyn, R-Texas; and other experts — discussed ways to address these challenges by helping young men build community.

"Many young men are lost and disconnected," Kelly said in an opening statement at the beginning of the symposium. "Many come from broken families, with fathers who are not a real part of their life. Many are drowning in the depths of the internet and social media."

Kelly, who heads the Catholic fraternal

organisation Knights of Columbus, pointed to loneliness and isolation as a challenge for young men.

"It's increasingly clear that millions of men no longer have friends who they can count on and who can spur them on to excellence," Kelly continued. "More than a quarter of millennials say they have no close friends, and the rise of artificial intelligence has millions of young men looking for friendship in chatbots."

Ellen Carmichael, founder of The Lafayette Company, the communications group hosting the symposium, said there is an "urgent need" for action.

"Recent incidents of political violence and growing national concern about young men's social isolation have underscored what we already knew: This conversation cannot wait," Carmichael stated.

"We are hardwired as men for purpose and

mission," Kelly said, noting that the Knights of Columbus is centred on Christ and service to local communities.

"We are trying to tackle what the surgeon general recently called the epidemic of loneliness and isolation," Kelly noted. "We're giving men the kind of community they truly need, and we will continue to help America's young men find meaning and mission in life."

"We've always known that men need meaning in life and that a man's ultimate meaning comes from his personal relationship with others and with God," Kelly said.

"Friendship is the key," he said. "Christ did His ministry through friendships ... He assembled 12 friends, imperfect people."

In a panel on the role of faith in rebuilding community for men, Kelly said young men "have had enough" of what the culture offers them and "are really yearning for more of an institution and yearning for moorings."



He noted that the Knights of Columbus have been bringing in a growing number of men over the past few years and that after an era of relativism, there has been a "swing back" among young men towards tradition.

In a change from previous generations, he said, young men are drawn to ritual.

"The areas they're searching leave them empty," Kelly said, so "they turn to God." **Kate Quiñones, CNA**

# Mary, mother of Jesus and all believers, is not co-redeemer

VATICAN: While praising devotion to Mary, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith firmly rejected moves to formally proclaim Mary as “co-redemptrix” or “co-mediatrix.”

In a lengthy doctrinal note titled *Mater Populi Fidelis* (Mother of the Faithful People of God), the dicastery said the title co-redemptrix or co-redeemer “carries the risk of eclipsing the exclusive role of Jesus Christ” in salvation.

And, regarding the title co-mediatrix or co-mediator, it said that Mary, “the first redeemed, could not have been the mediatrix of the grace that she herself received.”

However, it said, the title may be used when it does not cast doubt on “the unique mediation of Jesus Christ, true God and true man.”

Pope Leo XIV approved the text October 7 and ordered its publication, said the note, which was released Nov 4.

Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the doctrinal dicastery, presented the document during a conference at the Jesuit headquarters in Rome and said its teaching becomes part of the Church’s “ordinary magisterium” and must be considered authoritative.

For more than 30 years, some Catholics, including some bishops, have asked for formal dogmatic declarations of Mary as co-redemptrix and co-mediatrix, the document’s introduction said. But Msgr Armando Matteo, secretary of the dicastery’s doctrinal section, told the conference that the Vatican’s first study of the doctrinal implications of the titles goes all the way back to 1926.

Fernández said that one time, when St Peter’s Basilica was closed, he spent a long time in front of Michelangelo’s Pietà. The sorrow on Mary’s face because of the death of her son and, at the same time, her obvious strength, he said, “was so beautiful it was understandable why people would want to say everything and more about Mary.”

The new document said that titles used for Mary should speak of her motherly care for all people and her place as the first and perfect disciple of Jesus but must not create any doubt



Pope Leo XIV places a crown on a statue of Mary and the Child Jesus during a meeting with participants in the Jubilee of the Roma, Sinti and Traveling Peoples in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican October 18, 2025. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

that Catholics believe Jesus is the redeemer of the world and the bestower of grace.

“Any gaze directed at her that distracts us from Christ or that places her on the same level as the Son of God would fall outside the dynamic proper to an authentically Marian faith,” it said, because Mary always points to her son.

The titles co-redemptrix and co-mediatrix have been used in reference to Mary by theologians and even popes in the past millennium, the doctrinal dicastery said, but without elaborating on the precise meaning and the extent to which those titles could describe Mary’s role in salvation history.

St John Paul II “referred to Mary as ‘Co-redemptrix’ on at least seven occasions,” the note said, but after consultation with the then-Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and its prefect, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in 1996, he did not issue a dogmatic declaration and stopped using the title.

Citing Scripture and tradition, the future Pope Benedict XVI said, “The precise meaning of these titles (co-redemptrix and co-mediatrix) is not clear, and the doctrine contained in them is not mature.”

“Everything comes from Him — Christ — as the Letter to the Ephesians and the Letter to the Colossians, in particular, tell us; Mary, too, is everything that she is through Him. The word ‘Co-redemptrix’ would obscure this origin,” Benedict said.

Pope Francis, at a general audience in 2021, said that Jesus entrusted Mary to humanity as a mother, “not as a goddess, not as co-redemptrix,” adding that love motivated some people to call her co-redemptrix, but love often leads people to “exaggerate.”

“Given the necessity of explaining Mary’s subordinate role to Christ in the work of Redemption, it would not be appropriate to use the title ‘Co-redemptrix’ to define Mary’s cooperation,” the doctrinal note said.

The title, it said, “risks obscuring Christ’s unique salvific mediation and can therefore create confusion and an imbalance in the harmony of the truths of the Christian faith, for ‘there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’”

“When an expression requires many repeated explanations to prevent it from straying from a correct meaning, it does not serve the faith of the People of God and becomes unhelpful,” the dicastery concluded.

The use of the title “co-mediatrix” is more complicated, the doctrinal note said, because the word “mediation” often is “understood simply as cooperation, assistance or intercession” and easily could apply to Mary without calling into question “the unique mediation of Jesus Christ, true God and true man.”

Mary’s role in salvation history is unique, the document said. She willingly accepted to become the mother of Jesus the saviour, she raised Him, travelled with Him and stood at the foot of His cross.

While Christ, fully human and fully divine, is the one mediator between God and humanity, it said, He enables various forms of participation in His salvific plan because, in communion with Him, we can all become, in some way, cooperators with God and ‘mediators’ for one another.”

“If this holds true for every believer — whose cooperation with Christ becomes increasingly fruitful to the extent that one allows oneself to be transformed by grace — how much more must it be affirmed of Mary in a unique and supreme way,” the doctrinal note said.

The Church believes that those in heaven can pray and intercede for people still on earth and, “among those chosen and glorified with Christ, first and foremost, is His Mother,” the note said. “Therefore, we can affirm that Mary has a unique collaboration in the saving work that Christ carries out in His Church. With this intercession, Mary can become for us a motherly sign of the Lord’s mercy.” **Cindy Wooden, CNS**

Growing up as a Muslim child of immigrants in Mainz, surrounded by a rich Catholic culture, I experienced firsthand both the beauty and the tension that can come from living between religious worlds. At home, I recited the Quran: in school, I sang Christmas songs. I fasted during Ramadan while my classmates opened Advent calendars.

I often felt the weight of being seen as “other,” but still I recognised that our faiths were not as distant as they were often portrayed. I was raised to revere Jesus as a prophet, one of the most beloved figures in Islam. Mary’s name is honoured in the Quran more than any other woman. Above all else, I believed in the one God — in mercy, in accountability and in a shared moral call to justice.

In *Nostra Aetate*, the Catholic Church’s groundbreaking document on its relationship with other religions, I saw a vision that affirmed my experience, one that invites Muslims and Christians to move beyond fear and toward mutual respect, shared values and a more just future. *Nostra Aetate* offers hope, but does not, and should not, erase the painful parts of our shared history.

It was the spirit of this document that gave me the opportunity as a Muslim to study at Georgetown University and to serve as a Muslim chaplain-in-residence on the same

## A Muslim reflects on *Nostra Aetate* and its enduring call to mutual understanding

campus, where I walked alongside students of all faiths — and none.

Meanwhile, Muslims were also making efforts to advance relationships with other communities. In 1950, the Muslim scholar Bediüzzaman Said Nursi wrote a letter to Pope Pius XII expressing his hope for cooperation between Christians and Muslims against growing hostility, widespread poverty and moral decay. Nursi visited Patriarch Athenagoras in 1953 in Istanbul about working together on the issues of the time. Nursi’s vision is rooted in the example and universal teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and still resonates: collaboration rooted in faith, not in spite of it.

Pope John Paul II, on his 1980 apostolic visit to my hometown of Mainz, spoke directly to Muslim immigrants — my community — acknowledging our presence, our faith, and our dignity:

But not all guests in this country are Christians; a particularly large group professes the faith of Islam. To you as well I extend my heartfelt blessing!



