

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

and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.
Romans 5:5-6



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Faith between lectures
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Church's new saints inspire

faith and resilience

VATICAN: The universal Church rejoiced on October 19 as Pope Leo XIV canonised seven new saints on World Mission Sunday, in a ceremony that celebrated the universality of holiness and the enduring strength of faith.

Fr Boguslaw Turek, Under-Secretary in the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, said the canonisation aimed to reflect the Church's global nature. "The group was chosen to represent the universal Church's holiness by coming from various regions of the world. Their lives, marked by courage, compassion, and fidelity, exemplify holiness lived in diverse ways across the world, he explained.

Three of the new saints are from Italy, two from Venezuela, one from Oceania, and one from West Asia. Among them are St Peter To Rot from Papua New Guinea, the first canonised saint from the Pacific island nation and St Ignatius Maloyan, an Armenian bishop martyred during the Ottoman genocide.

Fr Turek noted that this canonisation bridges two pontificates, giving it "profound symbolic weight" as part of the Jubilee Year's call to holiness. "The number and selection of new saints depend not only on the congregation's work but above all on divine providence. These are figures who have matured for this moment in time," he said.

Among the newly canonised, St Bartolo Longo's dramatic conversion story captured many hearts. Once an Italian lawyer who fell into occult practices after his mother's death, Longo later experienced a profound return to faith through the influence of family and mentors at the University of Naples. He dedicated his life to promoting the Rosary and founded the Pontifical Shrine of the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary in Pompeii.

Before his canonisation, Longo was already revered as a patron for those strug-



(ANS - Vaticano)

gling with doubt — a powerful witness to the transforming grace of redemption.

The other new saints include Venezuelan physician José Gregorio Hernández Cisneros, known as the "doctor of the poor," and three women religious — Vincenza Maria Poloni; María del Monte Carmelo Rendiles, and Maria Troncatti — whose lives were devoted to charity, education, and service to the poor.

The canonisation Mass drew pilgrims from across the world, each testifying to how the saints' lives continue to inspire faith

and perseverance.

Esther Madaha, a lay missionary from Dodoma, Tanzania, said, "St Vincenza Maria Poloni has been a beacon of faith through her dedication to the poor and the sick. Her canonisation inspires me to live mercy in my daily life."

From Venezuela, Sr Adrian of the Handmaids of Jesus rejoiced as their foundress, St María del Monte Carmelo Rendiles, became the nation's first canonised saint. Despite physical challenges, she founded a congregation dedicated to

pastoral ministry.

Salesian Sister Gisele Masha reflected on St Maria Troncatti's legacy: "She showed us that mission begins with love for the poor, the sick, and the least in society. Her life reminds us that holiness is not distant — it is the gift of those who serve with joy."

Two pilgrims from Papua New Guinea, Samantha and Cathy, expressed pride in St Peter To Rot's witness. "His martyrdom strengthens my resolve to stand firm in faith during trials," said Samantha. Cathy added, "He valued the sanctity of marriage and resisted polygamy during persecution. St Peter To Rot shows that holiness is not reserved for clergy — it's found in daily fidelity and love for Jesus."

Sisters Rose Lone and Susana Vei from the Solomon Islands said the canonisation renewed their commitment to persevere in their vocation. "St Peter To Rot's courage reflects what it means to follow Christ, even unto death. He is a model for families and all who strive to live their faith boldly," they said.

The testimonies of pilgrims from Oceania, Africa, and Latin America echoed a shared conviction — that holiness is not bound by geography, vocation, or circumstance.

As one pilgrim summed up, "These saints are not just for the Church; they are for the world — showing us how to live faith with courage, compassion, and joy."

In a world marked by uncertainty and conflict, Fr Turek said the canonisation offered a timely message of hope. "We are living through a Jubilee Year marked by the theme of hope. These new saints speak directly of hope — to individual churches, to the universal Church, and to humanity. People need this message today, when peace and tranquillity are under threat," he said.

The canonisation of these seven saints, each rooted in their own culture and time, reaffirms that holiness remains attainable in every age. Their lives, Fr Turek added, "serve as seeds of hope for the Church and the world." **Agencies**

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The ugly truth about 'cancel culture'

A couple of months ago, I watched a movie about a news presenter who was on the brink of losing his job after being accused of sexism following an online post. Although the tweet was deleted, the uproar from netizens went viral, causing immense distress to the character, his family, and his colleagues. This was the first time I encountered the term "cancel culture" — the collective act of publicly shaming, boycotting, or "cancelling" someone for their words or actions.

Although cancel culture began as a form of social accountability, it has since evolved into something darker, more divisive, and far less forgiving. At its best, it was meant to call out genuine wrongdoing — to amplify the voices of the marginalised and demand justice where institutions had failed. It gave rise to movements like #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, where victims finally found the courage to speak truth to power. For a while, it felt like a tool of empowerment. But that's only half the story.

The other half — the ugly truth — is that cancel culture has become less about justice and more about judgment. What began as a movement for accountability has turned into a digital firing squad, where the goal is not reform but ruin. Instances of people being "cancelled" are often associated with high-profile figures like J.K. Rowling, Jordan Peterson, and the late Charlie Kirk, but it is also becoming increasingly prevalent among teenagers — our children.

With that in mind, I spoke to Gerard Koe, a family counsellor, on a recent episode of *HERALD Voices*, to identify the dangers of cancel culture and what steps parents can take to help. He pointed out that young people are at a very vulnerable stage in life — seeking recognition, acceptance, and validation as they form their emerging identities. Gerard warned



that if they experience social rejection from a large group or an entire school, they could be driven to despair, depression, or even suicide.

He added that, because of cancel culture, many teenagers are learning to censor themselves rather than engage in honest discussion, afraid that one mistake might define them forever. This environment stifles empathy and genuine learning — ironically silencing the very voices that are still finding their way in the world.

Forgiveness has become a rare virtue online. We demand accountability but offer no path to rehabilitation. Yet every faith tradition and moral philosophy teaches that people can change. Without forgiveness, justice becomes cruelty.

When we "cancel" without offering a way back, we deny the very humanity we claim to defend. It's one thing to hold someone responsible; it's another to erase them altogether. True accountability requires both truth and grace — calling out wrongdoing while still believing in the possibility of making things right.

As Pope Francis once said, "No one can be condemned forever." This principle applies not only in faith but also in public discourse. If we want a more compassionate society, we must move from *cancellation* to *conversation*, from *condemnation* to *conversion*.

Gerard also shared a famous saying that felt particularly fitting: "The pathway to hell is paved with good intentions." Cancel culture often begins with noble aims but ends up mirroring the very intolerance it seeks to oppose. The ugly truth is that we've traded understanding for outrage, and grace for grievance. To build a healthier culture, we must rediscover the power of empathy, dialogue, and forgiveness. After all, none of us would want to be defined by our worst moment — and if redemption isn't possible for others, it won't be possible for us either.

If you would like to watch the full conversation on *HERALD Voices*, visit the link below: bit.ly/herald-cancelculture

Kevin Francis

Love that endures beyond death

From the time I was about 9 or 10 years old, until the age of 17, I remember I used to follow my dad to the various Christian cemeteries around Melaka. At each cemetery, we would clean the graves of our departed relatives, sprinkle holy water and light a candle. I remember my dad always asked me to say a prayer for these souls. Sadly, after I moved to KL to study and work, I never had the chance to do this again. Of course, at that age, I didn't understand what was going on and why I was praying for the dead, I never even knew about the existence of All Souls' Day.

To be fair, I think many people still do not fully understand or comprehend the full meaning of this celebration. Those of us who grew up visiting graves and praying for the souls at least understood that, once a year, it was our duty to do this. All Souls' Day is a solemn feast in the Catholic Church dedicated to praying for the souls of the faithful departed, especially those in Purgatory. Its origin and purpose are deeply tied to the Church's theology of the Communion of Saints and the belief in prayers for the faithful departed.

The origin of this celebration goes back to the early centuries of Christianity. From the 2nd century until the 5th century, Christians prayed for their deceased loved ones during the Eucharist and on the anniversaries of their deaths, reflecting a belief that prayer could aid the dead in attaining heavenly peace. However, the formal celebration of All Souls' Day only began around 998 A.D. when St Odilo, Abbot of Cluny, ordered that

all monasteries of the Cluniac order should offer Masses and prayers for all the faithful departed on November 2, the day after All Saints' Day. This custom spread rapidly throughout Europe and was eventually adopted by the universal Church.

What is the purpose of All Souls' Day? It is twofold. The first is, as I have stated earlier, to pray for our faithful departed. Catholic doctrine teaches us that the faithful pray for those who have died but are not yet perfectly purified and are undergoing purification in Purgatory — a state of cleansing before entering heaven. The Church teaches that the prayers, sacrifices, and Masses offered by the living can help the souls of the dead attain the beatific vision. This is what we find in the teachings of the Council of Trent. "There is a Purgatory, and the souls detained there are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but especially by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar." (Council of Trent, Session XXV, Decree on Purgatory). This decree confirmed what had been the Church's long-standing belief and practice since the earliest centuries.

Secondly, it is to express the Communion of Saints. All Souls' Day reminds the faithful of the spiritual bond between the Church Triumphant (the saints in heaven), the Church Suffering (souls in purgatory) and the Pilgrim Church (the faithful on earth). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that "Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness... until all are brought together in Him." (CCC §956) Therefore, prayers, indulgences, and Masses offered by

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

All Souls' Day (C)

Readings: *Isaiah 25:6-9;*

Romans 5:5-11;

Gospel: Luke 7:11-17

the living can assist the souls in purgatory, since the merits of the Body of Christ are shared among its members.

The Church deliberately placed these two feasts side by side to emphasise the unity of the entire Church across heaven, purgatory, and earth. All Saints' Day is a celebration of victory — those who have attained full union with God, while All Souls' Day is a call to charity — helping those still being purified to enter heaven. In the Letter to the Hebrews, we are told that "We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses." (Hebrews 12:1) This is an expression of the unity of all members of the Body of Christ, living and dead. This communion shows that the Church is not divided by death. The saints intercede for us, we intercede for the souls in purgatory, and one day, others will pray for us. It's the rhythm of love and grace across time and eternity.

In essence, All Saints' Day calls us to rejoice with those who are already in glory. All Souls' Day calls us to intercede for those still on the journey. The month of November calls us to remember our own mortality and to live in hope of eternal life. As St Ambrose beautifully wrote, "We have loved them during life; let us not abandon them in death until we have conducted them by our prayers into the house of the Lord."

Children pray for the world

PUCHONG: In conjunction with Mission Sunday, the 23rd Worldwide Children's Eucharistic Holy Hour and Mission Rosary was hosted by the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe (OLOG), under the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, on October 17. The event, held on behalf of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei, was also livestreamed for wider participation.

The evening began with video messages from Bishop Julius Gitom, Episcopal President for PMS Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, and Archbishop Julian Leow, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur.

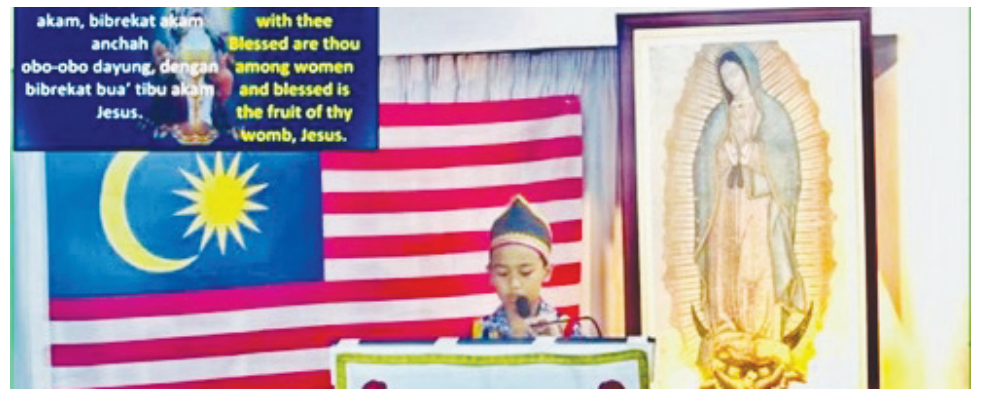
Parish priest and PMS Ecclesiastical Assistant for the Archdiocese, Fr Raymond Pereira, then welcomed all participants, emphasising the importance of prayer and missionary spirit among children.

During the Holy Hour, catechism children from OLOG led the Mission Rosary, offering prayers for the five continents — Africa, America, Europe, Oceania, and Asia. Each decade of the Rosary was represented by a distinct colour symbolising the Church's ongoing evangelising mission and the work of the Holy Childhood Association in reaching

out to children worldwide.

Reflecting Malaysia's multicultural character, the Mission Rosary was prayed in seven languages — English, Tamil, Mandarin, Bahasa Malaysia, Iban, Bidayuh, and Kadazan — signifying unity in diversity and the universality of the Church's mission.

The Holy Hour concluded with a video message from Pope Leo XIV for Mission Sunday, followed by a spirited rendition of "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" in multiple languages. The children ended the celebration by joyfully greeting all, "A Blessed Mission Sunday 2025!"



A child, dressed in traditional Bidayuh attire, leads the Mission Rosary in his native language.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

November

- 3-6 Tzu Chi Taiwan**
- 7 Confirmation – Church of St Michael, Alor Setar**
- 9 40th Anniversary for Catholic Prison Fellowship Association**

PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

November

- 5-10 Solemn Eucharistic Celebration for the Declaration of the Beatification of Venerable Mother Eliswa – National Shrine Basilica of Our Lady of Ransom, Vallarpadom, Kochi, Kerala**

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

November

- 2 Mass – All Souls' Day, Ulu Tiram Catholic Cemetery**
- 8 Blessing & Consecration of New Cemetery – Church of St Louis, Kluang, followed by Parish Pastoral Assembly and Mass**
- 9 Mass – Rededication of the Church of St Francis Xavier, Melaka**

Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #246

Welcome everyone.

Another long weekend holiday is over. Back to work, back to school. A lull is in the air. Another tragedy: a fatal stabbing in a school.

Speculations are rife. Suddenly a fear of the depressed, the autistic and the mentally impaired in their midst. But the schools have been a known seedbed for bullies, rapists, molesters, abusers, racists and divisive cultures for more years than we can remember. Maybe we have failed to admit that politicians, policies and populists have perpetuated cover-ups. Truth will always prevail; lies never can stay hidden.

Local Takes. No to cover-ups! The law minister said being underage is not an excuse to escape accountability for committing such offences.

Mounting violence in schools worries the cabinet into proposing: banning smartphones for under-16s.

Associate Professor of Psychology Monna Ong said "When individuals cannot find support through relationships, communication, or institutional systems even within schools, they may develop externalising coping mechanisms, in which aggression or destructive behaviour or attempts to control others substitutes for a sense of personal agency. Unfortunately, Malaysia's education system remains reactive rather than preventive."

The Deputy Unity Minister admitted that while social media plays a starring role in fuelling the nation's "social deficit," there are nine other **factors shaping Malaysia's social harmony:** ethnicity, religion, social class, education, language, generational gaps, gender politics, federalism, and the urban-rural divide.

Justice Amarjeet Singh ruled that preacher Firdaus Wong had **infringed the constitutional rights** of eight non-Muslim parents in a video posted on social media that encouraged the covert conversion of their minor children.

The Budget 2026 has shifted from race-based assistance to **needs-based assistance.** Is it **an evolution** in the nation's policy-making policy?

