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There will be no issue on November 29, 2026.
Our next issue will be on December 6, 2026.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

1 Cor. 15:20-21



Called to love, ordained to serve ■ P4



Golden Jubilee inspires renewed commitment to Christ ■ P7



Young Catholics discover the gift of every person ■ P16

When Christ returns, will He find faith?

KENINGAU: Amid wars, rising living costs, political uncertainty and growing materialism, Bishop Cornelius Piong has challenged Catholics to confront a question posed by Jesus Himself: "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?" (Lk 18:8).

The question lies at the heart of the Bishop of Keningau's Advent message, *Renewing Our Faith in Christ, Our Light,* in which he urges the faithful to renew their faith in Jesus Christ and rediscover Him as their source of hope amid life's uncertainties.

With Advent beginning on November 29, Bishop Cornelius reminds us that the season is not merely about preparing to celebrate Christmas. It is also an invitation to reflect on Christ's two comings — His birth into the world through Mary's acceptance of God's will, and His promised return in glory at the end of time.

His first coming brought hope to a world in darkness. His promised return, however, calls us to examine how faithfully we have lived according to His teachings.



The prelate acknowledges that remaining faithful to Christ is increasingly challenging amid the pressures of contemporary life. Materialism, extremism and moral decline, compounded by global conflicts, economic hardship and political instability, can weaken our faith and distance us from God.

Against these realities, he describes Advent as an opportunity of grace to return to the very foundation of our Christian faith — Jesus Christ, "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6).

He encourages Catholics to treasure the gift of faith and renew our commitment to living in faith, hope and love, fostering unity in Christ as members of a synodal Church.

The bishop also reminds us that following Christ does not mean a life free from suffering or difficulties. Recalling Jesus' invitation to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Him (Lk 9:23), he urges us to remain steadfast even when our faith is tested.

"Let us journey through Advent together, remaining confident and steadfast in our faith in Jesus," he says, recalling that Christ came into the world as Light so that those who believe in Him would no longer remain in darkness (Jn 12:46).

His message also carries a timely reminder as families begin preparing for Christmas and the year-end holidays. Amid shopping, celebrations and festive activities, he cautions us against allowing worldly preparations and material concerns to distract us from the true meaning of Advent.

Instead, he invites us to make room for Christ, deepen our relationship with Him and recognise His enduring presence in our daily lives.

"May this Advent help us to know Jesus more deeply and welcome Him more fully into our lives," he says, reminding us that Christ is the Light who illuminates our journey through life.

As we enter Advent, Bishop Cornelius' message offers both an invitation and a challenge: to look beyond the distractions of the season, renew our commitment to Christ and live our faith with greater conviction. For ultimately, the question is not simply whether Christ will return, but whether He will find us ready to welcome Him.

Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Journey to South America (Uruguay, Argentina and Peru) – November 6-17, 2026.



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Your contributions are essential in keeping our faith community connected and informed.
Send your articles to editor1@herald.com.my

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

When AI speaks for the parish

A parish poster may seem like a small thing. It announces a feast day, promotes a retreat, invites families to a gathering or encourages participation in a charitable initiative. Yet even something as ordinary as a flyer communicates something about the community behind it.

What happens when that invitation is created almost entirely by artificial intelligence (AI), with little human thought, creativity or attention?

Increasingly, Catholic parishes are turning to AI-generated posters, illustrations and promotional materials. Within seconds, an attractive design can be produced with a few instructions. For parish staff and volunteers juggling numerous responsibilities, the convenience is understandable.

But should convenience determine how the Church communicates?

A recent report on AI use in American parishes highlighted its shortcomings, including distorted human features and religious imagery that appeared convincing until examined closely.

Closer to home, even the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC2026) was not spared. A promotional poster circulated on social media featured AI-generated depictions of bishops whose faces bore little resemblance to their actual appearances. The inaccuracies prompted numerous comments from the faithful.

Some may have found the images amusing. Yet the incident raises a serious question: when even the faces of our Church leaders can be so carelessly misrepresented, what does that say about our responsibility for the material we publish?

There is nothing inherently wrong with using AI. It can assist with drafting announcements, translating material, suggesting layouts and developing creative ideas. Smaller parishes with limited resources may find it particularly useful.

The concern arises when technology ceases to assist human creativity and begins replacing it.

Consider a photograph of parishioners preparing meals for struggling families. The lighting may be imperfect, someone may be looking away, and the setting may be ordinary. Yet it captures something an AI-generated illustration cannot: a real community putting faith into action.