If you have brought your belief in God from your homeland to this foreign land with sincere hearts, and if you pray here to God as your Creator and Lord, then you too belong to the great pilgrimage of people who, since Abraham, have repeatedly set out to seek and find the one true God.

When you are not afraid to pray publicly,

you offer us Christians an example that deserves respect.

Live your faith, even in a foreign land, and do not allow it to be misused by any human or political interest!

Pope Francis continued this legacy in *Fratelli Tutti*, his 2020 encyclical on fraternity and social friendship. In it, he calls on people of all faiths, and none, to recognise one another as brothers and sisters. Inspired by his friendship with Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb, Pope Francis affirmed that authentic dialogue must be a force for peace and solidarity.

The message of *Nostra Aetate* is still relevant today, not only for clergy and theologians but also for the wider public, helping the next generation understand the complexity of our histories and the promise of a shared future. We live in a world of polarisation, but this document reminds us that Christian-Muslim collaboration is not naive, but necessary; and we can find, in one another’s scriptures and hearts, the foundations for respectful relationships, justice and peace.

**Zeyneb Sayilgan, NCR**

# The catechumenate is restored!

The Second Vatican Council was a major event in the history of the Catholic Church. It was convened by Pope John XXIII on October 11, 1962 and had, as its aim, the updating of the Church's practices and teachings to better relate to the modern world while remaining faithful to its core principles and traditions.



The Second Vatican Council was convened by Pope John XXIII on October 11, 1962.

## The Council calls for the restoration of the adult catechumenate

At the Council, the bishops instructed that, "the catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps, is to be restored and to be put into use at the discretion of the local Ordinary. By this, the period of the catechumenate, which is intended as a time of suitable instruction, and sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals, was to be reestablished (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, n. 64). This was further emphasised in the

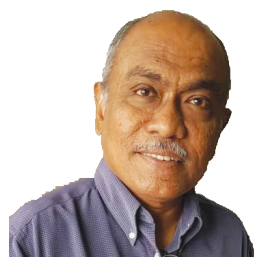
Vatican decree on the pastoral office of the bishops which stated that bishops should strive to re-establish or better adapt the institution of the adult catechumenate (*Christus domini*, n. 14).

The Second Vatican Council was formally concluded by Pope Paul VI on December 8, 1965. The directive by the Council for the restoration of the catechumenate meant that there was now the urgent need to produce a suitable liturgical rite that would accompany it. It had to be one that not only would take into consideration the insights and recommendations of the Second Vatican Council but also the present situation with regards to the initiation of adults in the Church.

## The establishment of the study group

In order to implement the numerous directives of the Council, a number of study groups were set up. For the reestablishment of the adult catechumenate, a special group, known as Study Group 22, was formed under the chairmanship of Balthasar Fischer, an expert on the liturgy and ancient catechumenate. Besides Fischer, other members included experts in Canon Law, Sacraments, Systematic and Pastoral Theology and others. There were also those who were already involved in some form of catechumenate in their respective dioceses or regions.

The group started work in 1962 and developed a revised order for the adult catechumenate in a series of drafts. In this task, it was Fischer who played an instrumental role. He crafted a series of



## Echoing the Faith

DR STEVEN SELVARAJU

changes that dramatically altered the way adults would be baptised in the Catholic Church. In 1966, the provisional text had been completed. It was sent to Rome with a request that the text be used on an experimental basis in a number of pastoral centres around the world.

Eventually, fifty centres in Japan, Indonesia, Mali, Togo, the Ivory Coast, Congo, Belgium, France, Canada, the United States and in other nations were identified for this purpose. In 1969, at the conclusion of the testing, each of the pastoral centres submitted a report to the study group. The group reviewed the comments in the reports and made the

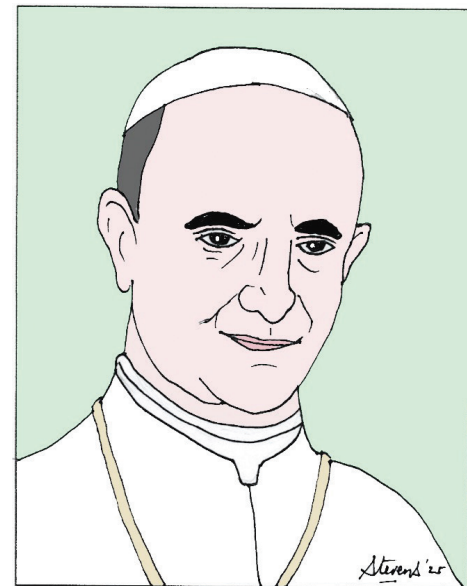
relevant adaptations before finalising the text in the same year. The final text was submitted to the Congregations of the Doctrine of Faith, for the Sacraments and for the Propagation of Faith.

## The approval

The Congregations authorised a few revisions before the final text was sent to Pope Paul VI for his approval, which he gave in 1972. It was known as the *Ordo Initiationis Christiane Adultorum* (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults). In time, the rite was translated into other languages and adapted by episcopal conferences around the world with the approval of the Vatican. In 1988, the standard English translation known as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), was published by the National Conference of the Catholic Bishops of the United States of America.



Fr Balthazar Fischer (1912-2001) served as the chairperson of Study Group 22, which was formed to prepare the revised order for the adult catechumenate.



Pope Paul VI approved the *Ordo Initiationis Christiane Adultorum* (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) in 1972.

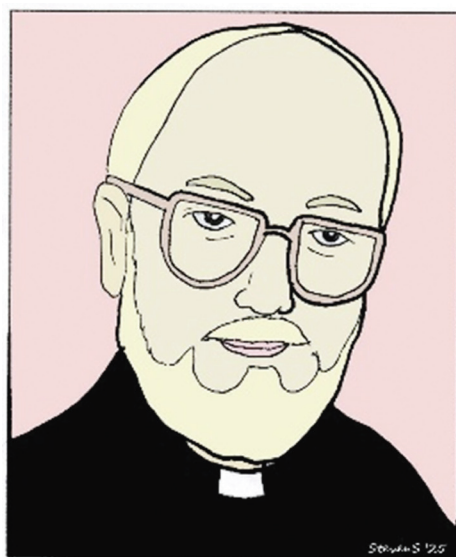
## Implications of the RCIA for the Church

The restoration of the adult catechumenate in 1972 was received with great interest and enthusiasm by many theological, liturgical, catechetical and pastoral experts, as well as, by bishops, priests and catechists. Other experts viewed the RCIA as one of the most important documents to emerge after the Second Vatican Council. They described the promulgation of the RCIA as an event that was "radical", "explosive", "a Copernican revolution" or as "one of the best kept secrets since the Second Vatican Council".

According to R. Duggan, an expert on the adult catechumenate, in his article, "Implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults", stated that the opinions and comments of these experts reflected a "growing consensus that this document would have a lasting effect on the life of the Church for many years to come."

One expert even viewed the promulgation of the RCIA as an admittance of failure by the Church in the manner it initiated adults in the past. In his book, D.L. Gelpi, pointed that in restoring the catechumenate, the bishops of the Second Vatican Council "passed judgement on the pastoral practice of fifteen centuries and found it wanting," since during this period the "Church has sacramentalised converts without evangelising them adequately."

Pastoral theologian, T. P. Ivory, in his article, "The Restoration of the Catechumenate as a Norm for Catechesis",



Like many liturgical experts, Fr Aidan Kavanagh (1929-2006) recognised the implications that the RCIA can have on the life and renewal of the Church.

was convinced that the document could bring about renewal to the very structure of the Church as it was willing to leave "behind outdated pastoral principles and practices." He added that with the Rite, the Church, "approaches the new era with the catechumenal process which promotes renewal for the entire Christian community."

Liturgical expert, K.A. Keifer, observed that the RCIA has resulted, "in the promulgation of rites which are, historically

and culturally speaking, a massive rejection of the presupposition both of the pastoral practice and of most church-goers regarding the true meaning of church membership." (Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate).

Catechetical expert B. Hixon, remarked that the RCIA "is not just a lovely new way to process converts. It calls for a new way of being Church, demanding a complete re-evaluation of how one is a Christian." In her book, "The RCIA Ministry: An Adventure into Mayhem and Mystery", Hixon writes that the Church, as represented by the Christian community, cannot genuinely carry out the RCIA if Catholics continue to hold on to old ways of thinking, acting and celebrating in the Church.

Liturgical expert A. Kavanagh, says in his article, "Christian Initiation for the Baptised as Infants", that the RCIA is "a far more mature document of liturgical change, and much broader in scope, than any that had preceded it." He adds that the RCIA can be viewed, "as a whole recovered initiation policy that represents a stunningly vast view of what it means to be a Christian in the Church." Like many others, he also recognises the implications the rite can have on the life of the Church.