Church In The World: Making a Difference:

The 2025 National Study of Catholic Priests reveals a **clergy committed to their mission, yet facing significant challenges.**

Although priests report high levels of personal well-being, trust in ecclesiastical leadership remains low, and younger priests face higher levels of burnout and isolation. Furthermore, there is a disconnect between pastoral priorities and their practical implementation in parishes. This Report underscores the need for Church leaders to creatively address the needs of the clergy, fostering an environment of support, ongoing formation, and collaboration. **Priests, like lay people, are on a journey of spiritual growth and need the support of the entire community to fulfil their vocation.**

The interior of a cathedral was transformed with large pasted graphics, posing **unsettling questions to God:** "Are you there?" "Why did you create hate when love is so much stronger?" "Does everything have a soul?" "Does our struggle mean anything?" **Conceived by Alex Vellis and Jacqueline Creswell**

A Thought for The Week: Good wolf! Bad wolf!

The old man told his son that a battle between two wolves inside each one of us goes on all the time. The first wolf is evil in character; it produces germs of anger, envy, sorrow, greed, arrogance, stress, lies and tension in our minds. Whereas, the second one is a good wolf; it generates the energy for hope, peace, happiness, truth, generosity and ethics in our mind, heart and soul. The son asked, so who wins the battle? The old man replied, the one which you feed more!

The lesson from the wise old man: Watch which wolf we feed and what we feed it!

Surrounding oneself with negative characters who backbite, deceive people and those who are sceptical and pessimistic reinforce the evil wolf. And positive and solution minded people and reading good motivational books encourages the good wolf to overcome the evil one.

QnQ: Q asks: Are there prophets in our midst today?

In his book *The Tears of Things*, Richard Rohr identifies characteristics of those he calls "true prophets" who follow in the footsteps of Jesus and the Hebrew prophets. Prophets embrace religion as a way of creating communities of solidarity with justice and suffering.

They look for where the suffering is and go there, just as Jesus did. They speak of solidarity with one God, which also implies union with all else. The prophet learns to be *for* and *with*, not against. They are *for* those who are suffering or excluded. They are centred not on sin but on growth, change, and life. They know that the best teachers are reality itself and creation. They do not reject the way of the priest — they have just moved beyond it alone.

The Spirit @ work: Life without liberty is like a body without spirit. **Khalil Gibran**

Something to tickle you: "Where there is hope, there is life. It fills us with fresh courage and makes us strong again." **Anne Frank**

Bishop Bernard Paul



Evelyn Jock

SANDAKAN: The faithful of St Mary's Cathedral gathered on the evening of October 15 to mark a triple celebration — the 18th anniversary of the Diocese of Sandakan, the episcopal ordination anniversary of Rt Rev Julius Dusin Gitom, and the bishop's 68th birthday.

The evening began with a Thanksgiving Mass at 7.30pm, which coincided with the Feast of St Teresa of Avila — a saint with whom Bishop Julius shares a deep spiritual connection. The celebration drew parishioners from St Mary's Cathedral, St Mark's Church, and St Peter's Chapel, united in a spirit of solidarity and thanksgiving.

October 15 holds profound meaning for the Diocese of Sandakan. It commemorates

Triple celebration marks milestone for Sandakan diocese

both the establishment of the diocese in 2007 and the episcopal ordination of Bishop Julius on the same day. Falling on the Memorial of St Teresa of Avila, a Doctor of the Church known for her reform and renewal of the Carmelite order, the date symbolically connects the diocese to her legacy of perseverance, prayer, and faith.

In his homily, Bishop Julius expressed deep gratitude for the blessings of the occasion, describing the celebration as “a gift from God.” Drawing inspiration from St Teresa, he urged the faithful to remain steadfast in faith and prayer, even in times of trial. “St Teresa persevered in her spiritual journey, deepening her relationship with Christ until she became a powerful reformer,” he said. “In the same way, we are called to persevere in our mission, even when responses are lukewarm or challenges arise.”

Reflecting on the Gospel, Bishop Julius reminded the faithful that all are missionary disciples, called to evangelise, show compassion, and respond to God's call. “Our union with Jesus is the source of grace that transforms

us,” he said, quoting St Teresa's well-known words: “Let nothing trouble you, let nothing frighten you. Everything passes. God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone is enough.”

After the Mass, parishioners gathered at the parish hall for a fellowship celebration. In true

synodal spirit, each family brought food to share in a potluck-style gathering filled with joy, unity, and song. The evening concluded with warm wishes and songs of “Happy Anniversary” and “Happy Birthday” dedicated to Bishop Julius, the beloved shepherd of the Diocese of Sandakan.



Bishop Julius Dusin cutting the anniversary cake as the clergy sing and cheer on.



Performance by the clergy

Sibu Cathedral commemorates 40 years with thanksgiving and unity

SIBU: Parishioners of the Sacred Heart Cathedral came together in gratitude and joy on October 18 for a thanksgiving dinner marking the 40th anniversary of the cathedral — a celebration that united parishioners in faith, fellowship, and thanksgiving.

In his address, Bishop Joseph Hii reflected on the cathedral's consecration four decades ago, which coincided with the installation of Bishop Emeritus Dominic Su as the first Bishop of Sibu. He reminded the faithful that the cathedral, as the mother church of the diocese, continues to provide leadership and direction for all parishes.

Bishop Joseph expressed heartfelt thanks to parishioners for their love, support, and commitment, reminding them that every individual shares in the mission God has entrusted to the Diocese.

Organising chairman Gabriel Saing extended appreciation to all who contributed to the success of the event. He noted that the 40th anniversary was commemorated in a modest, smaller-scale manner out of respect for Bishop Emeritus Dominic Su's recent health challenges, while also giving thanks for his recovery.

Parish Pastoral Council chairman Stephen Wong reflected on the meaning of “Thanksgiving,” combining “Thanks” and “Giving.” He invited all present to give thanks

to God — for Bishop Emeritus Su, whose courageous “Yes” led to the founding of the diocese and cathedral; for Bishop Joseph, who continues to shepherd the community; and for Rector Fr Philip Hu and all priests, past and present, who have faithfully served.

He also expressed gratitude for the Legion of Mary Movement, the Jubilee Year 2025, and the Grotto of Mary Immaculate, launched on September 8, 2025. He reminded everyone that true thanksgiving naturally leads to giving — of time, effort, and resources in service to God and His Church.

In his message, Fr Philip Hu expressed joy at witnessing the Cathedral's diverse language apostolates and communities working together in harmony. He described this unity as a living expression of synodality — “walking together as brothers and sisters in Christ, in communion, participation, and mission.”

Fr Philip also rejoiced in the recovery of Bishop Emeritus Su, noting that though he was not present physically, “he is with us in spirit.”

The evening featured cultural dances, songs, and performances by various parish groups, celebrating the richness of faith and culture within the community. The celebration concluded with warm fellowship and praise, reminding all that thanksgiving and giving are inseparable in the life of the Church.

Acts of hope and gratitude for migrants and refugees

KUALA LUMPUR: The Cathedral of St John the Evangelist observed the 11th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR) on October 12 during the 11.00am Mass, with parish-wide activities and outreach efforts leading up to the celebration.

Preparations for WDMR began on the weekend of Sept 27 and 28, as parishioners reflected on the Pope's message and watched a short video explaining the distinction between migrants and refugees.

In the following week, at all Masses on Oct 4 and 5, parishioners were invited to take part in the WDMR observance by engaging in simple, meaningful acts that affirm the dignity and contributions of migrants and refugees within their communities.

At the individual and family level, parishioners were encouraged to:

- Acknowledge the service of migrant domestic helpers, garbage collectors, security guards, and cleaning staff through small gestures of gratitude, such as offering a gift or a packed meal.
- Express appreciation to migrant workers in food courts and restaurants with a

kind word or simple “thank you,” helping them feel valued and respected.

At the parish level, several initiatives were carried out to express solidarity and compassion:

- A collection drive for non-perishable food items to support migrants and refugees in need.
- The “Baskets of Hope” project, a children-to-children initiative, where parishioners contributed age-appropriate items such as candies and small treats for distribution to migrant and refugee children.
- The creation of a “Tree of Hope”, where parishioners hung prayer cards, offering intentions for their migrant and refugee friends.

The celebration culminated in a heartfelt Mass, honouring the resilience, courage, and hope that migrants and refugees bring to both the Church and society.

Echoing Pope Francis' message, the parish reminded the faithful that “the Church is always on a journey, sustained by hope, enriched by diversity, and renewed by all who call it home.”



Members of the migrant community bringing up gifts during the Offertory.



Penang Diocese celebrates Jubilee of Consecrated Life

Stephanie Cheong

PENANG: The Diocese of Penang celebrated the Jubilee of Consecrated Life with a thanksgiving Mass at Church of the Risen Christ on October 11, honouring men and women who dedicate their lives to making Christ's love visible in the world.

Organised by the Association of Religious of Penang Diocese, the celebration brought together 26 religious from 15 congregations serving across the diocese. The Mass was concelebrated by five priests — Friar Esmond Chua, OFM; Fr Joe Stephen, CSsR; Fr Patrick Massang, CSsR; Fr James Tan, SJ; and Friar Crispus Mosinoh, OFM.

At the start of the Eucharistic celebration, the religious placed incense before the altar, symbolising prayers rising to God, as expressed in Psalm 141: "Let my prayer rise before You like incense." The gesture also marked their renewal of commitment to consecrated life.

The readings from Philippians 2:1-4 and Mark 3:31-35 captured the essence of Christian discipleship. In his homily, main celebrant, Friar Esmond, reflected on the heart of consecrated life — humility, service, and communion.

"The foundation of every Christian vocation — whether consecrated, family, or parish life — is



Religious nuns putting incense into the charcoal in front of the altar.

to put others before ourselves and to live in humble love that builds communion," he said. "Consecrated life is a living memorial of Jesus' way of living, reflecting His humility, joy, and love."

Friar Esmond acknowledged the challenges faced by religious communities today, such as declining numbers and growing restlessness. He urged consecrated persons to embrace a "restlessness for heaven" — a holy longing for God rather than worldly anxiety. This, he said, is lived out by staying connected to God and rejoic-

ing in the Lord.

He reminded that consecrated life is deeply connected with the laity, as both share in the mission of revealing Christ to the world. "The lay faithful can support the consecrated through prayer, friendship, and faith, and be open to discerning such a vocation themselves," he added.

Friar Crispus Mosinoh, OFM, chairperson of the Association of Religious of Penang Diocese, expressed gratitude to Friar Esmond for hosting the event and to all who helped make the celebration



Brother Hilary Handrie Lim decorating his cross with coloured glass pieces.

meaningful. A video message from Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, was screened during the celebration. In his message, the cardinal expressed gratitude to the religious and encouraged them to grow in appreciation of the evangelical vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience — "gifts of simplicity, beauty, and completeness."

Each attendee received a prayer card with the Prayer to the Holy Trinity from *Vita Consecrata* (1996) by Pope St John Paul II,

inviting prayers for religious life.

After Mass, the religious enjoyed lunch and took part in a creative mosaic activity, using broken coloured glass pieces to form crosses symbolising beauty from brokenness. Each participant also received a gift bag and a jigsaw puzzle piece, representing the unity of lay faithful, priests, and religious in Christ.

Sr Cyrilla, FMDM, who has served the Lord for 55 years, shared, "I feel great at this thanksgiving Mass and have joyful gratitude to God for His gift of grace."

Jubilee of Migrants celebration reflect universality of the faith

GEORGE TOWN: A melting pot of diverse cultures converged in unity and thanksgiving at the Church of the Assumption for the Jubilee of Migrants held in conjunction with the Jubilee Year of Hope on October 19.

Organised by City Parish, the celebrations gathered Catholics from several nations which included the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, South Korea, Myanmar and China.

Mass was celebrated by Fr Fabian Dicom, the National Director for Caritas Malaysia, and joining him as concelebrants were Fr Arulnathan Joseph (assistant parish priest) and Fr Antony Lee Chang Seub (Penang-based Korean priest) with Deacon Paul Kang assisting.

The Eucharistic celebration featured the carrying of various national flags during the entrance procession, an offertory dance by the Indonesian community and presentation of gifts by the respective nations.

In reflecting on the theme of *Migrants - Missionaries of Hope*, Fr Fabian reminded the congregation in his homily that migrants bear hope through their perseverance which resonates deeply with the heartbeat of the

early Church.

"Our migrant brothers and sisters teach us that the Church is not a building, but a people on the move, carrying the Gospel from one shore to another, from one heart to another," he said.

Fr Fabian then related to the readings whereby he urged for all to stand in solidarity with migrants emulating Aaron and Hur from the book of Exodus, and to learn from them in heeding the call of St Paul to walk faithfully with God in spite of various challenges.

He then expressed hope that all people of God will become a community of raised hands — to pray, bless and build bridges together.

"Let us be a Church that does not just help migrants, but walks with them, learns from them, and is renewed by them," he said.

The congregation then adjourned to the Assumption Church Hall for lunch fellowship which included the local staple of each community such as Malaysian chicken rice, Korean kimchi, Vietnamese spring rolls and Filipino rice cakes.

There were also a variety of performances from the singing of songs to traditional and contemporary dance performances which drew loud cheers and applause.

Mary Nguyen Thai Ngoc Han



Representatives from the different nations presenting the offertory gifts.

from Vietnam, shared that the Jubilee of Migrants was a reminder that "every journey carries dignity and that all people, no matter where they come from, have a place in God's family."

Maria Kristina from Indonesia meanwhile, expressed her excitement to be able to learn from other cultures through their cuisine, arts and languages.

"Seeing people from different countries, all united by our Catholic faith, is wonderful; and it truly feels like we are one big family, celebrating God's goodness together," said Dheniss, who hails from the Philippines.

Aaron Lim



Performance by the Myanmar community.

Gedangsa chapel celebrates feast of Our Lady of Fatima

Bernard Anthony

GEDANGSA, Hulu Selangor: The Chapel of St Mary, dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima, came alive with faith and fellowship as parishioners and pilgrims gathered on October 11 to celebrate its annual feast day.

The modest 60-year-old chapel welcomed nearly 200 faithful, including visitors from nearby Tanjung Malim, Perak, and surrounding areas. The celebration began with the Rosary, Litany of Hope, and Jubilee and Pilgrims Thanksgiving prayers before the Mass at 5.30pm, presided over by chapel administrator, Fr Vincent Paul.

Fr Vincent blessed the congregation with holy water and welcomed all to commemorate the final apparition of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal in October 1917.

In his homily, Fr Vincent recounted the story of the Marian apparitions to the three

shepherd children of Fatima, reminding the faithful that the Blessed Virgin identified herself as “the Lady of the Rosary” during her final appearance. “Mary told the children to build a chapel in her honour. That small chapel became the great Sanctuary of Our Lady of Fatima. Here too, we stand in a small chapel dedicated to Our Lady — perhaps what we need is not a bigger building, but a bigger faith,” he said.

He urged parishioners to pray the Rosary daily, calling it a path to inner peace and spiritual growth. “The message of Fatima is to bring peace — not only to the world but also to our own lives, families, communities, and workplaces,” he said, cautioning against careless words and attitudes that hurt others and offend God.

Fr Vincent also highlighted the need to value the sacraments and the crucifix, lamenting how symbols of faith have been removed in

some institutions. “We must give importance to the Eucharist and not take sacraments lightly, especially matrimony. Without faith, the Eucharist becomes routine, and we lose sight of its true meaning — the real Body of Christ,” he said.

Addressing the congregation, which included over 40 university students from Tanjung Malim, Fr Vincent stressed the importance of regular Confession. “Each time we go for Confession, we are reunited with God. Don’t divorce yourself from Him or become spiritually disconnected,” he said.

Fr Vincent also commissioned two

parishioners, Clement and Mary, as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Benediction followed a time of adoration, with the faithful praying for God’s protection and healing.