An imaginary gathering of perfectly smiling people may look impressive, but it cannot testify to an act of kindness that actually occurred.

Authenticity matters because evangelisation is not simply about presenting attractive messages. It is about witnessing to a faith that is lived.

There is also the question of credibility. AI can create convincing images of priests, religious and parishioners in situations that never occurred. What begins as an innocent joke can quickly become misinformation when circulated without explanation.

For a Church entrusted with proclaiming truth, accuracy and integrity cannot be sacrificed for technological convenience.

Pope Leo XIV has encouraged critical reflection on AI, drawing attention to the distinction between human artistic creation and machine-generated images. His concerns invite us to examine whether our enthusiasm for technological progress is causing us to undervalue human creativity.

Within our parishes are young people gifted in photography, writing, illustration and graphic design. Are we encouraging them to contribute their talents, or are we turning to machines because they produce results faster?

Imagine asking a group of young parishioners to design a poster for their patronal feast. They would research the saint's life, exchange ideas, select meaningful images and learn to work together.

Their finished product might not rival the polished appearance of an AI-generated design. But the experience could nurture confidence, deepen their understanding of faith and strengthen their sense of belonging.

Is that not also part of formation?

The same concern applies to AI-generated prayers, reflections and religious messages. A machine can compose moving sentences about forgiveness, compassion and suffering. But it has never struggled to forgive, accompanied a grieving family or experienced the consolation of prayer.

These human experiences give Christian communication its depth and credibility.

Technology can help us find the words. It cannot live the faith those words proclaim.

This is not an argument for rejecting AI. Rather, parishes need to exercise discernment, ensuring accuracy, transparency, respect for copyright, protection of personal images and proper human oversight. Images that could be mistaken for actual people or events should be clearly identified as AI-generated.

More importantly, we must ask whether our use of technology strengthens parish life or quietly diminishes opportunities for participation, creativity and service.

The Church has embraced successive developments in communication, from the printing press to radio, television and digital media. AI is another tool that can serve its mission, provided we remain attentive to what technology cannot replace.

After all, a parish poster is not merely an exercise in design. It is an invitation to encounter Christ through a community of people who genuinely care.

The danger is not that machines may become increasingly skilled at producing beautiful images and persuasive messages. It is that we may gradually become less willing to invest our own time, imagination and care in reaching others.

Let AI help the parish communicate. But let us never allow it to replace the human touch that gives Christian communication its meaning.

Patricia Pereira

The King we fail to recognise

If Jesus were to walk into our church today, would we recognise Him?

We might imagine Him arriving in glory, surrounded by angels, commanding our attention. After all, today we celebrate Christ as King of the Universe, the One before whom every earthly power must eventually bow.

But what if He arrived looking tired, hungry, and poorly dressed? What if He sat quietly at the back of the church, unnoticed by everyone? Would we welcome Him, or would we wonder what He was doing there?

Today's Gospel (Matthew 25:31–46) presents a challenging picture of our King. Jesus speaks of the final judgement, when the nations will be gathered before Him and separated like sheep from goats.

What determines their fate is not their wealth, achievements, social standing or impressive religious credentials. It is how they responded to those who were hungry, thirsty, strangers, sick, imprisoned or in need of help.

Then comes the revelation that changes everything: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Suddenly, the people we encounter each day take on an entirely different significance.

The elderly neighbour living alone in a flat. The migrant worker who cleans our tables at the food court. The struggling family quietly seeking assistance from the parish. The security guard who greets us every morning but whose name we have never bothered to learn.

Christ tells us that our response to such people is also our response to Him.

What is particularly striking is that both groups in the Gospel are surprised. Neither realised they had encountered Jesus in those they helped or neglected.

Could the same be true of us?

We may attend Mass faithfully, participate in parish activities, contribute to charitable collections and observe our religious obligations. These are important expressions of faith. But if they do not make us more compassionate, patient and attentive to others, have we truly allowed Christ to reign in our hearts?

In the first reading, Ezekiel describes God as a shepherd who searches for the lost, brings back the straying, binds up the injured and strengthens the weak. This is the King we worship, whose authority is expressed through tenderness and care.

If we belong to His Kingdom, surely we are called to reflect those same qualities.

This message takes on added significance as the Church celebrates the 41st World Youth Day, with the theme "Take courage! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In his message for this occasion, Pope Leo XIV reminds young people that genuine victory is not about defeating others or proving one's superiority, but about giving oneself in love.