## A vision for Church Renewal

The reason for a sense of excitement that occurred when the adult catechumenate

was restored is because of the vision of the Church as envisaged by the RCIA. The vision is that of a Church that is actively aware of its faith as a gift received from God and desires earnestly to share this gift with those who do not know Him. Many were convinced that the RCIA can challenge the Church to renewal in almost every area of Church life – evangelisation, catechesis, liturgy, community, service and others. In addition, the RCIA was also considered as a means of renewal in that it would impact not only those being initiated but the entire Christian community as well as it calls on the Christian community to be dynamically involved in the lives of those it is initiating and in doing so, renew itself.

## Conclusion

In this article, I examined briefly the call for the restoration of the adult catechumenate by the Second Vatican Council and the work that was carried out in order to prepare the order of adult initiation. In the next article, I will discuss further the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

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.

The illustrations are by Dr Steven Selvaraju

# A love blessed in faith

## Leslie and Irene's six decades of grace

Vincent D'Silva

Under the soft light of memory, the story of Leslie Oswin Struys, 88, and Irene Smith, 85, unfolds like a hymn — gentle, enduring, and full of grace. Their journey, which began more than six decades ago, has been marked by faith, family, and an abiding love that has weathered time with quiet strength.

Sitting side by side in their Johor Bahru home, the couple smile as they revisit the story of how it all began. "We met at a teenage party at a friend's home in Singapore," Irene recalls with a laugh, eyes twinkling at the memory. "We were both young, carefree, and full of life — I never imagined that this stranger across the room would one day be my husband."

Leslie, with a warm smile that still carries the spark of that youthful moment, adds, "It was one of those evenings that changes your life without you realising it."



The couple tied the knot at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd in Singapore in 1963.

Their wedding took place on April 15, 1963, a bright Easter Monday, at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd in Singapore. The day, they say, was both joyous and bustling. "There were so many weddings that day — we had to wait our turn," Irene reminisces. "But it was beautiful. A French priest named Fr Philippe Meissonnier, MEP, married us, and that blessing marked the beginning of everything."

From that sacred day onward, faith became the rhythm of their shared life. "We have been going to church without fail," Irene says softly. "It is our duty and our joy as Christians — even though Leslie is Anglican, he has never once discouraged me from my faith."

Irene said Leslie would accompany her to church and would even sit through the Mass. "During the Sign of Peace, he would lean over and plant a gentle kiss on my cheek," Irene recalled, her smile tinged with playful warmth.

Leslie nods gently. "Faith," he says, "isn't about boundaries. It's about love, respect, and what we share as a family."

When asked about the happiest memories they have shared, both break into nostalgic smiles. For the Struys, joy has always been tied to movement — journeys across continents and oceans, with family in tow.

"Nothing gave us more pleasure than to travel together," Irene shares. "Every year, we made it a point to visit a new place — it kept our bond strong and filled our lives with wonder."

Among their most treasured adventures were safaris across Africa — journeys through Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa — where they marvelled at the vast savannahs and untamed beauty of God's creation. "Those memories," Irene says, "are like jewels in the crown of our family story."

Yet, like any enduring marriage, theirs has not been without its trials. "One of the biggest challenges," Leslie reflects, "was the constant relocation for work." His career required the family to move from place to place, often

with little notice.

"Irene was the rock," he says admiringly. "She uprooted herself each time — taking the children out of school, setting up new homes, making every strange place feel like home again. That's no small thing."

Irene smiles modestly, her voice tinged with quiet strength. "It was never easy, but when you're a family, you just do what needs to be done. We leaned on each other — that's how we got through it."

On their 60th wedding anniversary, Leslie and Irene received a surprise that left them both deeply moved — an apostolic blessing from His Holiness Pope Francis.

"The blessing was arranged by the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Johor Bahru," Irene explains. "When we opened the envelope, we were overwhelmed. To see that certificate, with the Holy Father's name — it felt like a lifetime of faith and love was being acknowledged from the heart of the Church itself."

For a moment, her voice trembles with emotion. "It was humbling," she says. "We never expected it, but it felt like God's way of saying, well done, my faithful ones."

Their faith, they agree, has been the anchor through every storm and every season of joy. "Our faith has been our compass," Irene says. "It's what guided our marriage, our choices, and the way we raised our children."

Leslie nods in agreement. "Faith teaches patience," he adds. "It teaches you to forgive, to listen, to see beyond the moment. That's what keeps love alive."

The Struys family remains tightly knit, bound by affection and shared memories. "The family is very close and we do everything together," Irene says proudly. Children, grandchildren — even great-grandchildren — fill their lives with laughter and light.

Each family gathering, they say, feels like a blessing renewed. "To see our children grown, our grandchildren thriving — it's a joy that words can't fully capture," Leslie reflects.



Leslie (right) and Irene (centre) with their three daughters.

For many years now, Johor Bahru has been their cherished home, a place where their faith and friendships have taken deep root. "This community has been good to us," Leslie says. "We've seen it grow and change over the years, but the church here — the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart — has always been our constant."

Irene adds, "The Church is our extended family. It's where we find peace, belonging, and purpose."

After 62 years of being together, the couple are asked what the secret to their enduring love might be. Leslie's answer comes without hesitation. "To focus on the big picture," he says. "Don't get caught up in the small, irritating things. Life's too short for that."

Irene nods. "Trust, respect, and constant communication," she adds. "You have to be willing to listen, to support, and to forgive."

When asked what advice they would offer to young couples just beginning their journeys, Irene reflects for a moment before saying, "Take your time. Don't rush into



Leslie Oswin Struys and Irene Smith holding the framed papyrus of the papal blessing they received from Rome.



Leslie and Irene in their glorious heyday — a time of youthful grace, boundless energy, and unforgettable charm.

marriage. Time gives you clarity — it helps you find the right person to walk beside you."

Leslie's advice is simpler but just as profound: "Learn to accept each other," he says. "Whatever comes, face it together."

After a lifetime side by side, how would they describe one another?

Irene smiles fondly. "He's a great provider," she says softly. "Understanding, communicative — always ready to listen. I've been blessed."

Leslie looks at her with quiet pride. "Irene is the heart of our home," he replies. "A devoted wife, a loving mother, and the glue that holds everything together. She gave all her time to raising our three children, and she did it with grace."

Leslie Struys shared that the family had written a heartfelt email to congratulate Pope Leo on his historic election as Supreme Pontiff.

To their astonishment and deep joy, only hours after ascending to the head of the world's Catholic Church, Pope Leo himself penned a gracious reply — a warm note of gratitude that spoke with humility, kindness, and grace.

In his message, he thanked the Struys family most sincerely, a gesture that left them profoundly moved — a reminder that even at the highest seat of faith, compassion and connection remain beautifully human.

As the afternoon light filters through their living room, there is a warmth between them that words can only partly capture — a love burnished by time, deepened by faith, and sustained by the simple act of walking together, hand in hand, through life's winding road.

Their story is more than a testament to marital endurance; it is a living portrait of Christian devotion — of love rooted in God's promise, of patience and prayer, of choosing, every day, to stay the course.

When asked what keeps their hearts still intertwined after all these years, Irene smiles, her eyes soft with gratitude. "Because we never stopped being grateful," she says. "For each other, for our family, and for God's endless mercy."

In a world where love often fades and faith wavers, Leslie and Irene's 62-year journey stands as a quiet beacon — a reminder that when love is grounded in faith, it not only endures, it shines ever brighter with time.

# Searching for grace in grief



## GETTING SIDETRACKED

Agnes Ong

Recently, someone introduced me as a writer who contributes travel pieces to HERALD. Without thinking much, I replied, "Oh, but I'm on a different kind of journey now."

It was only later that I realised how true those words were, especially as we are now in the Month of Remembrance (November) and as the 100th day of my mother's passing approached.

In the November 2 issue of *HERALD*, someone had penned a thoughtful piece called *Death is sacred: Reverence for the Dead and Respect for the Grieving*. As I read the article, I nodded at almost every point raised by the author, as I experienced the same soon after my mother left us.

In the immediate weeks and months following her passing, I felt numb and lost in a fog. The only thing that kept me going was the things that needed doing — calls to make, friends and relatives to notify, wake and funeral details to coordinate, finances to manage, and a hundred other minor things.

When all the rituals ended and the quiet

settled in, the silence grew deafening — a hollow stillness that echoed through the corners of my days. I was alone and on a career break, with no demands on my time or attention. My friends and family were busy with their work and family. And so, the void left by my mother magnified: boundless, an ache too vast to name, too deep to measure.

I found myself breaking down time and again — when I ate the last of her *angku*, when I tried (unsuccessfully) to pack her clothes away, or when I stumbled upon her *taichi* equipment and uniform. Even the sight of her chopsticks in the cutlery drawer, or her recipe notes filled with the secrets of dishes and home-baked delights once shared with family and friends, could undo me. Each small discovery felt like opening a doorway to her absence: tender, sudden, and unbearably real.

A friend of my mother said to me, "I reckon this is your cannonball moment." Those prophetic words lingered with me for weeks as I sifted through my mother's personal effects and handwritten notes, slowly discovering the woman she truly was — beyond the roles of mother, daughter, and friend.