After Mass, lay leader Clement expressed gratitude to all who contributed to the feastday preparations and invited everyone for a fellowship dinner. An anniversary cake was presented to Fr Vincent in celebration of his 27th sacerdotal anniversary.

The Chapel of St Mary has been under the pastoral care of the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Tanjung Malim since August 2023.

A pilgrimage of prayer and fellowship at Jelapang chapel

JELAPANG: Fifteen members of BEC St David from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Ipoh, embarked on a pilgrimage to the Chapel of Annai Vellaganny on October 12.

Organised in conjunction with the Jubilee Year of Hope, the pilgrimage was especially meaningful for several elderly members who had not previously visited the chapel. The journey began with the recitation of the Rosary, during which participants entrusted their personal intentions and those of the wider

community to the loving intercession of the Blessed Mother. The prayerful atmosphere culminated with the Prayer of Hope, uniting all hearts in a spirit of faith and renewal.

The spiritual time together was followed by light refreshments and warm fellowship, where members shared stories, reflections, and words of encouragement. This simple yet deeply meaningful gathering not only nourished their faith but also strengthened the bonds of community and friendship within the BEC. **Uma Christina Manikadass**



Fr Vincent Paul celebrating feastday Mass.



PMET talk clarifies Church teachings on marriage and annulment

RAWANG: The Church of St Jude hosted a joint talk on October 11 addressing Catholic marriage and annulment, civil divorce law, and counselling. The session drew 43 participants from three parishes in the North-West District.

The session, held from 9.30am to 1.00pm, was organised by the Peninsular Malaysia Ecclesiastical Tribunal (PMET) in collaboration with the Catholic Lawyers Society and the Emmaus Counselling Centre. Participants attended from the Church of St Jude, Rawang; the Church of St Paul the Apostle, Kuala Kubu Bharu; and the Church of St Paul the Hermit, Bestari Jaya.

PMET Judicial Vicar, Fr William Michael, provided a comprehensive overview of the fundamentals of Catholic marriage, the

definition of annulment under Church law, and the duration of the tribunal process.

To raise awareness of the emotional challenges involved, Susie Lim from the Catholic Lawyers Society explained the role of the civil court in divorce cases, while Francis Joachim highlighted the support services offered by the Emmaus Counselling Centre. Upholding the sanctity of the marriage bond remains PMET’s primary concern.

A lively question-and-answer session rounded off the programme. Before concluding, parish priest Fr Simon Labrooy and his assistant, Fr Jonathan Rao, conveyed their heartfelt appreciation to the speakers for their insightful presentations. **Mercy Almeida Stellus**



A section of the participants. Pix inset: Fr William Michael.

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KUALA LUMPUR: Are our children safe in schools, churches, and other social institutions?

This is a question Christian parents are increasingly asking, says Dr Brendan J. Gomez, *pic*, Consulting Psychologist, Associate Professor, and Christian parent.

In an interview with *HERALD*, Dr Gomez said the disturbing rise in cases of child suicides, rape, and even murder — both locally and abroad — has shaken the confidence of parents and faith communities alike.

“In a society where we grew up feeling safe, it seems our children do not have the same luxury,” he said. “Today, there are multiple risk factors in their social environments, and one consequence is psychological distress in various forms. We can’t teleport them back to our safer past — much as we wish we could — so we must address these risks head-on.”

He stressed that protecting children is not solely the responsibility of “the authorities,” but of the entire ecclesia — the assembly of the faithful.

“This is not someone else’s problem,” Dr Gomez said. “The Body of Christ must be in action. Every one of us has a role to play.”

Empowering bystanders and overcoming apathy

Dr Gomez explained that many tragedies could have been prevented if bystanders — peers, friends, or adults — had known how to act.

“We need to train both adults and children in safe and effective bystander intervention,” he said.



We must rebuild the village to raise our children

“Teach them the courage to say, ‘What you said isn’t okay,’ or to report a worrying post or conversation to a trusted adult. We should frame this as courageous love for a friend in potential trouble.”

He emphasised that communities must foster openness and the willingness to act when something seems wrong.

Revitalising family ministries

Describing the family as “the primary functional cell of society and the domestic Church,” Dr Gomez underscored the need to strengthen parental support systems.

“Parents themselves are often lost and afraid,” he noted. “Parenting workshops are crucial — focusing on communication skills

for today’s families, fostering faith in a challenging world, and understanding children’s psychological development.”

He added that churches must also provide greater support for non-traditional families, such as single parents, and offer ongoing programmes instead of sporadic enrichment weekends.

“A strong, loving, and open

family is the child’s first and greatest fortress,” he said.

Building a community of mentors

Dr Gomez called for parishes to become “networks of extended family,” where every adult takes an active role in the formation and care of young people.

“We must know the children in our communities,” he said. “We should create a culture where it’s normal — even expected — for any adult to gently mentor a child in a public space, or to offer a word of encouragement to a struggling parent or child. We must rebuild the village it takes to raise a child.”

Seeing with the eyes of Christ

Dr Gomez reminded Christians that every human life is sacred, echoing the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2258): “Human life is a sacred gift from God that no one can claim the right to destroy.”

“Let us look upon each child with the eyes of Christ and ask, ‘How does this unique, irreplaceable soul need to feel safe, known, and loved?’” he said. “The answer, lived out in practical ways, will save our children from the next preventable tragedy.”

Concluding with a reflection from St John’s Gospel — “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” — Dr Gomez urged the faithful to respond with “relentless, intelligent, and loving commitment.”

“We must be the healers of wounds, the builders of fortresses for the spirit, and the watchmen on the walls,” he said. “Together, we can make a difference.”

Letters to Editor

When accountability stops, so does generosity

Dear Editor,

From the excerpt reported in the *HERALD* (October 5, 2025) of Fr Dr Clarence Devadass’ address at the FABC Bishops’ Seminar on Synodality, I observe he has made some keen insights on the issues of ‘Transparency and Accountability’, and very apt and excellent exhortations for transformation which, I sincerely hope, will be heeded.

Interestingly, in the same issue of *HERALD*, a ‘Letter to the Editor’ from Mr Norman Lourdes to some extent discusses the same topics. He is right indeed to deduce trust erosion where there is a lack of accountability and transparency.

In recent months, our parish has suddenly stopped publishing the weekend and other

collections in the bulletin. The last monthly financial statement disclosed on the notice board was that of February 2025, leaving us in the dark.

Ever since, I have drastically reduced my offerings, and have planned to channel the funds elsewhere, just as Mr Lourdes predicted; as I now get the feeling I am putting my contributions into a well where I cannot see where it has gone or how much has accumulated in it!

In reminiscence, I recall we once had a parish priest who accounted to the last cent for all the collections. Following on, we have been given figures only in Ringgit. I sometimes wonder what happened to all the coins we put in.

No other choice
Kuala Lumpur

Social media warfare: Are our teens doomed?

Dear Editor,

The murder of a 16-year-old teen in a school at Bandar Utama Damansara, left many Malaysians stunned and sent chills down the spines of many. The perpetrator is a 14-year-old boy with no prior criminal record nor past incidents. Only an addiction to social media — it finally took its toll on him, and on her.

Our children are growing up in a world where battles are no longer fought in the open — they happen silently, on screens. Every scroll, every like, and every post shapes how our teens see themselves and others. While we, as parents, might think social media is harmless entertainment, for many young people, it has become a battlefield for their hearts and minds.

The problem isn’t the technology itself — it’s the absence of guidance, reflection, and faith that leaves our youth vulnerable. Algorithms feed them comparison, pressure, and confusion

about their identity. In a world shouting, “You are what others think of you,” our faith gently whispers, “You are who God made you to be.”

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” — Romans 12:2

Social media often tells our teens they must look perfect, live extravagantly, and be constantly visible to matter. But as Catholics, we are called to a deeper truth — that our value is not found in likes but in love. When our children understand they are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), they learn that their worth is unshakable, no matter what appears on their screens.

Faith provides the moral compass and inner stillness that social media cannot. It invites reflection over reaction, compassion over criticism, and truth over trend. When a teen learns to pray, attend Mass, and stay rooted in the Word, he gains the spiritual armour needed to

navigate the noise of the digital world.

“Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.” — Proverbs 4:23

As parents, we are not merely protectors — we are shepherds of souls. Let us talk to our teens not only about screen time but also about soul time. Encourage moments of silence, family prayer, and gratitude. These small acts create sacred pauses that remind them: God’s love is constant, even when Wi-Fi isn’t.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.” — Proverbs 22:6

So no, our teens are not doomed. They are simply seeking direction — and that direction begins at home, in faith, and in love.

May we help them see that true connection doesn’t come from followers online but from following Christ.

Andrew Ambrose
Via e-mail



Send your letters to ► letterseditor@herald.com.my

The Editor, *HERALD*, 5 Jalan Robertson, 50150 KL | Please include your name and address. *Letters without name and address will not be entertained.*

Penang cathedral welcomes saints' relics

PENANG: The Cathedral of the Holy Spirit marked a memorable occasion on October 5, with the solemn reception of the relics of St Elena Guerra and St Carlo Acutis.

The Mass began with two parishioners carrying the reliquaries in procession, accompanied by altar servers, Deacon Andrew Loh, and celebrant Fr Raymond Raj. The reliquaries were placed before the baptismal font, signifying the sacred presence of the saints, before Fr Raymond proceeded to greet and welcome the

congregation.

Deacon Andrew then read letters authenticating the relics. The first, from Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino of Assisi-Nocera Umbra-Gualdo Tadino, verified the relic of St Carlo Acutis — a lock of his hair preserved in a sealed golden case. The second letter, written by Dr Paolo Vilotta, Postulator of the Causes of Saints, confirmed the authenticity of the relic of St Elena Guerra — a sacred bone fragment similarly enclosed and sealed.



Parishioners carrying the reliquaries



Parishioners venerating the relics.

In his homily, Fr Raymond reflected on the nature of faith, emphasising that it is “not a feeling but a conviction that God is always in control.” Quoting St Thomas Aquinas, he said, “To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible.”

He urged the faithful to “put God first and trust in Him,” adding that when God takes first place in one’s life, “everything else falls into place — bringing clarity, peace, and purpose.” Concluding his reflection, he reminded the congregation that “without faith, no one can impress God.”

During the Prayer of the Faithful, the congregation prayed, “May the sacred relics of St Elena Guerra and St Carlo Acutis in-

spire us to grow in our faith as we seek their intercession to deepen our relationship with the Holy Spirit and to treasure the Holy Eucharist.”

Following the parish announcements, Fr Raymond led the Litany and prayers to both saints and explained the three classes of relics:

- First-class relics: Physical remains of a saint.
- Second-class relics: Objects personally used or worn by a saint.
- Third-class relics: Items that have touched first- or second-class relics.

He informed parishioners that third-class relics would be distributed to those coming forward to venerate and encouraged them to keep the relics reverently at their

home altars.

After the final blessing, Fr Raymond and Deacon Andrew venerated the relics before inviting the faithful to do likewise. Guided by the hospitality ministers, parishioners approached reverently to venerate the relics — a profound experience for many, lasting nearly 30 minutes.

The reliquaries were then solemnly carried in procession to the chapel, where they are now displayed for ongoing prayer and devotion.

For many, this was a first encounter with the veneration of relics — a deeply moving celebration that strengthened faith and reminded all of the enduring communion between heaven and earth.

SFX parish concludes ‘Pilgrim of Hope’ journey

PETALING JAYA: The *Journey as Pilgrim of Hope* faith formation series by the Firm Foundation Ministry concluded on October 9 at the Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX), with an evening session titled *Concluding Synthesis*, led by parish priest Fr Alvin Ng SJ.

The final session offered parishioners a broad overview of Pope Francis’ key papal documents and invited them to embrace renewed hope, deeper faith, and purposeful living amid the challenges of today’s world.

Fr Alvin began by outlining the various types of papal documents,

explaining how the Pope teaches, guides, and encourages the faithful through different forms of writings:

- Apostolic Constitutions, formal texts shaping Church law, such as *Munificentissimus Deus* on Mary’s Assumption.
- Encyclicals, letters addressing key teachings like *Laudato Si’* on creation and *Fratelli Tutti* on fraternity.
- Apostolic Exhortations, pastoral reflections written after Synods, such as *Christifideles Laici* (St John Paul II, 1988). He also mentioned other tradi-

tional papal writings, including Apostolic Letters, *Motu Proprios*, Papal Bulls, and Decretals, each developed through the Church’s history and context.

Reflecting on Pope Francis’ writings, Fr Alvin highlighted their tone of urgency and compassion — as if the Holy Father, aware of limited time, sought to leave lasting guidance for the Church. The Pope’s documents, he noted, consistently call the faithful to mercy, inclusion, and ecological responsibility, offering a vision of faith rooted in global stewardship and missionary renewal.

Fr Alvin summarised the Pope’s major works, including *Evangelii Gaudium* (missionary renewal), *Laudato Si’* (care for creation), *Fratelli Tutti* (fraternal love), *Amoris Laetitia* (family life), and *Dilexit Nos* (Christ’s love for humanity). He also touched on three significant documents not covered in the series — *Praedicate Evangelium* (2022), *Querida Amazonia* (2020), and *Desiderio Desideravi* (2022) — which respectively address Church reform, ecological justice, and the beauty of the liturgy.

According to Fr Alvin, Pope Francis’ vision can be understood in two key ways — through the Jesuits’ Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) and through



Fr Alvin Ng, SJ presenting the Concluding Synthesis.

the universal mission of the Church. Both call believers to grow in holiness, strengthen family and community life, promote social justice, and care for creation.

Inviting reflection, he posed four guiding questions:

- How do I recognise my personal call to holiness?
- How do I reach out to others with compassion?
- How do I empower young people to lead?
- How do I care for our common home?

“These questions,” he said, “invite a movement from the inside out — a ripple effect of grace and action.”

Fr Alvin then linked these reflec-

tions to the Jesuits’ four Universal Apostolic Preferences: showing the way to God, walking with the excluded, journeying with youth, and caring for our common home.

To conclude, participants viewed excerpts from Pope Francis: *His Life, Teachings, and Enduring Legacy*, a National Geographic documentary that offered deeper insight into the Holy Father’s ministry of dialogue, interfaith solidarity, and pastoral presence.

Fr Alvin ended with a reminder that while every pope brings a unique style and focus, the Holy Spirit remains constant, guiding the Church “through every season with mercy, wisdom, and the enduring call to love.” Eddy Lee

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Pope and King make historic step towards Christian unity

VATICAN: History was made on October 23 when Pope Leo XIV and King Charles III prayed side by side in the Sistine Chapel, marking the first time since the Protestant Reformation that a reigning British monarch and a pope have prayed together during a royal state visit to the Vatican.

The ecumenical service, held beneath Michelangelo's Last Judgment, brought together the Sistine Chapel Choir, the Choir of St George's Chapel, Windsor, and His Majesty's Chapel Royal. The choirs sang hymns and psalms in Latin and English, concluding with a joint prayer led by Pope Leo and Anglican Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell.

During the state visit, the Pope and King exchanged symbolic honours of "spiritual fellowship." King Charles was named Royal Confrater of the Papal Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, while Pope Leo accepted the title of Papal Confrater of St George's Chapel, Windsor. The British Embassy to the Holy See described the gestures as "recognitions of spiritual fellowship" reflecting the progress made in relations between the Catholic Church and the Church of England over the past 500 years.

Earlier, King Charles and Queen Camilla met privately with the Pope, as well as Cardinal

Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, and Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Holy See's foreign minister. Their discussions focused on the environment, poverty, and promoting peace and ecumenical dialogue.