"True victory does not lie in seeking to prevail over others, but in giving yourselves to them," he writes.

How beautifully this echoes today's Gospel. Christ's Kingdom is not built on domination, popularity or personal success, but on self-giving love.

For our young people, that love might mean refusing to participate in online bullying, befriending a classmate who feels excluded, defending someone being ridiculed, or volunteering to serve the poor and marginalised in their communities.

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings
with Fr George Packiasamy

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (A)

Readings: Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28; Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

For adults, the challenge is no different. Growing older does not automatically make us more compassionate, patient or generous. We can spend years attending church without allowing the Gospel to transform how we treat others.

In the second reading, St Paul reminds us that Christ has conquered death and that His Kingdom will ultimately triumph over every power opposed to God. His victory, achieved through the Cross and Resurrection, assures us that suffering and death will not have the final word.

But while we await the fullness of His Kingdom, we are called to make His love visible in the world today.

As this liturgical year draws to a close, perhaps we should examine what truly governs our lives. Is it Christ, or have pride, resentment, comfort and self-interest quietly occupied the throne of our hearts?

And as we encourage our young people to follow Christ, are we ourselves offering them an example worth following?

One day, we will stand before the King we have worshipped throughout our lives.

What if we discover that He had been standing before us all along, waiting to be recognised in someone we chose not to see?



Advent: Preparing for Christ, not just Christmas

Chan Lilian

PENANG: Advent is not simply a countdown to Christmas, but a time to prepare our hearts to welcome Jesus Christ, Fr Raymond Raj reminded some 120 participants during a formation session at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on November 3.

The session, entitled *Theology and Spirituality of Advent,* brought together parishioners from the cathedral and other parishes, including participants from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Youths and groups from the Chinese, Tamil and English apostolates helped animate the programme.

Beginning on a humorous note, Fr Raymond recalled how some parishioners believed the four weeks of Advent were necessary for Christmas shopping and church decorations.

"Advent is not four weeks to prepare the Church. Advent is four weeks for you and for me to prepare our hearts," he said.

Drawing on the teachings of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, he described Advent as a season of waiting, conversion and hope.

"Waiting itself is a spiritual exercise," he explained, urging Catholics to embrace prayer, patience and trust in God's timing rather than allowing festive preparations to overshadow their spiritual lives.

Fr Raymond highlighted the three comings of Christ: His birth in Bethlehem, His continuing presence in daily life and His future return in glory.

He reminded participants that Christ is encountered not only in the Eucharist, sacraments and Scripture, but also in the people around them, particularly the poor, prisoners and marginalised.

Recalling a telephone call he received while in the Holy Land, Fr Raymond shared how he had been invited to celebrate Mass for prisoners in Sungai Petani. The invitation brought to mind Jesus' words: "I was in prison and you visited Me" (Matthew 25:36).

The experience reminded him that encountering Christ also means reaching out to those whom society often overlooks.

As families prepare for Christmas celebrations, he urged them to remember those who may spend the festive season separated from loved ones, particularly prisoners and the forgotten.

Explaining the theological significance of Advent, Fr Raymond emphasised that the Incarnation reveals God's desire to enter human history and share in our lives.

"God is looking at you and saying, 'I love you, I want to be with you,'" he said.

Christ's humility, he added, challenges Christians to examine their relationships and let go of resentment.

"If you cannot forgive in your life, you cannot move on in your life," he said, pointing to Jesus' example of forgiveness on the Cross.

Turning to family life, Fr Raymond encouraged parents to cultivate habits of prayer, Scripture reading, silence and reconciliation at home.

He recalled how his mother insisted that the children read the Bible aloud every morning, a discipline that continued to sustain his faith long after he left home.

Parents, he stressed, cannot expect their children to develop a love for Scripture unless they themselves set the example.

He also encouraged families to embrace simplicity during Advent, offering three practical reminders: "Buy less, waste less, complain less."

Rather than focusing entirely on cleaning and decorating their homes, Catholics should also make time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, forgive one another and reach out to those in need.

Introducing the ancient Aramaic prayer *Maranatha,* expressing the longing for the Lord's coming, he encouraged families to pray: "Come, Lord Jesus, come into my heart, come into my life and come again in glory."

Concluding, Fr Raymond offered four invitations for a meaningful Advent: slow down, wake up, make room and look forward.

These, he explained, call Christians to resist unnecessary busyness, remain attentive to God's presence, seek conversion and await Christ's coming with hope.