To my dismay and consternation, I realised that despite our closeness, there were parts of her I had never truly seen — and that awareness filled me with deep regret. In the weeks that followed, I found myself mired in grief and remorse, as

though the light within me had dimmed.

Friends and family would call, and I would say, "I could be better", though we all knew I wasn't. The pauses would stretch — they waited for me to talk, and I waited for them to rescue the silence.

But grief isn't a story one tells lightly, not the way you'd recount a happy holiday over coffee. There's only so much one can say about loss before it feels too heavy to speak aloud. In time, the questions all start to sound the same, pulling you back into the same sorrow, until silence becomes the only refuge.

I am deeply grateful to a friend who, after the initial 'how are you', continued to call, text, or FaceTime me — sometimes to talk about her family, work, or the things she's passionate about. It helped simply to hear another voice, without feeling the weight of having to keep the conversation going.

To help me cope with my grief, she also gave me a gratitude journal to help me cope. But when you're hurting, it's hard to notice what's good, even when it's all around you.

Realising this, she encouraged me to join an Ignatian retreat titled *Encountering Grace in Grief*, facilitated by Fr Hung Pham, SJ. My friend even signed me up herself to make sure I went.

Fr Hung guided us to face our grief and to see it as part of our spiritual journey. He reminded us that it was not only all right

to grieve and mourn, but necessary — that we should allow ourselves to feel our loss fully, without worrying about what others might think or say. That there is no deadline to grief. What touched me most was discovering the deep humanity of God — that He grieves with us, not apart from us.

Every activity drew me closer to Him and was deeply rooted in our Catholic faith. Fr. Hung constantly pointed us back to the promise of the Resurrection, to the hope of life beyond this one. Each ritual — lighting incense, writing my mother's name, releasing sky lanterns, and setting floating candles down a gentle stream — became a quiet prayer of surrender.

During one of the sharing sessions, someone said that grief is like a friend who comes and goes — to be met with love, not fear, because it reminds us how deeply we love. As I listened to others share their stories, I felt less alone. In our tears, I felt God's love holding and consoling us gently.

And with that came a quiet comfort: that one day, I will be reunited with my mother in heaven.

**Agnes Ong** is a self-professed curious traveller and lifelong learner with a lamentable tendency to get into sidetracked experiences. She aspires to explore as many historical UNESCO sites as possible, funds permitting. Agnes has a travel-slash-work-slash-dump everything IG at @agnes\_gets\_sidetracked

## Christmas! It is Christmas for you!

Is it too early to talk about Christmas? The first Sunday of Advent will soon be upon us at the end of this month. My church is already busy preparing for the season, and I'm sure yours is, too. Across many churches, plans are taking shape for the Advent season, carollers are beginning their practices, homes are being invited to host gatherings, and Christmas Day services are being organised.

In late September, my wife, Yah Lee, and I were in Tokyo staying with our Malaysian friend and his family. On our first afternoon, we were walking in the light rain through the Nakajuku neighbourhood which had a children's zoo and a walkway along a river lined with cherry blossom "Sakura" trees although, sadly, it was not the season for the flowers to bloom.

We came across a pâtisserie (a French pastry shop) named *Le Pont Des Amis* and I thought how wonderfully blessed on this first day in Tokyo that God shows us a pastry shop interestingly named "The bridge of friends". Even more surprising that we find on the shop's large glass window pane the words *La naissance de Jésus*, and the birth story of Jesus narrated in French, etched on it.

Intrigued, we desired to speak with the shop's owner and pastry chef to hear his story on why he chose to name the shop as such and the reason for putting up a narrative of the birth of Jesus on his shop's window. However, we were disappointed that we could not hear his story as more customers streamed in and both the service staff were overwhelmed. We did find his story as a western confectioner in the Itabashi city website but not his reasons for the shop's name. (see <https://itabashi-kanko.jp/en/pickup/detail?id=595>)

Another surprise for us was while buying some *bento* sets for our evening

meal in a department store, we saw an announcement for customers to order their Christmas cakes, which is a strawberry sponge cake in red and white. Another friend of ours living in Tokyo informed us that the strawberry sponge cake is the traditional way the Japanese observed Christmas along with a meal of KFC chicken. It was a stroke of marketing genius to promote a Christmas meal of affordable KFC fried chicken rather than a turkey, which would have been a luxury item. Thus, the strawberry sponge cake and the KFC fried chicken are must-haves for the Japanese people celebrating Christmas.

What about us in Malaysia? What do our fellow Malaysians associate with Christmas, a season that is so widely celebrated?

Foreign visitors are in awe of the Christmas decorations in our shopping malls, the Christmas sales and the variety of products offered as seen on their social media accounts. In many of



## Growing in Christ

TAN KONG BENG

our workplaces, there are the merry celebrations of Christmas and also the other major religions and cultures.

For Christians, our focus of Christmas in our churches and homes would be our jubilant Christmas celebrations of worship and thoughtful remembrances of the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Along with that are our open house festivities where we welcome neighbourhood friends and colleagues with a multitude of culinary delights and with carollers serenading us.

There have also been countless occasions of the state and federal governments hosting Christmas open houses and celebrations. In one Selangor state government celebration just after the COVID-19 pandemic, it was held with limited guests in a large hall and with very strict protocols. What was most heartening was the choice of Christmas songs in Bahasa Malaysia and in English chosen by the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM).

Annually, the CFM, have held the Christmas Day celebrations but in recent times, it has shifted to a Saturday in December instead of being held on Christmas Day. This was to enable church leaders from Sabah and Sarawak to join in the occasion in Peninsular Malaysia. Meanwhile, in Sabah and Sarawak, the Christmas celebrations are held in every major town and city for the general public to attend and to enjoy the festivities.

The Christmas celebration is hosted by the component bodies of CFM — the Catholic Church, the Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM) and the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) — in turn. The guest-of-honour is always the Prime Minister, or he might designate a cabinet minister to represent him. The other guests are church, religious, political and community leaders, the members of Parliament and the state assembly representatives, and members of the foreign diplomatic corps.

The CFM has always encouraged the local churches to celebrate Christmas with their local communities. It is a salutary occasion to share Christmas joy and happiness and to foster national unity among fellow Malaysians.

Perhaps, this Christmas our churches might consider extending the joy of Christmas to our men and women who defend our nation and keep us safe daily. With prior permission, churches can make visits to the military camps and bases, the police stations, the fire and rescue stations and to other public service units whose service we have taken for granted.

After many years in Christian service, **Tan Kong Beng** is seeking a new season of vocation and life lived in God's ways. He worships and serves in Subang Jaya Gospel Centre.



(filepic/Borneo Post by Chimon Upon)



Fr Ron Rolheiser

# What makes a good marriage?

No amount of preaching shapes a soul as much as seeing someone living an honest life. If that's true, and it is, then no marriage course is ever as powerful to teach about marriage as is the witness of a good marriage.

I understood this first-hand several years ago when I attended the 50th wedding anniversary of an uncle and aunt. Theirs was a good marriage: harmony, hospitality, family, faith.

However, and only they knew the price tag, this did not always come easily. They spent the first years of their marriage without much money and without extras, raising a large family. His first job, clerking in a store, paid him pittance. She couldn't find any work at all, since in the small town where they lived, women weren't much wanted in the job market then.

As well, as in all families, there were countless other struggles and, in their case, countless hours spent by both, beyond their own family concerns, working in church and community circles.

More than two hundred of us, family and friends, gathered to toast and roast them. At the end of the banquet my uncle stood up to thank everyone and ended his comments with these words:

"When we got married fifty years ago, we didn't have much, but we had an unconscious trust that if we lived by the

Ten Commandments and the laws of the Church, then things would turn out all right – and I think they did."

What an understatement! They turned out better than all right.

A good marriage can best be described, I believe, by four images, and theirs is the prime analogate of each:

- *A good marriage is a warm fireplace.* The love that the two people have for each other generates a warm place. But the warmth it creates does not just warm the two of them, it also warms everyone else who comes near them: their children, their neighbours, their community, and everyone who meets them.

- *A good marriage is a big table, loaded with food and drink.* When two people love each other in a true sense, that love becomes a place of hospitality, a table where people come to be fed, figuratively and literally. In a good marriage, love feeds not just the two people who are generating it, it always contains more than enough surplus to feed everyone who is fortunate enough to meet it. This is what makes it sacramental.

- *A good marriage is a container which holds suffering.* An old axiom says: "Everything can be borne if it can be shared!" That's true. Anyone fortunate enough to have a true moral partner in life can bear

a lot of suffering. This is particularly true in a good marriage where the wife and husband, because of their deep moral affinity, can carry not just their own sufferings but also can help carry the sufferings of many others.

- *Finally, a good marriage is Christ's body, flesh that is "food for the life of world."* Christ left us His body to feed the world. A good marriage does precisely that, it feeds everything and everybody around it. This, above all else, is what makes marriage a sacrament.