King Charles also conferred on Pope Leo the honour of Knight Grand Cross of the Order of Bath, while the Pope bestowed on the King the Knight Grand Cross with the Collar of the Order of Pius IX, and on Queen Camilla the title of Dame Grand Cross of the same order.

The visit underscores the shared commitment of Catholics and Anglicans to walk together as "pilgrims of hope." Agencies



Pope Leo XIV accompanies Britain's King Charles III to the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican at the end of their visit Oct 23, 2025. (CNS photo/Pablo Esparza)

Regional leaders reaffirm safeguarding as a moral duty

ANGELES CITY, Philippines: More than 300 bishops, clergy, religious leaders, and lay professionals from Southeast Asia gathered for the first National Conference on Safeguarding, a four-day event dedicated to strengthening the Church's commitment to protect minors and vulnerable persons.

The conference, held in Angeles City, Pampanga, carried the theme *Our Mission of Protection: A Journey of Hope and Compassion*. It was jointly organised by the Episcopal Office for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons (PMVP) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors (PCPM), the Catholic Safeguarding Institute (CSI), and the Conference of Major Superiors of the Philippines (CMSP).

Two members of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur's Professional Standards Office (PSO),



The Malaysian contingent at the National Conference on Safeguarding. From left: Fr Gregory Chan, Rita Wong and Archbishop Julian Leow. (Photo/Fr Gregory Chan facebook)

Fr Gregory Chan and Rita Wong, together with Most Rev Julian Leow, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, joined delegates from neighbouring countries in reflecting on the Church's ongoing journey towards accountability, trans-

parency, and healing.

The opening Mass at the Holy Rosary Parish was presided over by Archbishop Florentino Lavarías of San Fernando, who urged participants to view safeguarding as "a sacred duty" rather than

mere compliance. "Safeguarding isn't administrative — it is a vocation to walk together in synodality and compassion," he said.

In his keynote address, Bishop Luis Manuel Ali Herrera, Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, emphasised that protection is "a theological imperative and an evangelical mandate." He called on Church leaders to adopt a victim-centred approach and integrate safeguarding into pastoral planning and leadership practices.

Through a video message, Archbishop Charles Jude Scicluna, Adjunct Secretary of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, outlined Pope Francis' reforms, including the creation of the PCPM (2014), *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (2019), and the 2021 revision of Book VI of Canon Law. He underscored the Church's responsibility to protect whistleblowers, respect the dignity of the accused, and ensure pastoral care for all parties.

Other speakers, including Bishop Brendan Daly, Judicial Vicar of the Catholic Church in New Zealand, stressed that transparency is essential to rebuilding trust and credibility. The Catholic Safeguarding Institute, the Conference of Major Superiors, and several diocesan initiatives presented existing models of education, training, and response mechanisms.

Experts also discussed Canon Law, digital safety, survivor support, and collaboration with civil authorities, highlighting the need for ongoing training and effective reporting systems. Participants agreed that safeguarding must be rooted in formation and lived as part of the Church's mission to uphold human dignity.

The gathering concluded with a shared pledge to foster a "culture of listening" and to continue building communities of faith that protect, heal, and act with compassion and courage. Agencies



Editors sharing their input during the group discussions. (Signis Asia photo)

Asian Catholic editors call for stronger collaboration and digital evangelisation

MANILA: Catholic editors from 11 Asian countries gathered in the Philippine capital for a two-day roundtable aimed at strengthening collaboration and reimagining Catholic journalism in an increasingly digital and secular world.

Organised by SIGNIS Asia, the Catholic News Publication Editors' Roundtable 2.0 brought together representatives from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Timor-Leste.

Adeline James, head of the SIGNIS Asia Journalism Desk, said the meeting provided a platform to "strengthen collaboration, amplify one another's work, and ensure that stories of faith and justice reach those who most need to

hear them."

Discussions focused on sustaining the relevance of Catholic journalism, reclaiming faith's voice in secular media, and building cross-border solidarity.

Dr Peter Monthienvichienchai, Executive Director of *LiCAS News* and Secretary-General of SIGNIS World, stressed that Catholic journalism must transcend national boundaries. "By working together, we can tell stories that matter — especially those restricted elsewhere," he said, noting that shared editorial support helps ensure important stories reach wider audiences despite local challenges.

Msgr Pedro Quitarioro III, Director of the Media Office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, urged Catholic journalists to

"newsify the Magisterium" — to communicate Church teachings as part of public discourse. He said journalism remains a vital tool for evangelisation, helping people see the presence of God in daily life.

Speakers also addressed the role of Catholic media in engaging digital culture and shaping public opinion on moral and social issues. *Rappler* editor Paterno Esmaquel II emphasised that Catholic and secular journalists share the same mission "to seek truth, serve the public, and uphold human dignity."

The meeting concluded with participants affirming a commitment to deepen collaboration, develop joint projects under the SIGNIS network, and strengthen the Church's digital presence across Asia. *LiCAS News*

Death is sacred

Reverence for the dead, respect for the grieving

November, the month dedicated to praying for the faithful departed, invites us to reflect on the mystery of life, death, and eternal communion. It is a time when the Church remembers that death is not an end, but a sacred passage into God's embrace. Yet, even in this holy season, we are reminded that how we accompany one another in grief reveals much about our faith, compassion, and respect for the dignity of the human person.

When death visits a family, it tears through their existence with a force that words cannot capture. For those left behind, time fractures; the world moves on while they stand still, trying to reconcile a new and painful reality.

Yet within our Catholic community — one that celebrates the Paschal Mystery and believes in the sacred passage from earthly life to eternal rest — something has gone deeply wrong in how we behave during wakes and funerals.

When death becomes spectacle

Our family recently suffered the sudden loss of a beloved member, very soon after another. What should have been a time of prayerful mourning became an ordeal of endurance—navigating grief while confronting the thoughtless, intrusive, and sometimes shocking conduct of those who came supposedly to offer condolences.

This is not unique to us. Many families have faced similar indignities yet remain silent, too grief-stricken or too polite to confront the growing lack of respect for the deceased and bereaved.

The invasion before the body arrives

Imagine this: you've just lost an immediate family member or someone dear. You're at the hospital, grief-stricken, numb with shock, signing forms, making painful decisions. Yet before the body even arrives home, people have gathered — asking questions, broadcasting the news, and turning your private tragedy into a public event.

Families need space — both physical and emotional — before the rituals of mourning begin. A few hours of privacy is not too much to ask.

Curiosity is not compassion

At wakes, grieving families often endure interrogation disguised as concern: How did it happen? Did they suffer? What were their last words? These questions are not empathy — they are voyeurism.

If you must ask, do so gently, once. Better still, say simply: "I'm so sorry for your loss." The bereaved owe no one an explanation. Their sorrow is not entertainment.

A wake is not a social gathering

Many families try to ease the practical strain of visitors by providing food and seating, hoping for space to process the gravity of their loss. Instead, wakes often become social events — filled with chatter, laughter, and networking.

In the fog of their grief, immediate family members should not be dragged from pillar to post to greet random visitors. This is not a social event. It is not the family's job to play host or make anyone feel important or acknowledged.

We should not need reminding: a wake is not a party. It is sacred space, a place of mourning. Keep your voice low. Stay briefly. Pay your respects and leave. Respect the family's grief and the presence of the deceased.

Even in death, the deceased deserves dignity

In preparing their loved one for burial, a family's choices should be private and respected. Yet we have witnessed outsiders entering rooms uninvited, offering unsolicited — and often insulting — opinions about what the deceased should wear.

Such interference is an appalling lack of respect. Our loved ones deserve dignity until their final rest. Unless you are immediate family, do not enter private spaces or comment on preparations.

Stay away if you don't belong

Equally distressing are the arrivals of those who never showed kindness or respect in life but suddenly appear at the wake to "pay respects." If you had no genuine relationship with the deceased, your presence may wound rather

than comfort.

Do not attend out of curiosity or social obligation. This is not your moment. For the grieving, it is a sacred time of farewell, not an opportunity for you to satisfy curiosity or clear your conscience.

The microphone is not a stage

Prayers at a wake are for commending the soul to God and comforting the family — not for showcasing eloquence or children's speaking skills. The microphone is not a stage. If you cannot pray with sincerity and humility, remain silent. Do not make yourself at home in a grieving family's house if your presence causes them discomfort.

When even the priests cannot reach the family

Priests come to wakes to minister to the grieving. Yet some visitors monopolise their attention with trivialities, or worse, use the moment to inquire about burial plots and prices.

Let priests serve the bereaved. Do not intrude on their private conversations or use a family's sorrow as an opportunity for your own convenience. This behaviour is unconscionable.

The assault of thoughtless words

Grieving families are often met with platitudes: "It was his time." "She's in a better place." These phrases, trivialise their loss and presume to interpret God's will. They offer no comfort — only dismissal of the family's deep sorrow.

Likewise, it is insensitive to engage them in small talk about work or travel. They are navigating unimaginable pain. Respect that.

Death is not a social media opportunity

It is disgraceful that some treat wakes as photo opportunities — taking pictures of the deceased or posting scenes online. Grief is not content. We are not entitled to document or share another's pain.

Funerals are not networking opportunities

Even worse are those who exploit wakes for personal gain — asking grieving family members for favours, consults, advice, or referrals. A funeral is not a business meeting. Such behaviour reveals a shocking level of selfishness and stunning absence of empathy.

The audacity of exploitation

Some have even asked families for copies of death certificates to secure work or school leave. To burden the bereaved with administrative errands for your convenience is unconscionable. Using another's tragedy for personal benefit is moral bankruptcy — it is cruel.

Respect the family's final farewell

The morning of the funeral should be sacred time for the family's final farewell. They intentionally did not list the funeral morning in the obituary, hoping for some privacy at this crucial time. Yet people descended uninvited, watching like spectators. Most upsetting; Church representatives insisted on conducting the final home prayers before all the siblings arrived, so that they could avoid traffic or get to work. Your schedule does not supersede a family's right to say goodbye together.

The final indignity

At the burial, freeloaders complained about transportation timing while others blocked the family — children and elderly, including close family who had travelled from interstate and overseas — from the graveside just to film videos. When asked to step aside, one even argued mid-rite creating disruption and distress.

To record your "moment" while denying the family theirs is the height of disrespect. These are sacred, final moments which are deeply personal. These final moments belong to the family.

The boundaries of advice

No sooner had the burial ended, then the family received calls about cancelling the phone lines and subscriptions of the deceased. The audacity of such advice is shockingly insensitive. These practical matters are the family's business alone, not yours to manage or advise on.



A call to conscience

To those whose behaviour resembles what has been described: you may not realise the depth of pain you cause with your ignorance and insensitivities. For you, the funeral is an event. For the family, it is a lifelong wound.

Years from now, they will remember your words and actions as part of their grief. What you dismiss as minor insensitivity becomes indelible trauma as they carry their sorrow for life.

What Catholic charity requires

Our faith calls us to comfort the sorrowful and honour the dead. This is what love of neighbour looks like in times of loss:

Before the wake

- Allow the family time to process their loss privately.
- Ask gently if they need assistance before showing up.

During the wake

- Arrive with humility, not curiosity.
- Offer brief, sincere condolences.
- Avoid interrogating the family or gossiping.
- Keep your demeanour subdued; do not linger for hours joking and socialising.
- Never take photographs without consent.
- Do not exploit the moment for personal benefit or attention.
- Respect priests' pastoral role — do not monopolise their time.
- Stay out of private areas, personal conversations, final arrangements and family decisions.

At the funeral

- Give the family priority access to their loved one.
- Do not block or film during rites.
- Accept offered hospitality with gratitude.
- Never, under any circumstances, request official documents or special favours for you or your family's benefit.

Death is holy ground

When we enter another's grief, we stand on holy ground. We are witnesses to the Paschal Mystery — a reflection of Christ's own journey through suffering, death, and resurrection.

Our presence should be reverent, our words few, our actions restrained and our compassion genuine. The bereaved need our prayers, not our curiosity; our silence, not our chatter; our respect, not our intrusion.

We owe them the dignity of treating death, not as spectacle or social occasion, but as sacred passage. The family whose experience inspired this reflection will carry their grief forever. They should not also carry the memory of our community's callousness.

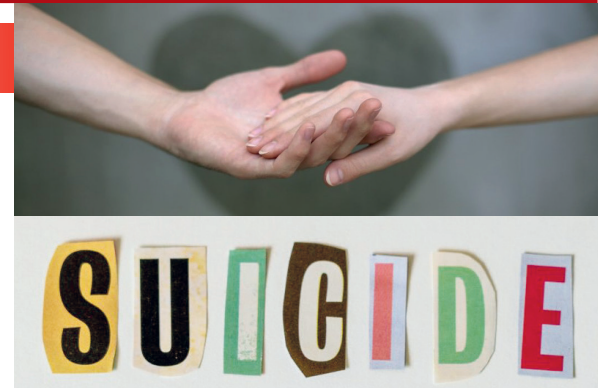
We must do better. We must act with conscience. Our faith demands it; our humanity requires it. When we fail to show compassion to the grieving, we fail to recognise Christ in our midst.

Let us resolve to honour both the dead and the bereaved with the reverence they deserve.

The author who wishes to remain anonymous, hopes this reflection will spark honest conversation within our Catholic community about how we can speak, act, and show up better in times of grief and loss.

Pope's prayer intention for November

A voice from the edge: The Church's call to prevent



PRAYER PRISM

Fr Fabian Dicom

“Let us pray that those who are tempted to commit suicide might find the support, care and love they need in their community, and be open to the beauty of life.” - Pope's Prayer Intention for November 2025

A Voice from the Edge

In a quiet conversation with someone who has wrestled with suicidal thoughts for most of her life, I heard not despair, but a profound honesty about pain. She spoke of growing up feeling unwanted, of carrying wounds from childhood rejection and abuse, of learning to live with a voice that often whispers, “What's the point of living?”

“From young I knew my mother didn't want me. She would say it out loud — that nobody would ever love me. Later I was abused by someone close, and I thought of dying many times. What stopped me wasn't God then — it was my father. I couldn't bear for him to find me like that.”

Now, decades later, her father has long passed, but she still holds on to that same fragile thread that keeps her from crossing the line.

“Even now, what stops me is wondering if my dad would be disappointed. I found God along the way, but I still ask, what do You want me to do, Lord? Why am I still here?”

Despite her pain, she has achieved much — education, a career, independence — but she admits there are moments when life feels emptied of meaning.

“I'm not lonely, but I'm alone. And sometimes I wonder, what else is there to look forward to? I've travelled, I've achieved, I'm contented — but still the thought comes back.”

What struck me most was not her suffering, but her wisdom about how we respond to others in such darkness. She said quietly:

“You can never really know what another person is going through. Don't tell them, ‘You'll get better’ or ‘It's not that bad.’ You can't feel their pain. Just be there. Listen. Don't make them feel guilty for how they feel. Sometimes all they need is someone to stay beside them without judgment.”

And then she spoke words that, without her knowing, touched the very heart of theology, “When I meet someone in pain, I don't pray that they get well. I just tell God, ‘Do what is best for this person, Lord, because You know best.’ That's all.”

Presence Before Advice

Her words reveal a deep pastoral truth: prevention begins not with advice or correction, but with presence.

Those who contemplate ending their life do not always seek rescue — they seek recognition. To be seen, heard, and held without being fixed or judged.

When the Pope invites us to pray this month “for the prevention of suicide,” he is not simply urging medical or



(Unsplash/Alex Ivashenko)

psychological responses — though these are vital. He is calling us, as Church, to become a community of compassionate accompaniment, where no one feels invisible.