"Advent is not simply preparing for a day or a season of four weeks. Advent is about preparing for a person. And that person's name is Jesus Christ."

His message was a timely reminder that amid the shopping, decorations and celebrations, the most important preparation for Christmas begins within the human heart.

Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

November

26	Meeting – MCCBCHST Exco
30	Annual Board Meeting – Catholic Welfare Services

Penang Diocese

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

November

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

Malacca Johore Diocese

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

November

24-26	MJD Annual Pastoral Assembly – MAJODI Centre
30	Meeting – Catholic Welfare Services, College General Penang



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #295

F12 MJD NEWS UPDATES

Welcome dear friends,

The Church exists to evangelise, said Pope Paul VI. Today that reminder continues to resound. It is more than street outreach. It is everyone's mission by the grace of baptism. Where we are planted, there we bloom….. there we witness. Remembering Paul: "Faith comes from hearing: and hearing comes from preaching the Good News." Never stop doing good.

Local Takes! Decadence or Resilience?
The observers say Malaysia exhibits both significant warning signs of institutional stagnation and clear signs of economic resilience and democratic reform. ***The signs of decline*** include selective justice that favours the elite, the questionable independence of the judiciary and law enforcement; entrenched patronage networks and reliance on political connections; the persistent brain drain and the race and religion-shaped politics and policies. ***The optimists argue*** that Malaysia's demonstration as an active, self-correcting civil society; remaining a major global hub for foreign investments; the expansion of infrastructure projects; and the efforts at institutional reform, are the plus points. ***One cannot be simplistic*** in one's observation. Political scientists view the country as a nation in institutional transition, which must overcome entrenched patronage and political polarisation.

Reading the Signs: Good News To All.
To Uruguay's youth, the Pope said: "Smallness does not mean insignificance".
To its Church: "To shed much light, we do not need to be many, but rather to reflect the Lord's light".
To its Clergy: "Faithfulness to our vocation calls us to return again and again to Jesus Christ; to let Him be our treasure, the one whom we wish to resemble".
At Assisi, the symbol of dialogue and peace, Rabbi David Rosen stressed that interreligious dialogue is essential to peace, because if we respect other religions, "we can overcome stereotypes, prejudices, stigmatisation, and live together in a better society".

Thought for the week: The Suitcase of God.
A man died and saw God coming closer with a suitcase in His hand. God said: Alright, son, it's time to go. Surprised, the man responded: Now? So soon? I had a lot of plans… God said: I'm sorry, but it's time to go. What do you have in that suitcase? The man asked. *My belongings?* You mean my things, my clothes, my money? God answered: Those things were not yours; they belonged to the earth. *Is it my memories?* The man asked. God answered: Those never belonged to you, they belonged to Time. *Is it my talent?* God answered: Those were never yours. They belonged to the circumstances. *Is it my friends and family?* God answered: I'm sorry they were never yours, they belonged to the path. *Is it my wife and son?* God answered: They were never yours, they belonged to your heart. Is it my body? God answered: That was never yours, it belonged to the dust. Is it my soul? God answered: No, that is Mine. Full of fear, the man took the suitcase from God and opened it just to find out. The suitcase was empty. With a tear coming down his cheek the man said: *I never had anything???*
The lesson from God: It is correct that we never had anything; every moment we lived is ours. That moment belongs to us. For this reason enjoy this moment while we have it. Don't let the thought of owning, stop us from enjoying the moment. Live now. Live in the now.

QnQ? Q asks? Why must there be pain? Why is this happening?
"We are students of pain. Pain is always carrying information".

The question is not how to make the pain stop. Ask what it is showing me? What's not working right now? What needs to change? What have I not been looking at?

Seek to become a student of your experience and not a victim of it. That's when real transformation happens, not when the pain stops, but when you extract what it came to teach you.

Pain keeps repeating until its lesson is received. If a pattern keeps showing up in your life, such as the same conflict, the same exhaustion, or the same ache, it isn't bad luck. It's an unopened message. The moment you stop asking "Why is this happening to me?", and start asking "What is this happening for?", you stop being a passenger in your own life. Pain is the message, messenger and medium.

The Spirit @ work: "Peace is built in the heart and from the heart, by eliminating pride and vindictiveness and carefully choosing our words." ***Pope Leo XIV***

Something to tickle you: "God is like a mirror. The mirror never changes, but everybody who looks at it sees something different." ***Harold S. Kushner***

Bishop Bernard Paul

Called to love, ordained to serve

Marlina Sara Sylvester


Frs Patrick Hilary Sandnasamy and Ashley Stephen Chau with Cardinal Sebastian Francis and their family members.