Many of us have experienced this in some of the married people we've met. Having them in our lives is a constant source of moral, psychological, and religious nourishment.

The marriage of my aunt and uncle can be described by these images. Their relationship with each other was a fireplace, where many people, including myself, found warmth. It was a table; their house always had a big table, loaded refrigerator, and friendly doors that welcomed and gave hospitality and food and drink to everyone who crossed their threshold.

And their relationship was a container for suffering. Through the years, thanks to their love for each other, they were able to bear with faith, dignity, soft hearts, and an ever-deepening charity, all the pain, tragedy, and suffering that came their way, and

were able to help many other people carry their sufferings.

Finally, their relationship was, in real human flesh, Christ's body, food for the life of the world. Virtually everyone whose path ever crossed theirs was, in some way, fed, nourished, and given vitamins for their souls.

In an age which no longer understands sacrament, we might look at a marriage like this one to better understand what constitutes a sacrament.

Sometimes the answers we seek are not found in a book, but in the house across the street; sometimes the divine grace we seek is found when someone opens a door of welcome to us; sometimes the elusive consolation we seek is given us by a friend who understands our pain; and sometimes the sacrament we seek to feed our souls is found in a warm living room, at a loaded table, in the banter and humour flowing back and forth across the table, and in a couple who are happily married.

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

Encyclicals are important documents issued by popes inspired by the Holy Spirit in answer to a need at a particular time in the life of the Church / world. In 2005 Pope Benedict XVI issued *Deus Caritas Est* – God is Love. In it, he spelt out three kinds of love – *Eros*, *Philia* and *Agape*.

EROS, erotic / romantic love, manifests itself in a reciprocal giving and receiving. Why giving? To receive! To possess! The male showers his sweetheart with flowers, jewellery, gifts that will surely win her affection. On her part, the weight of the manifestation of his love opens her heart and body in total surrender. This moment of reciprocity is solemnised at the altar. The union is for better or worse in the unseen future. Magic is the moment when an elderly couple is at the altar again to celebrate 50 / 60 years of conjugal love. They have weathered stormy weather, quarrels, fights, threats of divorce, and carnal temptations. Through it all, who was in the boat of their married life? The One who presented Eve to Adam who said, 'Here is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.' Why is the divorce rate so high across all religions? Over the years of married life, reciprocity in giving and receiving has succumbed to selfishness and the ME first movement worldwide.

PHILIA – the second kind of love (Latin *filii* = son; *filia* = daughter) refers to relationships within a family – parents with children, children with parents, siblings with siblings. Who can put a price tag on parenthood? An accountant father, my brother calculated how much had been spent on his ten-year-old son, from the moment of his conception to his current kindergarten days. RM 85,000. Exaggeration?

No! Nine months of care of the mother and yet unborn, then born, baby's needs, postnatal care of the mother. Beyond



## The many faces of love

childhood special needs up to working life, an individual can drain family coffers faster than they can be filled. The cycle of life now sees ageing parents looking to children for care. How can a filial working professional couple balance personal family needs with those of ageing parents? It is payback time! Nursing homes provide food and shelter and the kind of relationship best described as ships passing in the night i.e. a cursory acknowledgement of presence. Would filial piety tug at the hearts of families enjoying food, festivals and fun over promotions, medals won, scholarship offers while grandpa and grandma eke out their days and nights in a dreary daily routine.

The third kind of love is AGAPE – the 'love of God for human beings and human beings for God. In contrast to *philia* and *eros*, which are somewhat tainted by self-love'. Agape embraces pain and sacrifice merged in the dazzling light of a seamless union real and strong enough only to those to whom it has been revealed.

Picture a young man prostrate before the altar on the morning of his ordination, kneeling before a bishop, pledging obedience, renouncing the earthly comforts of wealth, power, freedom of choices. In return for what? A life of endless service, unpredictable missions, servant of all, master of none, lonely nights and ultimately a bed in the home

of the Sisters of the Poor, if you are lucky, if not, in a nursing home or if invalidated and under undesirable circumstances e.g. stubbornness on your part, stay alone with a salaried male caregiver. Is this worth giving up all you could have? Wife, children, house, car, bank account, friends of equal high status, living in an enviable neighbourhood? Love, Agape love is the answer.

A 17-year-old head girl of her school enters the Convent to become a religious, smitten by the charming Irish Sister who, unknown to her, was grooming her vocation. Ok, after ten years of jumping over the hoops of induction, she kneels before the bishop, her Provincial, a choir of her religious Sisters, her teary-eyed family, university mates, and a few hopeful boyfriends. She promises her Spouse who first gave His life for her, to live chaste, poor and obedient all the days of her earthly life. What a waste! What stupidity! Think of the buffet of pleasures that life holds out to a beautiful, educated female executive, a CEO climbing the corporate ladder to whom the sky has no limits. As religious life unfolds, her blank check will tick off conflicts, misunderstanding, jealousy, humiliation, side-lined, unfair punishment, confined to a wheelchair, literally or metaphorically. No, all this is not within her radar. Is she blind or naive? Her vision is clearer than those with eyes but cannot see. Agape does that. Christ on the Cross saw an Easter dawning.

We speak of *eros*, *philia* and *agape* as though they are gradations and therefore a bit separate from one another. They are not. They come from the same source. The Sacred Heart of Jesus. Refer to Pope Francis' encyclical *Dilexit nos* where we read that "... we have come to know and believe in the love that God has for us ..." through the DIVINE and HUMAN Love of Jesus Christ. **Sr Anne Wong IJS**

# Little Catholics' corner

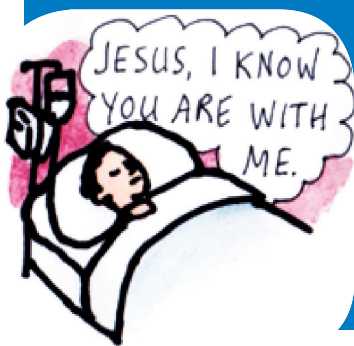
Dear children,

Jesus tells the people in today's Gospel reading some of the things that will happen before the end of the world.

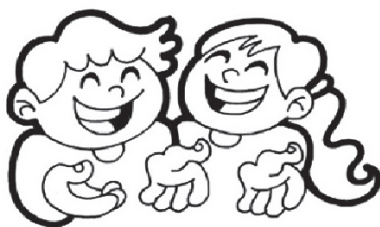
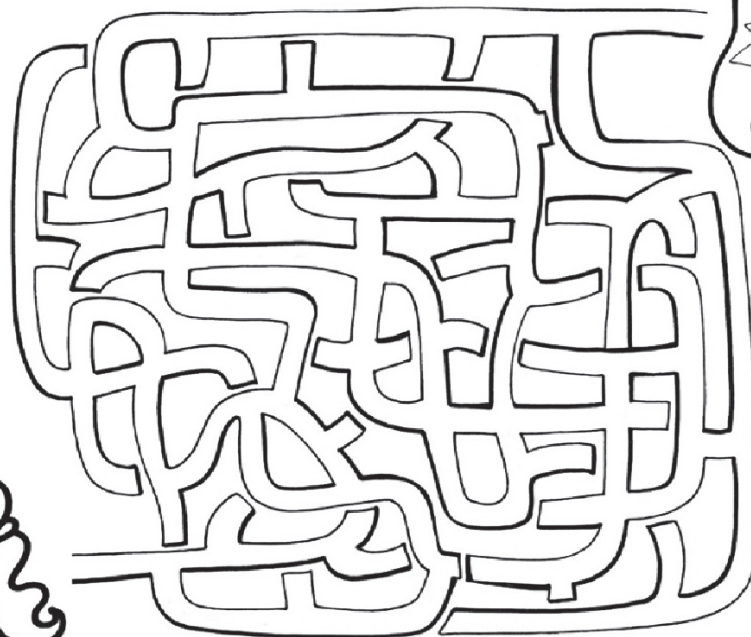
He says that some people will be arrested and have to speak about Him in front of the leaders and rulers the people, but He will protect them. Jesus doesn't want us to worry about what is going to happen at the end of the world, but He wants us to be ready for it when it comes. He also wants us to be ready for the end of our lives, because we don't know when that's going to happen either. Do you find it kind of scary thinking about the end of the world or dying?

Well, you don't need to be afraid about it! Jesus will give us all the strength we need for whatever happens. All we have to do is trust in Him!

Love  
Aunty Eliz



Help the children find their way to Jesus!