In the Gospels, Jesus often noticed those whom others overlooked: the bleeding woman who touched His cloak, the leper who stood at a distance, the tax collector hiding in a tree. He was never too busy to be interrupted by human pain.

To prevent suicide in the spirit of the Gospel is to see as Jesus saw, and to stay as He stayed - with tenderness and without judgment.

From Stigma to Solidarity

Suicide, even today, carries stigma — especially among believers. Families whisper, communities avoid, and those in pain remain silent. Yet the Church, enlightened by the Pope's pastoral vision, is called to a new response: solidarity instead of silence.

The Vatican's document *Samaritanus Bonus* (2020) reminds us that God's mercy reaches into the darkest human experiences. The Catechism of the Catholic Church itself teaches that we “should not despair of the eternal salvation” of those who die by suicide (CCC 2283). These are powerful affirmations that God's compassion is deeper than despair.

To move from stigma to solidarity means that our parishes, schools, and homes must become spaces where people can speak of their pain without fear of condemnation. Suicide prevention is not merely a professional discipline — it is an ecclesial mission.

Pastoral Thoughts for Suicide Prevention (Reflection by Fr Philip Chua, Registered & Licensed Counsellor, Certified Supervisor in Counselling, Board of Counsellors Malaysia)

“Despair, to those who have never faced it, may seem like a fleeting sadness or a part of life's natural struggles. But for those who live in its shadow each day, it can feel like a deep, unending darkness - an inner pit from which there seems to be no escape. In such moments, a person may believe that the only way to end the suffering is to end their

own life.

Yet ending one's life is never the answer. Our Lord Jesus Christ entered into our suffering - not to erase it instantly, but to redeem it. Through His Passion and Death on Calvary, He transformed pain into the path of salvation, showing us that no darkness is beyond the reach of His light. His Resurrection is the ultimate sign that hope always has the final word.

As Christians, we are called to be bearers of hope for those who struggle - to listen with compassion, to walk beside the broken-hearted, and to remind them that their lives have immeasurable worth in God's eyes. Even when they cannot see their own value, we must see it for them and reflect God's love through our care, presence, and prayer.



As the Jubilee Year draws to a close, let us not allow hope to fade. Instead, let us renew our commitment to be instruments of God's mercy — spreading the love, tenderness, and understanding that can lift others out of despair.

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted; He saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18)

Let us pray that every person who feels lost or unloved may encounter the healing embrace of Christ — through us.”

A Holistic Path to Healing

(Reflection by Dr Mary Bharathy, MBBS (Manipal), M. Psych. Med (Malaya) Psychiatrist)

“Suicide is rarely caused by a single factor - it arises from a complex interaction of

biological vulnerability, psychological distress, and social challenges. Prevention and care for those in distress require an integrated approach: timely mental health treatment, supportive relationships, and compassionate faith communities that respond without judgment.

When communities recognise mental illness as human suffering rooted in complex biological and psychological processes, stigma gives way to understanding.

Through compassionate presence, empathic listening, and the support of faith, we can encourage those in distress to reach out for professional help and rediscover their sense of dignity, meaning, and hope.”

Rediscovering the Beauty of Life

The Pope's intention ends with a plea that those tempted by suicide “be open to the beauty of life.” This is not sentimental optimism — it is a call to help people rediscover wonder. The sunrise, a shared meal, a friend's laughter, a quiet act of kindness - these are the small sacraments of daily grace that awaken hope.

Every life, no matter how scarred or struggling, bears the imprint of divine beauty. The Church's mission is to mirror that beauty back to those who have forgotten it, until they can see it again for themselves.

A Community of Hope

Suicide prevention, ultimately, is about cultivating a culture of hope.

It calls the Church to be a field hospital, in Pope Francis' words — a place of refuge where wounds are tended and stories are heard. It challenges us to transform our parishes into spaces of companionship and courage, where no one's pain is dismissed or denied.

To prevent suicide is to proclaim the Gospel in one of its most radical forms: by standing beside those who stand at the edge, by holding their hands in silence, and by whispering — through presence more than words — “You matter. You are loved. And your life is precious in God's eyes.”

Fr Fabian Dicom is the National Director of Caritas Malaysia

Faith between lectures

My journey with the CSSUKM in the late 1980s

Joseph Tek Choon Yee

They say university is where minds are stretched, faith is tested, and *nasi lemak* becomes a food group. For me, it was also where God became personal — not through visions or thunderbolts, but through the hum of ceiling fans and the strumming of guitars in a small lecture room in Bangi.

Room 506, FSKK: The chapel that wasn't
It began in Room 506 at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, where members of the Catholic Students Society (CSS) of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia met every Friday evening. We came armed, not with laptops, but with notebooks (the paper kind), guitars, and hearts in need of grace.

In the 1980s, "technology" meant a payphone, a fountain pen, and a calculator the size of a sandwich. There were no handphones, no laptops, no PowerPoint. "The cloud" was just something that threatened to rain on your field trip. To call home, we queued at hostel payphones clutching coins, praying the line wouldn't die before Mum answered, "Hello, siapani?" Yet somehow, without Wi-Fi or WhatsApp, everything still worked — perhaps because friendship in Christ never needed a signal bar to connect.

Room 506 wasn't much to look at — whitewashed walls, squeaky air-conditioning, fluorescent lights that buzzed like over-enthusiastic bees — but for many of us far from home, it was sanctuary. We were students from every corner of Malaysia, drawn not by ambition, but by a shared hunger for meaning. We prayed, sang, shared,



CSSUKM Carolling Practice at DEKTAR-UKM.

and sometimes laughed until tears rolled. Someone would offer a reflection, another a heartbreak; someone would whisper, "Let's pray over him," and you'd feel something stir — not emotion, but presence.

It was there I first understood what "Church" meant on campus. Not a building, not a Sunday obligation, but a living fellowship — fragile yet faithful, imperfect yet inspiring.

The fellowship that formed us

Our CSSUKM community was small — fewer than a hundred — but spirited. We didn't have microphones or budgets, but we had hearts that beat in rhythm with hope. There were the Sabahans on guitars, turning every hymn into a campfire anthem; sisters-in-Christ whose smiles outshone the fluorescent bulbs; and committee members who took meeting minutes as though chronicling the Acts of the Apostles.

Campus life then was disciplined

and structured. Intellectual pride often overshadowed spiritual thirst. Yet in that modest classroom, we found space to breathe, to be, and to believe. Through CSS, I discovered what textbooks never taught: faith grows best in friendship. When one stumbled, others helped him up. When one doubted, another lent her belief. We prayed for one another and learnt that grace is most real when shared.

Retreats, realisations and renewal

Once or twice a year, we escaped to Cameron Highlands, Batu Arang, Port Dickson, Cheras, or Penang for our beloved CSS retreats. We returned mosquito-bitten but soul-refreshed — praise and worship punctuated by burnt sausages and theological debates over Milo.

I still remember one retreat night vividly — the bonfire flickering, the smell of damp socks and mosquito coils, a guitar softly strumming *Be Not Afraid*. We were asked to share our deepest fear. When my turn came,

I said quietly, "That my life won't make a difference."

The facilitator, a man with more wisdom than sleep, leaned over and said, "Maybe it's not about making a difference, Joe. It's about being faithful where you are."

At that moment, I was struggling. I had missed the quota for medicine after my first year in Sains Hayat, edged out by a few cleverer classmates. So, I stayed on — and ended up in Botany. Yes, Botany! That word that made relatives nod politely and say, "Oh... plants, ah?" while mentally recalculating my prospects. My friends proudly declared Engineering, Law or Business; I mumbled "Botany" and could almost hear the unspoken *sayang seribu kali sayang*.

But I stayed. I chose green over greed, leaves over legal briefs. I fell in love with plants — the scent of rain on field trips, the wonder of photosynthesis, the quiet miracle of growth unseen. Perhaps faith is something like that too: silent, steady, transforming light into life.

By graduation, I had earned the department's first First-Class Honours. It wasn't the course I wanted, but it was the one God had written for me. Looking back, I see that God doesn't always open doors; sometimes He reroutes us to better fields.

That night by the bonfire planted a truth that never left me: faithfulness often precedes greatness. Years later, trudging through the plantations of Sabah — under rain, heat and deadlines — that same lesson echoed: stay faithful in the small things, and God will handle the rest.

Intercampus friendships and chaplaincy

There were intercampus gatherings too — CSSUKM in Bangi and CSSUPM in Serdang were practically neighbours, separated only by jungle and youthful energy. Friendships sprouted like morning glory; we exchanged ideas, laughter, and borrowed guitars.

Those meet-ups were more than socials — they were mini-Pentecosts, bursts of faith and fellowship reminding us that Catholic life didn't end at the campus gates. We learnt the universality of the Church long before we could spell ecumenism.

Guiding us were our chaplains and the Archdiocesan Campus Ministry team — shepherds who walked quietly beside us, never imposing, always inviting. Their presence was vital. Campus life is that strange in-between — too old to be spoon-fed, too young to be sure. Faith flickers under the pressure of deadlines, homesickness, and identity crises.

That's why chaplaincy mattered. They reminded us that faith isn't an extracurricular activity — it's a compass. They offered direction when we were lost, friendship when we were lonely, and patience when we were impossible. In a climate where sensitivities simmered beneath the surface, their quiet witness taught us to live our faith not with fear, but with respect, humility and joy.

Lessons in service

Our society was never about titles or applause. It was about servant leadership. We organised recollections and talks, assisted at Mass at the Church Of the Holy Family Kajang, visited orphanages, cooked for charity sales, and carolled during Advent. We even started hostel cell groups — half faith, half fellowship, and wholly dependent on potluck suppers.

We had no budget, but God provided — through love offerings or seniors who "happened" to appear with food just as our funds disappeared. Every task — setting up chairs, sweeping floors, preparing projectors — became prayer in motion. Those humble acts formed the bedrock of my leadership philosophy: show up, serve quietly, stay consistent.

Faith tested between assignments

Not every day was sunshine and song. Deadlines loomed, money ran thin, and faith sometimes felt like another subject to study. Some friends stretched their budget with Maggi mee kosong; others wrestled with doubts too deep for discussion.

Yet somehow, God always sent someone — a late-night rosary, a shoulder, a word, a smile. Our prayer circles were unpolished but powerful. No scripted litanies, just honest petitions:

"Lord, help us finish this thesis."

"Lord, help us trust Your timing."

"Lord, help us believe again."

Through those nights, I discovered something profoundly Catholic: the Church isn't a museum of saints but a fellowship of pilgrims walking each other home.

The road from Bangi to Sabah

After graduation, we went our separate ways — some into careers, others into marriages (a few that began right in CSS). But the spirit never left us.

When I joined parish life and the Basic Ecclesial Communities in Subang Jaya and later Sandakan, I realised that what we had practised as students was what the Church calls communion. Those experiences became



CSSUKM Morning Tea at Holy Family church in Kajang.

seeds for future service, preparing us to be salt and light in our workplaces and parishes.

At Montfort Youth Training Centre in Sabah, working with boys from difficult backgrounds, I recognised that same spark — the longing to belong, to be loved. And I often thought: if God could find me through a small student group in Bangi, surely He can find them too.

Faith as compass

Decades later, I see clearly what CSS truly gave me — a compass. It didn't hand me all the answers, but it taught me where to turn when I lost my way. It didn't guarantee success, but it shaped how I handled both success and setback.

Even today, when I pray, I still hear the echoes of those campus hymns, off-key but sincere: "Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?"

And I smile, because that song — sung decades ago in squeaky Room 506 — became the anthem of my life.

Between lectures and lifetimes

Faith isn't mastered in a semester. It's lived, tested, forgotten, and found again — a circle

of grace. For me, the Catholic Students Society was not just a chapter of youth; it was a seed of vocation.

God doesn't only speak in cathedrals or churches — sometimes He whispers between lectures, through laughter, friendship, and the quiet assurance that we are never alone.

Even now, as I enter my sixth decade, the friendships we forged in the 1980s remain beautifully alive. Technology makes staying in touch easier, but when we reunite, time melts away. Psychologists call it the social time-capsule effect; I call it grace.

We may now be scattered across Malaysia and beyond, but every reconnection feels like coming home. Some of our dear friends have gone ahead to the Lord, yet their laughter and love still echo in our hearts.

I miss my CSSUKM family deeply and thank God each day for the tapestry of faith He wove through us — one meeting, one song, one prayer at a time.

May we continue to walk faithfully, even between lectures, guided by the same God who turned a simple student society into a lifelong mission of love.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”.

Throughout this Jubilee year, we are constantly reminded that “Hope does not disappoint”, yet the world around us is shaking. The social upheaval is enormous as well. Threats to the economy abound. Effects of global climate change accelerating. Who can be trusted in the mass media? It is hard to know what to believe and who to believe. And attacks on the Christian faith are stronger than ever. It says in Psalm 11:3, “When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?” If our foundations are in this world, we will be utterly shaken. If our foundation is faith in the Lord, we will be kept safe and secure. Hebrews 11:1 says – “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Christian faith can be seen as confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. God is an unseen God. However, true faith, saving faith, goes beyond what I see to commune with the unseen God. God is Spirit. Faith is the groundwork or confidence for everything you are hoping for. Faith and hope go together; and the same things that are the object of our hope are the object of our



PERCEPTIVITY

Sr Margarete
Sta Maria FdCC

faith. It is a firm persuasion and expectation that God will perform all that He has promised to us in Christ. Now hope needs faith and faith needs hope to be operative. From the word hope we also get the word trust and these two words are interchangeable in the New Testament. Hope is also to expect or confide, to

trust.

Faith is the expectation of what God has promised the believer in Christ and hope presupposes it.

These explanations should give us a better understanding of the meaning of the word faith and how our lives can be transformed on a daily basis if we are willing to take on the challenge of the perpetual journey of faith and hope in the only true God of faith. Faith embraces the idea that there is something working in our lives that is bigger than us and stronger than us. Faith requires that we accept something that we cannot see or touch, yet it touches us in every aspect of our lives and “sees” everything that we do. Faith requires that we believe, rather than understand; that we accept what happens, rather than futilely fighting; that we trust, rather than demand; and, that we openly accept God in our lives, rather

Assurance of faith

than stubbornly rejecting His help. Even with Jesus, I must believe the unseen. If I am to have a relationship with God, I must go beyond physical sight and choose to believe the unseen. “God is Spirit and they who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Faith is the foundation for your hope. Your hope in God and your conviction in the unseen is directly correlated to your faith. If you find that your hope is weak, then your faith is weak. If you find that your conviction wavers, then your faith is shallow.

Faith is what gets us through life’s difficulties. Our endurance will come only by the strengthening of our faith. Even if we have a strong faith, we need to add more to our faith, making it stronger. God still grants gifts of faith today. We need to pray that God will gift the lost with eyes of faith to see the truth and understand. Faith is a gift, faith is a choice, but faith is also a discipline, a life style and not just for one day a week. Not just when you feel like it. But always. Whether circumstances are good or bad, keep on trusting Him, no matter what. Many are confronted with harsh realities in their everyday life. Think of those living in war zones. Where do their resilience and perseverance in seemingly impossible situations come from? It is trust in God that enables people of faith to nurture a hope. Such an

astonishing gesture of hope makes faith become more real. It is a firm trust in what is, as yet, invisible and even uncertain. Can we hold on to such a hope?

Christ came to bring in a better hope. Christ came to stir our hearts into knowing that we have hope in God and with God. Representing Christ correctly in this dispensation is letting people know that there is something better and more glorious for them in God. It is when we begin to do this that we begin to lay the right foundation for faith to come alive in people. The Word of God must be the lens with which we see life. It must be the anchor that holds us stayed and steady. It must be the motivation that keeps us going when all else are saying to put an end.