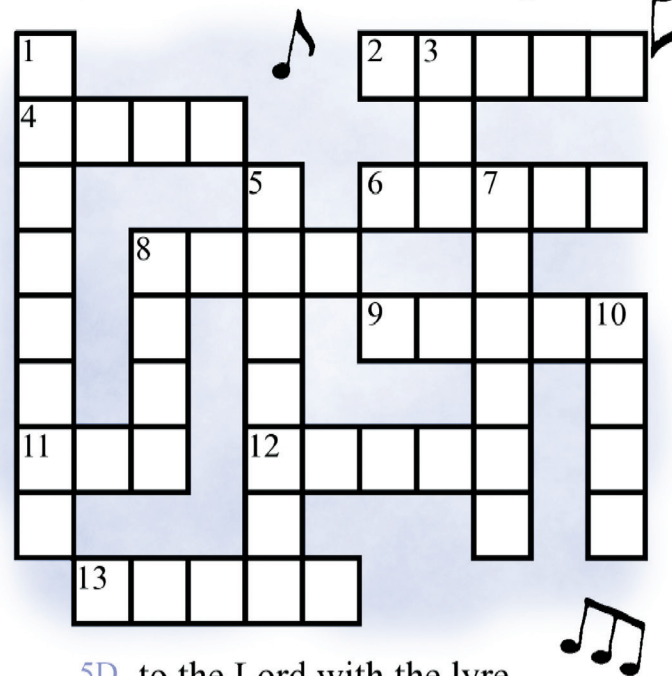
Colour the picture



## Psalm 98 Cross-Word

Use the words in the list to fill in the blanks in today's Psalm, and then fit them into the puzzle.

- LYRE
- THOSE
- THE
- DWELL
- WHO
- MELODY
- LORD
- COMES
- SOUND
- FILLS
- PRAISES
- ROAR
- TRUMPETS
- SING



Sing \_\_\_\_\_ 5D to the Lord with the lyre, with the \_\_\_\_\_ 8D and the sound of \_\_\_\_\_ 7D! With \_\_\_\_\_ 1D and the \_\_\_\_\_ 12A of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the \_\_\_\_\_ 8A!

Let the sea \_\_\_\_\_ 4A, and all that \_\_\_\_\_ 9A it; the world and \_\_\_\_\_ 13A \_\_\_\_\_ 3D \_\_\_\_\_ 2A in it! Let the floods clap their hands;

let the hills \_\_\_\_\_ 10D for joy together before the Lord, for he \_\_\_\_\_ 6A to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness, and \_\_\_\_\_ 11A peoples with equity.

A=Across  
D=Down

*Everyone will hate you because of me.  
But not a hair of your head will perish.  
Stand firm, and you will win life.  
(Luke 21:17-19)*



# Alpha CVS 2025:

Alpha

# Planting the seeds of hope

Joseph Asim

**SHAH ALAM:** The Catholic Varsity Students (CVS) of the Church of the Divine Mercy (CDM) launched their eight-week Alpha CVS programme on October 26, with the support of parish priest, Fr George Harrison, and Alpha Malaysia. The last in-person session was held six years ago in 2019, followed by an online version in 2021.

The revival of Alpha CVS comes as CDM continues to provide pastoral care for approximately 300 Catholic students within the parish. The programme aims to offer young people a safe and welcoming space to explore life, faith, and purpose.

Prior to the first session, an Alpha CVS Team Training was held on October 18, conducted by Joseph Asim, pastoral coordinator of the parish, and Dr Lovelyna Jipiu, campus lecturer for CVS. Both serve as administrators for Alpha CVS. The training, attended by 40 CVS leaders from various campuses, introduced the background of the Alpha programme, equipped participants with essential facilitation skills, and addressed strategies for implementing it within the CVS community at CDM.

Following the training, the CVS leaders held a discussion to assign specific responsibilities, including roles such as weekly programme director, host, co-host, emcee, praise and worship coordinator, food and beverage coordinator, and audio-visual team, among others.

The first session of Alpha CVS commenced on October 26, drawing 150 students from various universities and colleges. The majority of participants came from UiTM (across three campuses), Xiamen University Malaysia,

CENTEXS, HELP University, UOW, MSU, Perkasa Skills Institute, and Kolej Tingkatan 6 Shah Alam. Notably, this year's programme also welcomed Indonesian students currently studying at Xiamen University Malaysia.

In line with the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025 and the theme Young Pilgrims of Hope, the eight-week Alpha CVS programme — which runs until December 14, 2025 — features a series of activities designed to deepen participants' faith experience. These include the Alpha Weekend, pilgrimage, street walk, adoration, Christian meditation, and healing sessions.

A meaningful 'Care for Creation' initiative, introduced by the administrators, invited each group to care for a potted plant of different species. Group members were to take turns bringing the plant to their hostel during the week and returning it on Sunday to place it on their group's table. This shared responsibility ensured that every member had the opportunity to nurture the plant — a living symbol of stewardship and growth.

By the end of the 12 sessions, the plants were expected to sprout tiny green shoots — a symbol of the faith that has taken root and begun to grow in each participant. These seedlings represented the spiritual journey of every student, nurtured through shared questions, stories, and moments of grace. As Alpha CVS concluded, the community celebrated how God had stirred something new in each heart, preparing them to go forth and share the Good News.

Through Alpha CVS, the Church of the Divine Mercy continues to nurture the faith of Catholic Varsity Students. This journey not only fosters spiritual growth but also strengthens the bonds of community, providing a supportive environment where students can connect deeply, share their experiences, and inspire one another to grow in their relationship with God.



## Testimonials from participants after Session 1

"I'm glad I attended the first session. As a student who doesn't go out much, I often get bored in the hostel. The Alpha CVS programme gave me a great chance to meet people my age and form new friendships, making the whole experience genuinely delightful."  
**Belle, UiTM Puncak Perdana**



Jesus more deeply in my everyday life. I was deeply touched and reminded of God's presence among us. May the following weeks continue to strengthen our faith and friendship."  
**Jennifer (Indonesian), Xiamen University Malaysia**

"Alpha CVS gave me a new and enjoyable experience. I had the opportunity to meet friends from various regions and gained new perspectives that strengthened my faith."  
**Theodora Patricia Suseno (Indonesian), Xiamen University Malaysia**



"Although I started out feeling nervous and reserved, I quickly found myself becoming enthusiastic and actively participating in conversations with new friends. I'm looking forward to spending time during adoration and am eagerly anticipating the next session."  
**Andrew, UiTM Shah Alam**



"I'm very excited about this Alpha CVS programme because through it I was able to be part of a more open circle where everyone could share their life experiences within the theme of Christianity."  
**Anuerine Clive, CENTEXS**



"Session 1 of Alpha CVS was a good programme where we could connect with fellow believers on a deeper level. I personally think that God brought us together, which is why we were able to interact with one another in an instant. The praise and worship songs were touching, just like back at home, which made me a little bit emotional. But I was happy to be able to feel His anointing presence. Overall, I think that the Holy Spirit really moved through us that day and I could see God's work through the kind hosts and co-hosts."  
**Keyko Trixy (Indonesian), Xiamen University Malaysia**



"If I had one word to describe Alpha CVS, it would be 'home.' As a student studying abroad and living far from my family (Indonesia), joining Alpha CVS made me feel truly happy and grateful. The atmosphere was warm and full of love, from the ice-breaking sessions, shared meals, and small group stories, to the moments of worship and prayer. It felt like finding a new family away from home, and also a start to finding and getting to know



"I am very happy to join Alpha CVS. From here, we gain many new friends, new experiences, and new perspectives in deepening our understanding of the Catholic faith. The friends here are also fun and they have many new insights for me."  
**Valentino (Indonesian), Xiamen University Malaysia**



# NURTURING YOUNG STEWARDS OF GOD'S CREATION

KUALA LUMPUR: About 55 students from Forms 1 to 4, together with their catechists, attended an ecological talk organised recently by the Creation Justice Ministry of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Jalan Peel.

The talk, titled *Pilgrims of Hope: Stewardship and Creating Awareness for Care for Creation*, was delivered by Dr Celine Chong, a lecturer and postdoctoral environmental scientist from the National University of Singapore.

She began by engaging the students in a light-hearted guessing game about her profession before introducing her work in environmental science. Dr Chong highlighted the alarming rate of forest loss worldwide, noting that forests are disappearing at a rate equivalent to one football field every two to five seconds, with some recent estimates suggesting as many as 18

football fields per minute.

She explained that the main causes of this devastation are human activities such as agriculture, logging, and resource extraction, further intensified by the growing frequency and severity of wildfires linked to climate change.

She also shared

practical ways students could adopt eco-friendly habits at home and in school, such as refusing single-use plastics, switching off lights when not in use, and joining an ecology club.

At the end of the session, Dr Chong invited everyone to make a pledge to live more consciously and care for creation in their daily lives. The talk concluded with the hope that it would inspire more students to become pilgrims of hope in caring for our common home.



## We can all be saints, Peruvian archbishop says to thousands of youth

AREQUIPA, Peru: Archbishop Javier Del Río Alba of Arequipa in southern Peru shared the keys to holiness with more than 8,500 young people at the Shrine of Our Lady of Chapi during the 13th Youth Festival of Faith, held over the weekend of the solemnity of All Saints.