Ephesians 2:8–9 tells us that, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast.” Thus, faith can express trust in God by smiling with great humility. In times of loss, it will be grief but not without hope. (1 Thess: 4:13) Hope can fit any situation because it relies on the goodness and faithfulness of God.

Sr Margarete Sta Maria FdCC is the Director of the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute

BE OUR GUEST

Showing up even when it hurts

By Elvina Fernandez



Very recently, I attended a Rosary prayer session in our BEC, and something that happened during fellowship caught me off guard. It stirred a deep, reflective thought on what it truly means to be a Catholic community that cares. Someone who had watched me grow up in our parish said, “You invited only my daughter to your wedding, while your uncle invited me, so I brought my whole family to your cousin’s wedding. That’s why I didn’t come to yours.”

Those words pierced my heart like a dagger. The judgment behind them reduced me to a social misstep, measured against a hierarchy of invitations I didn’t even know existed at 23. My wedding wasn’t a grand affair planned by my parents, it was something I had to organise on my own, with limited support and a heavy heart. I remain grateful for my godmother, aunty, and uncles who stepped in to help.

Unlike my cousin’s wedding, lovingly arranged by my uncle, I faced it alone. My parents were separated, and I had to navigate the logistics, the guest list, and the ceremony without their support. As a young adult, I didn’t understand the unspoken “rules” of invitations or how deeply people read into those choices.

That night, I sat with the sting of those words. I wondered if I should avoid such gatherings in the future, whether it was worth exposing myself to more questions about my family background, more assumptions, more pain. But in that quiet moment, I turned to God. With a silent, aching prayer, I asked for strength — not to retreat, but to keep going. To continue showing up. To trust that God sees the heart, even when others don’t.

A different kind of faith journey

My journey in faith has never followed

the expected path. I was around nine or ten when my father walked away from the Catholic Church. That moment marked the beginning of a quiet, personal struggle to stay on, to keep showing up.

At my Confirmation, I remember scanning the pews, hoping to see him. He wasn’t there. The absence was deafening as I walked up to receive the sacrament at seventeen.

Those moments shaped me. They taught me that faith isn’t always nurtured in ideal conditions. Some of us grow in the cracks, in silence, in solitude. And yet, we show up, we try, we pray, we serve, and we strive to belong, even when we must do it alone.

I am deeply grateful to my grandparents, uncles, aunt, and godmother, whose quiet strength and unwavering devotion helped keep me anchored in faith. Their example, their prayers, and their presence reminded me that even when family feels fractured, love and faith can still hold us together.

And perhaps, through that faithfulness, healing has begun. My sister, who had only been baptised before following my father to other churches as a child, returned two years ago to complete her sacraments through RCIA. My parents, after many years away, are now back in our parish.

What makes a community truly welcoming?

This experience has made me reflect deeply on what it means to be a welcoming community. Is it about who gets invited to what? Or is it about understanding the stories behind each face in the pews?

A truly welcoming community must go beyond appearances and assumptions.

It must be rooted in compassion, not convention. Here’s what that could look like:

Listen before judging. Ask questions with kindness. Assume good intentions. Not everyone has the same resources, support, or understanding of social norms.

Recognise different journeys. Some come from broken homes. Some walk alone. Some are rebuilding faith after trauma. Our paths may be unconventional, but they are no less sacred.

Offer grace. Especially when someone is doing their best with limited support. Grace is the heartbeat of Christian community.

Build bridges, not walls. Inclusion should never depend on tradition or protocol. We must make space for those who don’t fit the mould.

The power of compassion over convention

Communities thrive, not because everyone follows the same rules, but because they make space for those who don’t.

My story isn’t unique. Many among us walk into church carrying invisible burdens, estranged from family, battling mental health struggles, or simply trying to belong. Yet we often forget this. We measure people by their attendance, their invitations, their adherence to social expectations.

We forget that behind every face is a story. Behind every silence is a wound. Behind every absence is a reason.

So, the next time we gather, whether for prayer, celebration, or fellowship, let us remember that the most sacred thing we can offer isn’t a Rosary or a ritual, but a simple act of compassion: a smile, a

kind word, a seat at the table.

A Church that heals

Perhaps such comments come from an innocent place, a longing to understand, or a sense of being left out. But maybe we can be more loving in the way we ask. Instead of assuming, we could sit down and listen, to truly know what someone is going through. Compassion begins not with correction, but with connection.

As Fr Michel Dass, assistant priest of the Church of St Anthony said in his Holy Hour homily on the first Friday of October, “To be able to listen, we must first see.”

He reminded us that if we take time to truly observe one another, we will know how and what to ask, so that our listening becomes an act of love, not judgment. “Too often,” he said, “judgment drives the broken away from the Church. Let us be a Church that listens. By our compassion, we can draw them home and show them the love of Christ. We pray for the grace to be a people who pause to listen and a community that heals.”

The takeaway is simple yet profound: to be the ear that hears, the heart that welcomes, and the channel of Christ’s compassion.

The Church is meant to be a place of healing — a refuge, a home. But it can only be that if we choose to see each other fully, not just as parish members, but as human beings with complex lives and tender hearts.

Let us be the kind of community that welcomes without condition, forgives without hesitation, and loves without limits. Because in the end, it’s not about who was invited to a wedding — it’s about who felt seen, heard, and loved.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

The perfect posture for prayer

In her autobiography *The Long Loneliness*, Dorothy Day shares how she once prayed at a low time in her life.

Dorothy Day, as you know, grew up without faith. An intellectual, moving in Marxist and anti-church circles, she entered her twenties convinced that if anyone had the courage to look life square in the eye, she or he would not believe in God. She had support in that. The love of her life at the time was a man who shared her views. She moved in with him and bore his child outside of marriage. The birth of this child, a daughter, changed her in ways she had not foreseen. Holding her infant daughter, she was so overcome with awe and gratitude that she prayed spontaneously: "For so much joy, I need to thank someone!" Her faith was born from that, from the purest spring of all, gratitude.

She took some instructions, was baptised, and became a Catholic. The father of her child, upset by the change in her, warned that if she had their child baptised, he would leave her. Her daughter was baptised and he did leave her. Many of her friends reacted similarly. So, even though now she was buoyed up by her newfound faith, she found herself very much alone, without most of her former friends and

her usual support systems, a single mother, living on her own, lacking money, and without any vision of what she should do.

She floundered like this for a time, feeling ever more alone and unsure of herself. One day she decided she needed to address this. She left her young daughter in the care of friends and took a train to Washington, DC where she spent some hours praying at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Her prayer that day was one of complete helplessness. In essence, this was her prayer to God: "I've given up a lot for You, and You haven't done anything for me! I'm lost, alone, unsure of what to do, and running out of energy and patience. I need help – need it now, not in some distant future! Help me! Help me now! I can't go on like this!"

When she got back to New York, a man was waiting to see her. He told her he had heard about her, had an idea, and he needed her help. He then explained to her the concept of "The Catholic Worker." The man's name was Peter Maurin and the rest is history. From that moment on, she had a vision for the rest of her life.

Not everyone gets so quick and clear an answer in prayer, although more people than you would suspect have similar

stories. Martin Luther King, for instance, shares how he once prayed at a low point in his life:

"One night towards the end of January, I settled into bed late, after a strenuous day. Coretta had already fallen asleep and just as I was about to doze off, the telephone rang. An angry voice said, 'Listen, nigger, we've taken all we want from you, before next week, you'll be sorry you ever came to Montgomery.' I hung up, but I couldn't sleep. It seemed that all of my fears had come down on me at once. I had reached the saturation point.

I got out of bed and began to walk the floor. Finally, I went to the kitchen and heated a pot of coffee. I was ready to give up. With my cup of coffee sitting untouched before me I tried to think of a way to move out of the picture without appearing a coward. In this state of exhaustion, when my courage had all but gone, I decided to take my problem to God. With my head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud. The words I spoke to God that midnight are still vivid in my memory:

'I am here, taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and

if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left.

I've come to the point where I can't face it alone.' At that moment I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced Him before." (MLK, *Stride Towards Freedom*)

Christina Crawford, the author of *Mommy Dearest*, a memoir of what it was like growing up in Hollywood as the daughter of a famous movie star, shares how, at a certain point in her life, she felt hopelessly and completely lost; but then adds: Lost is a place too!

She's right. And lost is a place from where we are especially invited to pray. When we hurt all over, feel hopeless and helpless, and are on our knees because we are too weak to stand, we're in the perfect posture for prayer. Lost is a place for prayer!

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

It's that time of the year when parishes are gearing towards their parish assemblies and planning for the coming year. Planning the pastoral assembly can be a tricky task indeed. One 'naughty' way is to tightly manoeuvre the proceedings so that they feed into a certain desired outcome. What is ideal is to let it go 'free and easy' and allow the Spirit to work in and through the participants. Yet, there is a need for some structure. Of course it is not as if a parish is a blank canvas to splash colours on – parishes are always a work-in-progress, with a history behind them. In pastoral planning we need to look back together at the recent past to see if we did indeed achieve all that we had hoped to in the preceding year. Do we carry on in the same direction or are we being led toward new directions? More often than not, not everything would have been achieved as expected and there is still some more to be done. Thus we might have to continue to build on our goals so as to achieve the desired state – after all, Rome wasn't built in a day! We cannot just harp on the past but must look beyond with hope to where God is leading us towards.



As I was Contemplating

FR GERARD THERAVIAM

In this era of Synodality, pastoral planning is not about the hopes and desires of the parish priest or a few leaders, but one hopes that a good number of people might come together to listen to each other as to what God might be saying through their experiences. It is not just about putting their minds together but also their hearts – the danger of listening just to our minds is that we want to project our personal wants and desires, but when one involves the heart, God speaks to us of new possibilities and dreams that we can work on together. Sometimes, what a single person might say in a group catches fire and there is a synergy of ideas that build on each other. I might see that what I wanted to say needs to change as the Spirit speaks through the other and I am inclined to see something new, instead of hanging on to my earlier ideas. The Holy Spirit works overtime, as it were, and there is excitement as the group engages on a common goal.

Conversations in the Spirit (or Spiritual Conversations)

Conversation in the Spirit is a method of communal discernment that aims to help a group of people listen to the Holy Spirit through conversations with one another. This is a tool that has come to the forefront in the last couple of years as a result of the Synod on Synodality convened by Pope Francis. The whole idea of synodality, of walking together requires an openness to what is being said by everyone, allowing all

Ready, Steady, ~~Go~~ LISTEN!

The conversation in the Spirit

A dynamic of discernment in the synodal Church



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voices to be heard. Careful and prayerful listening to what was being said by one's companions with intermittent periods of silence, allow us an opportunity to digest and reflect and allow God to work in us.

Thus Conversations in the Spirit begin with silence to help us focus and prepare to listen to each another attentively. Then begins a first round of speaking in turn, perhaps in response to a question, sharing thoughts and feelings, with everyone else listening attentively with no interruptions, inter-spaced with silence in between each person to allow what was said to truly sink in. There is a time limit for each to talk so that no single

person monopolises the process.

A second round follows where individuals share reflectively what stood out to them from what the others shared. A consensus of a common direction the Spirit is inviting the group to might slowly emerge but we do not discuss at this stage – we continue to listen respectfully.

The third round is focussed on possible action – on the actual steps the individual or the group is being led to take. All this is done in a spirit of prayer with a concluding prayer helping the group to come to a close. This in a parish assembly is brought together to see what other groups have experienced to discern further.

Speaking in turn like this with silences in between ensures that every voice is heard – no one is superior; everyone must be heard. It allows those who are generally quiet to have their views heard and appreciated. It also means that those who have the tendency to talk too much will have to learn to talk less and listen more, realising that no-one has the monopoly of truth. The Spirit might be whispering to us, in the voice of the quiet ones, rather than in the loudest bluster.

The results of various groups are then brought together to analyse and discern further in a bigger setting to see where God might be leading the parish community. This part of the process needs minds that can see the 'big picture' and put together the findings of everyone in a cohesive whole, discerning the common directions, while also respecting the dissonant voices for further deliberation at another time.

Moving On in the Spirit

This new style of pastoral assemblies that we have been experiencing in the Archdiocese the past several years is a far cry of the old AGM style where most were passive, if they came at all, and the biggest concern and noisiest part was when the parish accounts were discussed. In this new reflective, contemplative mode, we are seeking to discover as a community, people and priests together, where God is calling His people towards. It is about truly becoming the Body of Christ, where each is heard and appreciated, recognising that the Spirit given to us at baptism is at work in each person.

May we be led by the Spirit as we walk together in HOPE in our communities.

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

Little Catholics' Corner

Dear children,

All Souls' Day

The 1st and 2nd of November are two special feast days in the Church.

We celebrate all the people who followed God on earth and are now in Heaven.

Today, November 2nd, is the feast of All Souls. It is a special day when we remember all the people who are still in Purgatory.

While we are alive, we try to love God and do what He asks so that when we die, we can go to Heaven to be with Him.

We can also help the souls in Purgatory. They are suffering because they have to make up for the sins they did when they were on earth.

They can't go to Heaven until their souls are clean. We can help them by offering prayers and sacrifices to God for them.

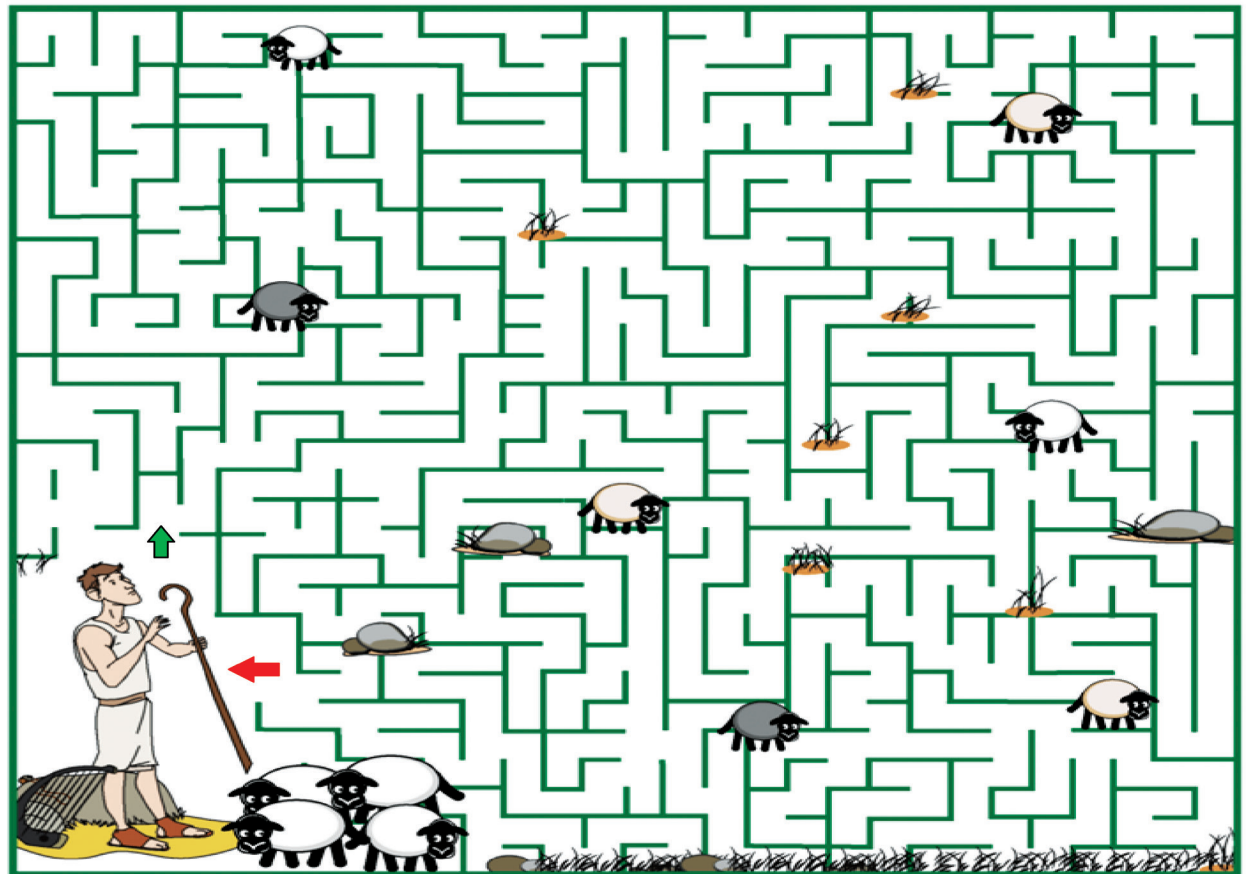
The Saints in Heaven loved and served God and made up for their sins.