The gathering, which took place October 31–November 1, was led by the archbishop, accompanied by the auxiliary bishop of Arequipa, Raúl Chau Quispe, along with priests, nuns, seminarians, and catechists.

The celebration began around 10.30pm with the procession of the image of Our Lady of Chapi, which was received with applause from the young people.

Del Río delivered a homily on the Gospel passage of the wedding feast at Cana, reflecting on the importance of Catholic marriage and reminding the young people that stimulants or other drugs are not needed to be truly joyful.

The young people were able to go to confession with dozens of priests and then participate in Mass and receive a plenary indulgence.

### We can all be saints

Del Río celebrated Mass on Nov 1 and emphasised that it is not impossible to be saints and reach heaven like Carlo Acutis or Pier Giorgio Frassati — both canonised in September — St Ignatius of Loyola, St Teresa of Calcutta, or St Catherine of Siena, who “had the same human nature as us; they were not Superman or Superwoman: They were men and women like us, they were

young like you with the same wounded human nature.”

The prelate emphasised that, as children of God, we all have “in our DNA” the potential to reach heaven, to be saints and be completely happy, despite our problems and individual circumstances.

The archbishop encouraged the young people to trust in God always, especially “when you feel overwhelmed, when you find yourself committing the same sins, when you think you can’t move forward, that you’ll always be a slave to the same thing: a vain person, a lustful person, a selfish person, a jealous person, an insecure person, a timid person... when you think you’ll always be stuck going around in circles.”

Del Río told those present to remember that God is with them when others make fun of them or when they are not invited to parties and others say: “‘There’s that prude’; ‘Look at that prude with her rosary.’”

The prelate exhorted them to remember in those moments that they are blessed, because when “the world

persecutes you, when the world insults you, when the world says all kinds of things against you,” Jesus Christ is there.

Del Río also encouraged them to go to confession frequently in order to be able to face the world, where the devil can appear in different places such as “the internet, technology, social media, or artificial intelligence.”

The archbishop also warned that the devil “wants you to believe that, to be happy, you have to indulge yourself in everything, you have to get ahead, even if it means trampling on others.”

“God, on the other hand, teaches us something wonderful,” he said. “God tells us the truth, and the truth is one: Jesus Christ, who, nailed to that cross, shed His blood for you” to free you “from death and sin.”

Finally, the prelate encouraged his listeners to ask “the Lord to accomplish this work in us, to grant us His Holy Spirit so that we may persevere in the Church and thus be witnesses of His power, His love, and His mercy to those who need us.” CNA



Young people at the Shrine of Our Lady of Chapi. (CNA/Archdiocese of Arequipa Archdiocese of Arequipa)

## DON'T LET THE ALGORITHM WRITE YOUR STORY



VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV on October 30 urged young people to cultivate their “interior life” and to listen to their restlessness without “fleeing from it” or “filling it” with things that don’t satisfy, lest they fall into existential emptiness.

“Having a great deal of knowledge is not enough if we do not know who we are or what the meaning of life is,” the pope told the hundreds of university students he received Oct 30 in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican for an event held as part of the Jubilee of the World of Education.

In his message, he invited the students to rediscover the inner dimension of life and pointed out that “without silence, without listening, without prayer, even the light of the stars goes out.”

“We can know a great deal about the world and still ignore our own hearts,” he noted, while encouraging the students to constantly strive “toward the heights,” being “the beacon of hope in the dark hours of history.”

Leo XIV acknowledged that many young people experience a sense of emptiness or inner restlessness and emphasized that this disorientation is not solely due to personal reasons.

“In the most serious cases, we see episodes of distress, violence, bullying, and oppression — even young people who isolate themselves and no longer want to relate to others,” the pope observed. In his view, these deep wounds are “the reflection of “a void created by a society that has forgotten how to form the spiritual dimension of the human person, focusing only on the technical, social, or moral aspects of life.”

The pope was especially approachable and relaxed with the young people, with whom he shared several spontaneous moments. He introduced himself to them twice as a “former math and physics teacher,” recalling his teaching past, and even joked with them: “Perhaps you have a math exam soon?” he asked, going off script and eliciting laughter and applause.

The pope affirmed that a life that remains “stifled by fleeting pleasures will never satisfy us.” Instead, he asked each person to say in his or her heart: “I dream of more, Lord, I long for something greater, inspire me!”

“This desire is your strength and expresses well the commitment of young people who envision a better society and refuse to be mere spectators,” he emphasized after noting that the “desire for the infinite” is the compass they should use.

Instead of looking at your phone, “look to the sky, to the heights”.

He urged the university students **to not be satisfied “with appearances or fads” and instead of “being fixated on your smartphones, to look to the sky, to the heights.”**

“How wonderful it would be if one day your generation were remembered as the ‘generation plus,’ remembered for the extra drive you brought to the Church and the world,” he exclaimed.

During his address, Pope Leo cited as role models St Pier Giorgio Frassati, who had “the courage to live life to the fullest” and “to the heights,” and St Carlo Acutis, “who did not become a slave to the Internet but rather, used it skillfully for good.” The Pontiff canonised these two young saints together on Sept 7.

The Pope also cited St Augustine as an example, describing him as “brilliant but deeply unsatisfied” because he found “neither truth nor peace until he discovered God in his own heart.”

The Holy Father focused much of his address on the challenges posed by the digital world and the development of artificial intelligence, urging that these areas not become “a cage where you lock yourselves in” nor “an addiction or an escape.”

“You live in [digital education] and that’s not a bad thing; there are enormous opportunities for study and communication. But don’t let the algorithm write your story! Be the authors: Use technology wisely, but don’t let technology use you,” he urged. **Victoria Cardiel, CNA**



# A cheerful witness of God's Word



PASAY CITY, Philippines: Daughters of St Paul Sr Santiago Valentina Carrido was called to eternal life on October 29. She was 80.

Born in Caibiran Leyte, Philippines, she entered the Daughters of St Paul in 1967. She made her first profession in 1974 and took her final vows five years later. She was the eighth child in a large, deeply religious family where she learned responsibility, a strong work ethic and a joyful spirit. She possessed a delightful sense of humour that could make everyone laugh and bring comfort in any situation. She also knew how to be playfully "comical," lifting the sisters' spirits and fostering a joyful, peaceful atmosphere in the life of the community.

Throughout her life she was an enthusiastic diffuser of the Gospel in the many places where she was assigned: Pasay, Lipa, Cagayan de Oro, Cebu, Baguio, Manila, Zamboanga, Tuguegarao, Bacolod, Legazpi and in Selangor, West Malaysia (1981-1982).

She was willing to make any sacrifice to ensure that the Word of God could reach every heart. Her spontaneity and warmth enable her to build relationships with benefactors and secure resources for the community. Undeterred by fatigue or sacrifice she was always available and radiated a contagious joy.

Despite facing health challenges in later years: acute kidney disease, hypertensive heart disease and diabetes, she bore them with serenity. Before her demise, she was hospitalised after a serious fall that caused an intracranial hemorrhage, which proved to be the immediate cause of her death.

A deeply convinced Pauline, she wrote the following at the time of her final profession in 1979: *I am fully convinced that the Pauline religious life is made just for me, that is, it guides me toward the realisation of my life's ideal. I make this choice in freedom and with much joy. My choice is Christ, and I wish to say my 'yes' forever with love.* **Sr Anna Yap fsp**

## Kolkata launches 'dignity burial' initiative for the marginalised

KOLKATA, India: In a gesture of compassion and inclusion, the Christian Burial Board Kolkata inaugurated its "Dignity Burial/Shamman Samadhi" initiative at the historic 184 Lower Circular Road Cemetery.

The programme ensures that every individual, regardless of financial status, receives a dignified burial, free of cost.

The initiative designates a dedicated section within the cemetery for families unable to afford burial expenses, guided by the Board's solemn commitment: "Dignity in Every Farewell."

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Member of Parliament Sudip Bandyopadhyay as Chief Guest, alongside Fr Moloy D'Costa, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Calcutta, and MP Derek O'Brien. In a symbolic act of compassion, two sisters from Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity cut the ceremonial ribbon, underscoring the

For enquiries, please contact:  
Email: [memoriam@herald.com.my](mailto:memoriam@herald.com.my)  
Tel: 03-2026 8291

### MEMORIAM

**17th 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.

**30th Anniversary**  
In Cherished Memory of  
**Ignatius Wilson Cherian**

*Precious, beautiful brother, angel  
By your life of faith and love  
Suffering and compassion  
Kindness and gentleness  
Thoughtfulness and respectful conduct  
You shine a blessed light too.  
Beloved brother  
Faithful child of God  
Angel of the Lord  
Pray for us.*  
Your loving family

**Born:**  
25 January 1965  
**Departed:**  
20 November 1995

**50th Anniversary**  
In Loving Memory of **S. Savarimuthu**  
5th March 1917 - 15th November 1975

*Knowing dad, he probably would have quoted Mary Elizabeth Frye  
Do not stand at my grave and weep  
I am not there. I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints on snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripen grain.  
I am the gentle autumn rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush.  
I am the swift uplifting rush.  
Of quiet birds in circled flight  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry.  
I am not there. I did not die.*  
Dearly missed and forever treasured by your family.