We can pray to them and they can pray to God for us, to help us get to Heaven too!

Love
Aunty Eliz

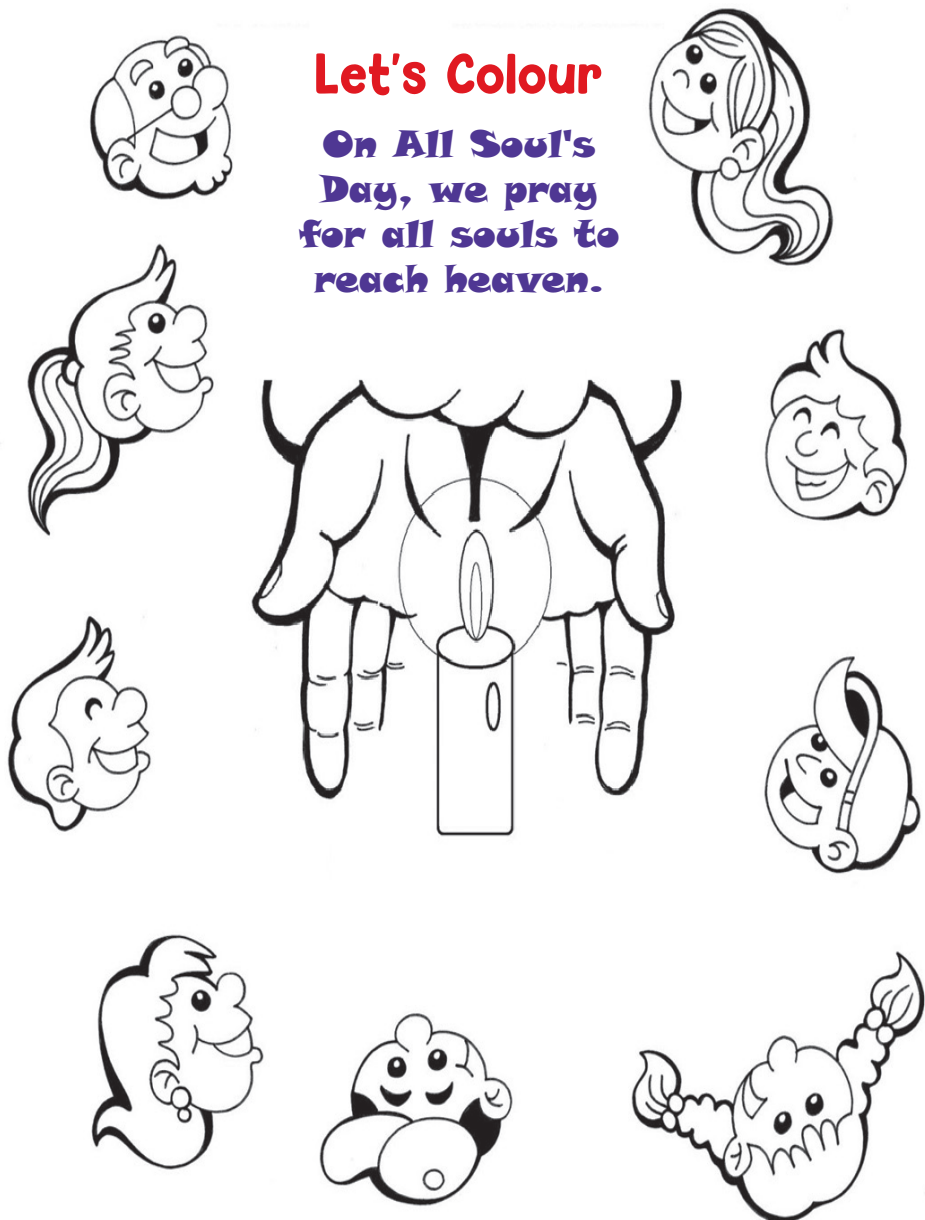


SEVEN SHEEP HAVE WANDERED AWAY FROM THE FLOCK. HELP DAVID FIND ALL OF THEM AND RETURN THEM TO THE FLOCK. YOU MAY HAVE TO TAKE MORE THAN ONE PATH TO COLLECT ALL OF THE SHEEP.



Let's Colour

On All Soul's Day, we pray for all souls to reach heaven.



THE BEATITUDES PUZZLE

Match the first and second parts of each of the beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) and then use the letters in the same order to fill in the blanks at the end.

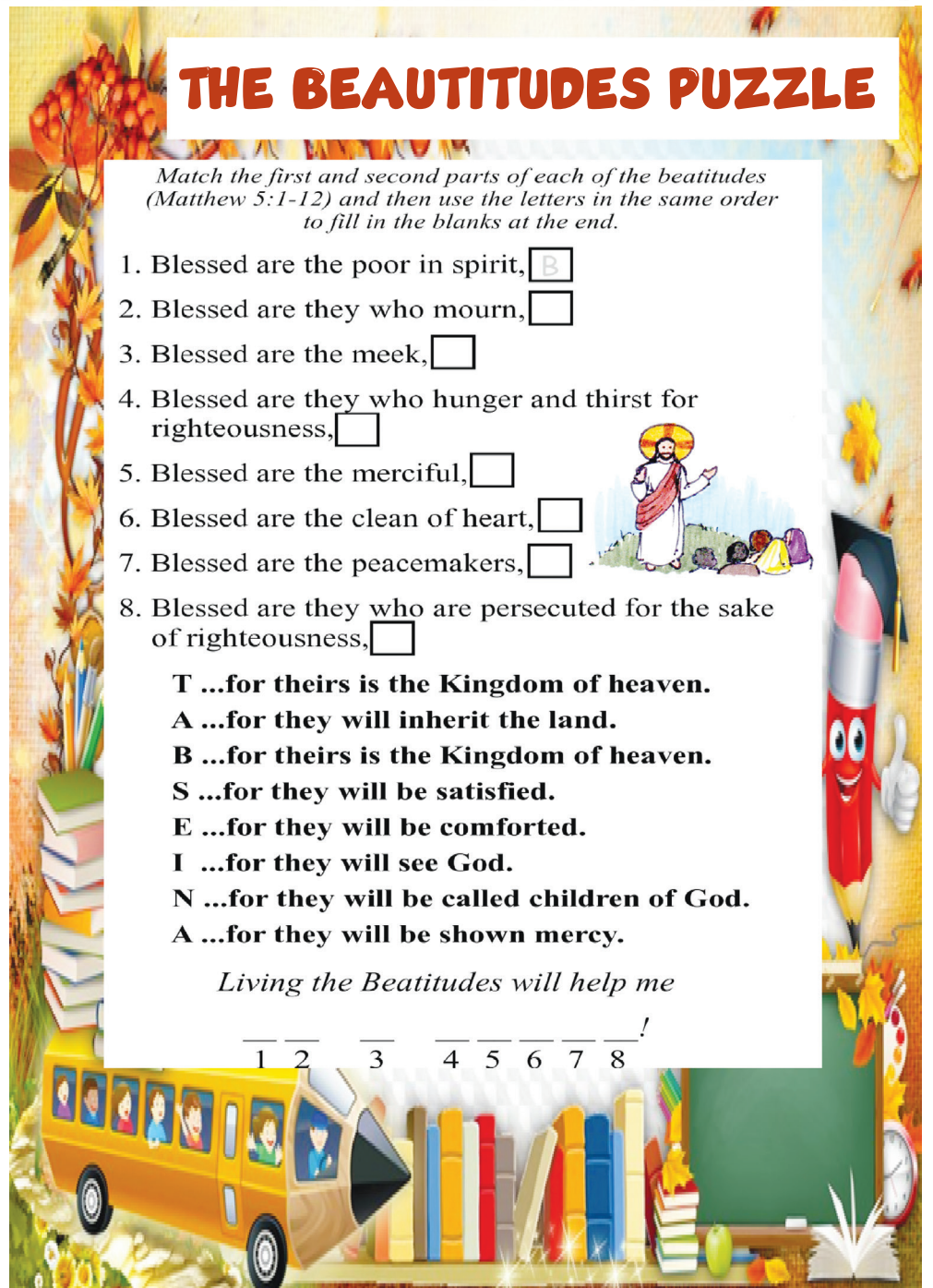
1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, B
2. Blessed are they who mourn,
3. Blessed are the meek,
4. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
5. Blessed are the merciful,
6. Blessed are the clean of heart,
7. Blessed are the peacemakers,
8. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,



- T ...for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
- A ...for they will inherit the land.
- B ...for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
- S ...for they will be satisfied.
- E ...for they will be comforted.
- I ...for they will see God.
- N ...for they will be called children of God.
- A ...for they will be shown mercy.

Living the Beatitudes will help me

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 !





Hebrew and Arabic-speaking Catholic youth gather to celebrate hope and unity

DEIR RAFAT, Israel: Nearly two hundred young people from across Israel, from Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Nazareth, and Galilee gathered for the Youth Festival organized by the St James Vicariate for Hebrew-Speaking Catholics in cooperation with the Youth Ministry Team of the Galilee on October 18.

Hebrew- and Arabic-speaking participants came together for a full day of prayer, music, workshops, and encounter, united by their shared love for Jesus Christ.

The festival opened with a prayer and greeting led by Fr Piotr Zelazko, Patriarchal Vicar for the St James Vicariate for Hebrew-Speaking Catholics, together with Fr Ramez Twal, Chaplain of the Youth in Galilee.

Their words of blessing invited the youth to start the day with open hearts, united in faith, joy, and the desire to grow together as one Church.

The monastery courtyard was transformed into a joyful sea of color. Young people painted flowerpots with messages of peace, sang songs of praise, created bracelets of hope, and wrote their personal prayers on a "Wall of Sentences of Hope."

Amid the sound of guitars and laughter, there was also silence: moments of deep reflection, confession, and worship.

"Because of Him, we remain," one young leader said. "We are living in difficult times, but our desire is to look for another way, the way of Jesus."

A Cardinal's Message of Courage and Faith

The highlight of the day was the arrival of Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Bishop Rafic Nahra, Patriarchal Vicar for Israel, who joined the youth in the courtyard under a bright autumn sky, hearing confessions and celebrating Holy Mass.

In his homily, the Cardinal spoke with warmth and realism about what it means to be believers in the Holy Land today.

"Christian faith is not merely a religion," the Cardinal said. "It is a way of life, a way of being life. It is not only what we do, but how we do it, how we express what we have in our hearts."

He praised the young people's courage for organizing such a meeting "when everything was saying the opposite," recalling that the decision to hold the festival was

taken during a time of deep discouragement.

"Now everyone is talking about peace and reconciliation," he added, "but you already believed that something new could begin. I want to express my appreciation for your courage."

The Cardinal encouraged the youth not to listen to the voices of doubt or division, but to the voice of Jesus, who prays "that they may all be one."

"Love each other—not despite your differences, but because of them," he said. "If we were all the same, we would be so boring and here in the Holy Land, we are never bored!"

A Festival of Hope in Difficult Times

Throughout the day, groups moved between creative stations, shared meals, and moments of music and worship.

Conversations in Hebrew, Arabic, and English blended naturally. The festival embodied what the Church in the Holy Land so often strives for: communion beyond language, background, or community lines.

Fr Piotr Zelazko, Patriarchal Vicar for the St James Vicariate for Hebrew-Speaking Catholics, said that "it might be the only place in the world where the Church prays in Hebrew and in Arabic together."

"We will try to continue to spread the message of unity to the entire Holy Land," added the Vicar.

"We cannot keep love for ourselves," Cardinal Pizzaballa reminded the youth. "Love, when kept, becomes possession and dies. Love flourishes when it becomes donation. We are happy not because things are easy, but because we can give what we have received. Something so great that the power of evil cannot prevail against it: Jesus Christ."

As evening fell, the youth gathered again for adoration and worship. The courtyard glowed with lights, and the sound of hundreds of voices singing together rose into the night.

Fr Benedetto Di Bitonto and his fellow musicians led the worship concert. A moving moment in which voices rose together in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, echoing the unity and joy that had filled the entire day.

The Cardinal's words summed up the spirit of the day. "Maybe you do not understand it now, but these are the small signs we need. Here, in this land often known for division and exclusion, there is still a small remnant able to make the difference."



A priest offers a personal blessing during the Youth Festival. (Vatican News)



A nun leads a multilingual workshop, symbolising the communion of Hebrew- and Arabic Catholic youth in the Church of the Holy Land. (Vatican News)

A Small Remnant, a Great Mission

The Youth Festival of Deir Rafat was not only an event but also a testimony: that the young Church in Israel, small, diverse, and multilingual, remains united, alive, and creative.

With courage, music, and faith, these two hundred young people showed that unity is possible, that joy is stronger than fear, and that the Gospel continues to inspire hearts

to hope.

"We are not here by chance," the Cardinal said earlier. "We are here out of providence. Jesus wants us, His Church, His community. To belong to Him means to stay, to keep the channel open to Him."

In Deir Rafat, that channel was wide open, and through it flowed the quiet strength of a faith that will not give up. **Monika Faes, Vatican News**

Faith in colour: How one young artist is painting heaven on earth

When most people walk into a church hall, they might notice the chairs neatly arranged or the cross at the front. But for 23-year-old artist Melanie Pang, the walls themselves speak — waiting to tell a story of faith through art.

Back in April 2022, Melanie, then just 20 and a graduate of Dasein Arts Academy in Kuala Lumpur, transformed the plain wall of MEP Hall at the Church of St Philip, Segamat, Johor into a breathtaking masterpiece — a mural of The Last Supper. What began as a blank canvas became a vivid portrayal of Christ's final meal with His disciples, a scene that continues to draw admiration for its depth, emotion, and intricate detail.



Unlike her first project, which she completed in 20 days, this new mural took over a month of patient, prayerful work. Each day, Melanie spent hours meditating on the Scripture's imagery — the emerald rainbow encircling the throne, the elders casting down their crowns, and the living creatures crying out, "Holy, holy, holy." From that divine vision, she translated faith into colour, form, and light. The mural was completed on October 15.

"It was my way of honouring God through the gift He gave me," Melanie shared. "Each brushstroke felt like a prayer."

That spirit of prayer and purpose has brought Melanie back to the same hall once again — this time, with an even greater challenge. Her new mural, inspired by Revelation, Chapter 4, seeks to capture the awe and majesty of heaven's throne room — a vision filled with light, worship, and divine mystery.

Parishioners passing through MEP Hall often paused to watch her at work. For many, it wasn't merely art in progress — it was faith taking shape before their eyes. One parishioner described it as "a reminder that heaven is closer than we think — sometimes, even painted on our walls."