**14th Anniversary**  
In Loving Memory of

**Albert Ebenezer Devadass**  
**Called home to be with the Lord**  
**18th November 2011**

*When I realise how long it is since you passed on.  
I can't believe that I have journeyed without you till now.  
You must be watching us closely although you are gone.  
Still trying to cope and console myself, to you I pray and bow.*

*Even though I want to be very brave and be courageous.  
Your memory keeps haunting and doesn't leave even a day.  
Time doesn't heal your absence but lingers on through ages.  
Life does go on but to us you have never gone away.*

*Your love care and passion for us remain in our heart.  
That make us much stronger and lighten our weak mind.  
Wonder where you are and what you are about to start.  
You must be somewhere serving others cause you are kind.*

*Always missing you even though fourteen years have passed.  
Still wishing you had remained with me and I won't be alone.  
God is taking care of me all this while and keeps me blessed.  
Pray He continues caring and loving me as I feel forlorn.*

Ever loving grandchildren, children and wife.

Anniversary Prayers

**14th Year Anniversary**  
**ANTONY A/L MANIKAM, PJK THOMAS - EX MPK - KUANTAN**  
**Departed: 6th Jan 2011**

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

O God, The Creator and Redeemer of the world, grant to the souls of your children the remission of all their sins, that through pious supplications, they may obtain that pardon which they always desired. Be merciful, O LORD and grant them a place of repose and peace. Amen.

Forever cherished, loved and remembered by :

Sons : David Antony (D), Datuk Dr Robert Basker, Michael Antony, Peter Antony

Daughter : Rosalind Antony

Daughters-in-law : Datin Dr Shelah Basker , Nisha (D) and Tini

Son-in-law : Sagayanathan

Grandchildren : Sharmon, Samuel, Mathiass, Shakinaa, Daniel, Dominic, Dina, James, Joshua, Jocelyn, Hakimi, Natasha, Najwaad and a host of relatives.

**14th Year Anniversary**  
**MARIAMAH PONNAMAL**  
**Departed: 13th Nov 2011**

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**HERALD The Catholic Weekly**  
5, Jalan Robertson, 50150 Kuala Lumpur  
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# Rethinking economics in the light of the Jubilee

VATICAN: What happens when the economy stops? We're not talking about stock indexes or macroeconomic data, but about the deeper orientation of our economic systems: the meaning we assign to them, the direction they take us.

Stopping can seem uneconomic. And yet, the biblical Jubilee tells us just that: a time when mechanisms of ownership are interrupted, debts are forgiven, the land rests, and the enslaved are set free. A time that overturns usual logic to remind us that the economy is a tool, not a goal.

What if that ancient Jubilee holds traces of another possible economy? One that acknowledges limits, that doesn't consume time or people, that makes room again for

care and relationships.

An economy that slows down to care for the Earth, that frees labour from exhaustion, that sees debt not as punishment but as a wound to be healed. An economy that rediscovers the value of enough—not only measured in growth, but in the capacity to endure, to share, to let go.

This is the vision behind Restarting the Economy, the global gathering promoted by The Economy of Francesco, taking place in Castel Gandolfo from November 28 to 30, 2025.

The Economy of Francesco is an international network of young economists, entrepreneurs, and changemakers, launched in 2019 at the invitation of Pope Francis. It

brings together people from every continent who are committed to building a more just, inclusive, and sustainable economy — starting from real, local experience.

This won't be a traditional conference, but an international laboratory of listening, dialogue, and imagination. A place where young people from diverse backgrounds will journey together around three key words: rest, liberation, restoration. This collective reflection is rooted in a living community that doesn't only share ideas but tests them daily by building new economic models in their own contexts.

In the days leading up to the gathering, several voices from The Economy of Francesco community will accompany this journey with a series of short editorials published on *Vatican News*. Each one will seek to bring the present into conversation with the spirit of the Jubilee, starting from some pressing questions: What does it mean today to liberate work? Is it still possible to forgive debt? Does the Earth have a right to rest?

Each voice will offer a different perspective, but they all spring from the same intuition: that the Jubilee, with its ancient gestures, can offer new coordinates for navigating today's crises. From ecological justice to the dignity of labour, from debt relief to the spirituality of limits, each editorial will be a small exercise in economic discernment.

There may not be one perfect economy, but there are gestures that can help orient it towards justice. And in the end, this is what the Jubilee reminds us: that stopping is not a waste of time — it's the beginning of a choice. **Luca Iacovone, Vatican News**

**Sponsor a tree, nurture life**



KUALA LUMPUR: We have planted 195 trees at the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, Sabah since launching the *HERALD* Tree Planting Campaign on September 8, 2024.

More than a response to *Laudato Si'*, this campaign is our chance to leave a living legacy. In partnership with APE Malaysia through the ROAR (Restore Our Amazing Rainforest) initiative, these saplings are helping to restore a once-barren area into a future rainforest teeming with life. Within a few years, these trees will grow into a vibrant habitat for gibbons, orangutans, birds, and other wildlife.

As climate change accelerates, forests are among our strongest natural defences — absorbing carbon, restoring ecosystems, and sustaining communities. While *HERALD* remains committed to print media, we also acknowledge its environmental footprint. This initiative allows us to give back — to restore, to protect, and to renew.

For RM35, you can sponsor a tree. Each sponsorship includes four years of care to ensure the sapling thrives.

This is more than planting a tree — it's planting hope.

Join us in nurturing creation. Sponsor a tree today: <https://www.herald-malaysia.com/CSR-reforestation>



File pic of Pope Francis is welcomed to Assisi, Italy, September 24, 2022, by young economists, entrepreneurs, financial advisers, scholars and scientists who have been working for two years on the Economy of Francesco project. (CNS photo/Remo Casilli, Reuters)

## Space must be safeguarded for the common good

VATICAN: Outer space must be safeguarded for peaceful purposes and for the common good of humanity, stressed the Vatican's top diplomat to the United Nations.

Archbishop Gabriele G. Caccia, *pic*, the Holy See's UN apostolic nuncio and permanent observer, delivered two statements on the issue October 27 and 30 at the UN General Assembly in New York.

Speaking Oct 27, Archbishop Caccia said that while "the vastness of outer space is a realm of immense opportunity" for "cooperation and scientific discovery," that potential also brings with it "great responsibility."

He pointed to "disturbing trends that threaten" the peaceful use of space.

Among those, said Archbishop Caccia, are "the ongoing threat posed by space-based weaponry, including anti-satellite systems, and the accumulation of debris in low Earth orbit," which all "represent a genuine and grave threat to international peace, security, and the long-term sustainability of space-related activities."

According to an April 2025 assessment released by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies — a bipartisan nonprofit policy research organisation based



in Washington — "space is likely becoming a more dangerous place."

CSIS cited "widespread jamming and spoofing of GPS signals in and around conflict zones," including those "near and in Russia and throughout the Middle East."

Both Chinese and Russian satellites at various orbit levels are increasingly more agile in their manoeuvring, displaying capabilities applicable to "space warfighting," said CSIS.

Additionally, CSIS noted the blending of

military and commercial space technologies, along with "China's rapid buildup of military space capabilities in all orbital regimes" and increased statements from US officials signalling a willingness to "conduct offensive and defensive space operations."

Archbishop Caccia lamented that "the international community has not yet achieved a consensus on an agreement to ban all types of weapons in outer space," although "outer space has been an agenda item of the Conference on Disarmament" — the UN's forum for disarmament and the prevention of war — "since 1985."

He stressed that the UN's 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which sets forth a basic framework for international space law, reminds the global community that "space is a common good to be protected for the benefit of present and future generations, rather than being exploited for the exclusive interests of private entities or nations."

"States have a shared responsibility to cooperate, embrace multilateralism, and advance the common good in their activities in space," said Archbishop Caccia.

The archbishop reiterated his calls in an

Oct 30 address at the UN highlighting the need for the exploration and use of space to "be guided by the principles of cooperation, solidarity and peace."

He stressed that "the rapid pace of technological progress and mounting military competition underscore the urgent need for renewed dialogue and cooperation to ensure that outer space remains a realm of peace and shared responsibility."

"As geopolitical rivalries extend into space, there is a growing risk of a fragmented and contested regime that would undermine the peaceful and cooperative spirit envisioned in the founding principles of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty," said Archbishop Caccia.

He expressed the hope that "states can continue this work with the view to establish responsible guidelines for managing space activities."

And, he added, "Strengthening multilateral cooperation and mutual trust in this matter is indeed critical, both now and in the future, to ensure that this new frontier remains a realm of peace, stability, and shared progress for generations to come."

**Gina Christian, OSV News**