Through her murals, Melanie has turned her talent into a ministry. Her art does more than decorate — it invites reflection, inspires prayer, and deepens the sense of sacredness within the community.

Melanie hopes her journey will inspire other young people to see their gifts — whether artistic, musical, or otherwise — as ways to serve God. "You don't have to be a preacher to share your faith," she says with a smile. "Sometimes, you just need a paintbrush."



MEP FATHERS' HALL



'Hello! I'm a Catholic Priest!'

How one coffee shop ministry is attracting student seekers

VIRGINIA: "Hello! I'm a Catholic Priest!" reads the cheerful sign taped to the back of the laptop of Fr Richard Miserendino, chaplain of the University of Mary Washington's Catholic Campus Ministry and a priest of the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia.

The notice invites anyone at the campus coffee shop in Fredericksburg to stop by — ask a question, chat, or just say hello.

Everyone's heard of faith sharing, though many Catholics find it intimidating. So, is this café evangelism?

Evangelisation is part of every priest's mission, but Fr Rich — as he's affectionately known — says his twice-weekly sessions at a small patio table aren't a pulpit substitute. "Sometimes," he says, "it's just to listen."

On a crisp fall afternoon, he greeted dozens of students. Some stopped to talk — a former Marine adjusting to civilian life, a student mourning a grandparent, another carrying flowers for his girlfriend. Different people, different stories — but each found comfort in conversation with the friendly priest.

"Sometimes, they're theological. Sometimes, they're matters of the heart," Fr Miserendino told OSV News. "Sometimes people are just lonely, and they just want



Fr Richard Miserendino, Catholic campus ministry chaplain at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Va., pictured in a Oct 16, 2025, photo, poses while waiting to talk with students outside the campus coffee shop. (OSV News photo/Mary Shaffrey, Diocese of Arlington)

to talk."

The Catholic Campus Ministry at UMW includes the St John Bosco Centre for Masses and gatherings and the nearby St Dominic Savio House for OCIA classes and Bible studies. Still, attracting busy students isn't easy.

"In the cell phone age, with earbuds in, they walk right past even big signs saying 'Catholic Campus Ministry,'" he said.

questions. It's been edifying. This generation isn't adversarial — they're open and curious."

Not every chat leads to conversion, he admitted. "But it starts conversations. Relationships take time — you've got to be present."

Contrary to stereotypes of campus life, politics rarely arise. "Nobody's tried to corner me on hot topics," he said. "They want to talk about human things."

Sometimes discussions last minutes; others, hours. "The longest was two-and-a-half hours — about God and gender and everything in between," he recalled. Some have since joined Mass or begun OCIA classes.

"One of the things our culture is starved for is community," Fr Miserendino said. "I evangelise through ordinary conversation. Just being present invites people on their own terms."

He hopes others — priests and laypeople alike — will try similar outreach. "You'll find people more curious than you expect," he said. "If you're patient and teach with understanding, it bears great fruit."

"It's not a special gift," Fr Miserendino concluded. "We just have to bring faith to where the people are. You can do it too." OSV News

Reflecting on Matthew 4:19 — "I'll make you fishers of men" — he realised, "If I'm fishing in one spot and there's no fish, I should move the boat."

He began working outdoors about a year ago. "I can do emails out here as easily as in the office," he said with a grin.

Despite early warnings that students might be hostile, the response surprised him. "People are coming up and asking

Pope remembers late Cardinal Menichelli as “dear brother”

VATICAN: After learning of the death of Cardinal Edoardo Menichelli, Archbishop Emeritus of Ancona-Osimo, Italy, who passed away on October 20, Pope Leo XIV sent a telegram of condolence to Archbishop Angelo Spina of the Archdiocese of Ancona-Osimo, where the late cardinal had served from 2004 to 2017.



The Pope expressed his heartfelt condolences for the loss that has impacted the “ecclesial community, as well as that of Chieti-Vasto, who had him as a zealous pastor, and also the Archdiocese of Camerino-San Severino Marche, where he served as a devoted priest.”

Remembering Cardinal

Menichelli, Pope Leo described him as a “dear brother who served the Church and the Holy See with dedication.” He offered up prayers to God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to welcome the cardinal “into the heavenly Jerusalem.”

Closing the message, the Pope imparted his Apostolic Blessing to Cardinal Menichelli’s family, those who cared for him, and everyone who will attend the funeral.

Who was Cardinal Menichelli?

Born in San Severino Marche, Italy, in 1939, Menichelli was ordained a priest on July 3 1965. He was called to Rome in 1968, serving as an official at the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura until 1991. From 1992-1994, he worked in the secretariat of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches.

In 1994, he received his episcopal ordination and was appointed to the Archdiocese of Chieti-Vasto. He was then assigned to the Archdiocese of Ancona-Osimo in 2004. Pope Francis created him a cardinal in the consistory of Feb 15, 2015 with the titular Church of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary at Tor Fiorenza.

From July 14, 2017, Cardinal Menichelli was the Archbishop Emeritus of Ancona-Osimo.

Vatican News

Pakistan Church leaders, activists decry journalist killings

SANGHAR: Church leaders and rights activists have condemned a surge in violence against media workers in Pakistan’s southern Sindh province after the killing of reporter Tufail Rind, *pic*, the third journalist murdered in as many months.

Rind, 36, general secretary of a local press club, was shot dead last month while taking his eight-year-old niece to school in Ghotki district. The girl sustained minor injuries but died of shock in the hospital, police said.

Rind’s death follows the September 28 killing of Imtiaz Mir, ambushed by gunmen in Karachi, and the August murder of Khawar Hussain of Dawn News, found shot dead in his car in Sanghar.

Fr Shahzad Arshad, director of the National Commission for Justice and Peace in Karachi, said the serial attacks show “journalists face persecution similar to those who stand up for truth and justice in faith contexts”.

Journalists risk their lives when exposing corruption and injustice. The state should implement policies to protect them, he said.

The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists said Pakistan “has



become a slaughterhouse for journalists,” noting 13 media persons have been killed in Sindh over the past six years, with no convictions.

Fazil Jamili, president of the Karachi Press Club, said the killings have deepened fears among journalists already constrained by strict online information laws.

In 2024, the Pakistan Press Foundation recorded 162 attacks on journalists, while the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said six were killed nationwide last year.

Reporters Without Borders ranks Pakistan 152nd on its 2024 World Press Freedom Index for persistent threats, censorship, and impunity in attacks on media workers. ucanews.com

MEMORIAM

For enquiries, please contact:
Email: memoriam@herald.com.my
Tel: 03-2026 8291

In Loving Memory of
Lucy Elizabeth Isabella Yoong
Beloved wife of the late Emile Victor Lessler



Departed: 5.11.2023

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever.”

Lovingly remembered by children - Julie, Rita, Bunny, Linda, Hazel, Gerard, Kelly, Selena, their spouses, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



1st Anniversary
In Loving Memory of
Sawariamah Rayappan @ Mary Paul Raju
(wife of the Late Paul Thanaraju Devasahayan)
9th December 1955 – 7th November 2024

In Sweet Remembrance

In sweet remembrance of this day, A year ago, you slipped away. For the love you gave and all you did, Our gratitude will never be hid.

Always in our thoughts, forever in our lives.

The memorial mass will be on **Friday, November 7th, 2025, at 1 pm** at the **Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam.** Deeply missed and fondly remembered by Children, Sons-in-Law, Daughter-in-Law, grandchildren, and loved ones.

In Loving Memory Of
“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want” - Psalm 23:1
MAY 2, 1953 OCT 22, 1995 30 YEARS ANNIVERSARY
JUN 8, 1973 SEP 19, 2025 40 DAYS MEMORIAL

Pademhanaban V Menon Edwin Pademhanaban

TILL WE MEET ON HEAVEN'S SHORE
GOD CALLED YOU HOME TO REST ABOVE,
IN HIS ETERNAL LIGHT AND LOVE.
WE TRUST WE'LL MEET IN HEAVEN AGAIN.
TILL THAT DAY, IN FAITH WE STAY,
GUIDED BY LOVE THAT WILL NOT FADE AWAY

“THEIR ABSENCE IS A SILENT GRIEF;
THEIR LIFE A BEAUTIFUL MEMORY”
Always loved and remembered by those who knew and loved them



JENNY CHEW LOKE LOY
Fifth Anniversary
Forever Missed

Called home to the Lord on 4 November 2020

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” Ps 23:1

May the Lord grant you eternal rest and His perpetual light shine on you

We miss you dearly, mum/grandma: Chuan Soon, Sock Kheng, Siew Hua, Chuan Lee, Jenniefer, Beatrix, Joshua, Christopher, Danelle.



10th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of
Alexis Diana Lopez
1 July 1958 - 5 November 2015

“Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.” Prov 31:28

Ten years have passed since you were called to your eternal reward.

You are missed daily by your beloved husband, Allen, your children, Robert, Tanya and Tricia, their spouses, Lauren, Vijayan and Patrick, and your 8 grandchildren, Noah Allen, Nikhil, Lucy, Lara Alexis, Leo, Kolbe, Rhea and Miriam Diana.

A memorial Mass will be offered on Saturday, 8 November 2025 at 5.30pm at the Chapel of Kristus Aman, TTDI.

40th Day Memorial
In Loving Memory of
DAVID ANAND PILLAI



From The Lord: 19-5-1972
To The Lord: 25-9-2025

A Much Loved Husband and Father

The day that God called your name
It broke our hearts in two
But Heaven needed an Angel
And the one He picked was you
We just wish He could have waited
And let you stay with us
But you have left memories in our hearts
And that's where they'll always be
We just wish we could rewind the clock
Or make it turn real slow
We could have hugged you one more time
Before you had to go
No matter how much time will pass
We'll miss you everyday
Keep shining bright in Heaven
So you can light our way.

Missing You Tremendously, Shevonne, Tristen & Ashten.

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Christopher Kushi

BUKIT MERTAJAM: The Minor Basilica of St Anne was filled with gratitude and joy on October 21 as the faithful gathered for Mass to celebrate the 90th birthday of Rt Rev Bishop Emeritus Antony Selvanayagam of the Diocese of Penang.

The bishop emeritus, fondly known as Bishop Selva, presided over the Mass, concelebrated by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Msgr Henry Rajoo, Msgr Stephen Liew, Fr Nelson Joseph, and assisted by Deacon Paul Kang. The celebration drew clergy and religious from across the diocese attending their monthly recollection, together with well-wishers and family members. Among them were Bishop Selva's sister, Rosemani Gunasegaram, 80, and grand-nephew Darren Loroy, who travelled from London for the occasion.

Born on October 24, 1935, in Bentong, Pahang, Bishop Selva was ordained a priest on December 20, 1969, and appointed Bishop of Penang on July 2, 1983. He shepherded the diocese for 29 years before retiring on July 7, 2012. He was the first president of the Episcopal Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei and the first president of the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM). He also strongly promoted Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) in all parishes.

Bishop Selva warmly welcomed everyone, acknowledging the milestone of growing older. Reflecting on his 90th birthday, he shared that he accepts whatever the Lord wills with faith and gratitude. He reminded all that this occasion is not simply 90 years of life, but 90 years of blessings and devoted service to God and the Church.

Touching on the theme of synodality, he highlighted the importance of working together in a spirit of consultation, listening, discernment, and enlightened decision-making. "There is no place for 'sendiri raja' (acting alone)," he said. "We are united in one holy, apostolic, and Catholic Church." He noted that the Acts of the Apostles, chapters 2 and 4, show that synodality was present from the very beginning of the Church.

Bishop Selva concluded with a heartfelt hope: "We are together — Bishops and priests in authority and leadership, in consul-

Honouring Bishop Selva's life of service



Bishop Emeritus Antony Selvanayagam being blessed by his sister, Rosemani Gunasegaram and Cardinal Sebastian Francis.

tation with the laity. That is my wish and my prayer."

Fr Joseph Stephen CSsR delivered the homily, sharing amusing anecdotes from his years of serving under Bishop Selva. He fondly recalled the long, fruitful meetings where, with diligence, important work for the diocese was accomplished. Fr Victor Louis, chair of the Thanksgiving Mass organising committee, humbly noted that he was ordained by Bishop Selva and has been guided by the bishop's wisdom and humanity throughout his own journey of faith and service.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis expressed gratitude for Bishop Selva's life and ministry. "As we give thanks for Bishop Selva, we also remember with gratitude those who came before him — Bishop Francis Chan, Bishop Gregory Yong, and Cardinal Anthony Soter Fernandez. The mission continues," he said. Cardinal Sebastian also warmly welcomed Bishop Selva's family, noting that today's celebration is about family, our roots, and future generations as they gather to honour the 90th birthday of the bishop emeritus. The



Bishop Emeritus Antony Selvanayagam cutting his birthday cake surrounded by family with Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Msgr Stephen Liew and Msgr Henry Rajoo looking on.

cardinal also thanked Fr Edmund Woon, parish priest of City Parish where Bishop Selva now resides, as well as the caregivers and parishioners for their care and support. He then led the congregation in a prayer for Bishop Selva.

After the Mass, the celebration continued with a fellowship dinner, featuring a montage highlighting the remarkable journey and

milestones of Bishop Selva's life. The evening was further enlivened by the cutting of the birthday cake. Bishop Selva's sister, Rosemani, expressed heartfelt gratitude to Cardinal Sebastian, Fr Edmund, City Parish, and the Diocese of Penang for their love and care towards her brother. In high spirits, Bishop Selva is now so determined that he is resolved to walk again without any support!

Jordan marks 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* with interreligious symposium

JORDAN: On October 20, the Catholic Center for Studies and Media (CCSM), in cooperation with the American University of Madaba (AUM), held a symposium to mark the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the Second Vatican Council document that opened new horizons for interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding.

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and member of the Vatican's Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, and Imam of the Hashemite Royal Court, His Eminence Dr Ahmad Al-Khalayleh, delivered keynote addresses. The event was attended by Madaba Governor Hassan Al-Jbour, clergy, Islamic scholars, and AUM students.

Cardinal Pizzaballa thanked the CCSM and AUM for organising the symposium, noting its importance in fostering relations between Muslims and Christians based on mutual respect and faith in one God. He said that although awareness of *Nostra Aetate* remains limited outside academic and religious circles,



Religious and civil leaders attend the "Nostra Aetate" Symposium at the American University of Madaba in Jordan. (Vatican News)

its spirit is reflected in Jordan's initiatives under King Abdullah II, who has made dialogue and peace central to the nation's mission.

He cited Jordan's global dialogue efforts — including the Amman Message, the Common Word Initiative, and the World Interfaith Harmony Week — as "luminous models" of coexistence. Interreligious dialogue, he

said, is a "pilgrimage towards hope and trust-building" that must be instilled through education and cooperation among religious leaders, especially amid current regional conflicts like the war in Gaza. Peace in the Middle East, he stressed, begins with genuine dialogue among followers of different faiths.

CCSM Director Fr Dr Rif'at Bader said the symposium aimed to look to the future,

reaffirming Jordan's pioneering role in fostering Muslim-Christian cooperation and respect for religious diversity since the 1980s. He hoped the annual commemoration would inspire young people to pursue dialogue and peace.

AUM President Professor Mamoun Akrouh expressed pride in hosting the event, saying it reflects the university's commitment to openness and bridge-building among cultures and religions. He noted that the Church remains a spiritual and humanitarian voice promoting peace, justice, and the common good.

Dr Ahmad Al-Khalayleh highlighted the unique bond between God and humankind, stressing that true faith involves respect for others' beliefs and recognition of diversity as part of God's creation. He commended Jordan's leading role in interfaith initiatives and its commitment to peace, harmony, and the defence of holy sites, particularly Jerusalem. **Vatican News**