BUKIT MERTAJAM: "Do you love me?" Jesus asked Peter this question three times, and it carried special significance for two men who pledged their lives to serving Christ and His Church.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, ordained Deacons Ashley Stephen Chau and Patrick Hilary Sandnasamy to the priesthood during a solemn Eucharistic celebration at the Minor Basilica of St Anne on November 10.

The ordination brought together nearly 60 priests, mainly from the Diocese of Penang, as well as clergy from Kuala Lumpur, Melaka Johor, Sabah and Sarawak. Seminarians, religious sisters, family members and the faithful also joined in the celebration.

Love was central to both priests' ordination themes. Fr Ashley chose *Manete in dilectione Mea – Abide in My Love* (John 15:9), while Fr Patrick's theme, *Love? Love is the Question. Love is the Answer. Love is the Command* (John 21:17), echoing Jesus' invitation to Peter to express his love through service.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian reminded the ordinands that priesthood is not merely about fulfilling responsibilities, but about faithfully living and proclaiming the Word of God.

"Meditating on the law of the Lord, see that you believe what you read, that you teach what you believe, and that you practise what you teach," he said.

He urged them to embrace their ministry with joy and genuine love, placing Christ's concerns above their own.

"Keep always before your eyes the example of the Good Shepherd who came not to be served but to serve, and who came to seek out and save what was lost," he exhorted.

The Rite of Ordination was marked by moments rich in symbolism. After making their promises of obedience, the two men lay prostrate before the altar as the congregation knelt for the Litany of the Saints, invoking God's grace upon them.

Through the laying on of hands and Prayer of Ordination, the two men were ordained priests. Fr Ashley was then vested with the priestly stole and chasuble by Fr Michael Chua, while Fr Patrick was vested by Msgr Henry Rajoo. This was followed by the anointing of their hands with sacred chrism, signifying their consecration for priestly ministry.

The congregation greeted the newly ordained priests with resounding applause, sharing in the joy of their families and the wider Church.

At the conclusion of Mass, both priests expressed heartfelt gratitude to Cardinal Sebastian, their families, spiritual directors and all who had supported them throughout their formation.

For Fr Patrick, the days leading up to ordination had been a time of prayerful reflection on one particular word: beloved. He shared how deeply he had been touched by the realisation that he was, above all, a beloved son of God.

Cardinal Sebastian also paid tribute to the families whose love, sacrifices and prayers had accompanied the two men towards priesthood. Remembering Fr Ashley's late father, he offered a particularly touching reassurance: "Fr Ashley's father is watching from heaven, with his blessings always upon you."

The cardinal then announced their pastoral appointments. Fr Ashley will continue as assistant parish priest at the Minor Basilica of St Anne, while assisting Fr Simon Anand in Youth and Campus Ministry.

Fr Patrick will continue serving at City Parish, Penang Island, alongside Fr Edmund Voon, and will also assist Fr Dominic Santhiyagu in the Marriage Tribunal.

As the celebration drew to a close, Cardinal Sebastian offered a light-hearted reminder that the joy of ordination must now find expression in the daily responsibilities of priestly ministry.

"God bless you all and let us all get back to work," he said.

● *See pages 10 and 12 for their vocation journey.*


(photo/Felix Lam)



Spirit of Assisi unites faiths 40 years on

SEGAMAT: Differences in religious beliefs need not divide communities. Instead, they can become opportunities to build friendships, deepen mutual respect and work together for peace.

Forty years after Pope St John Paul II brought religious leaders together in Assisi, Italy, for the historic World Day of Prayer for Peace in 1986, the spirit of that gathering was rekindled at the Church of St Philip on October 30, as leaders and members of different faith communities came together in a shared commitment to peace and harmony.

Organised by the Parish Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue (PEIRD) after weeks of preparation, the gathering, held at St Joseph's Hall drew religious representatives, their respective communities and parishioners in a shared commitment to inter-religious harmony.

Welcoming the participants, parish priest, Fr Paul Wong, recalled how religious leaders from different traditions gathered in Assisi four decades ago to affirm their commitment to peace and reject violence committed in the name of religion.

He stressed that the message of Assisi remains particularly relevant today, when religious differences can easily be exploited to create suspicion, hostility and division.

Rather than merely tolerating one another, he urged people of different faiths to embrace their diversity with genuine acceptance and respect.

The Spirit of Assisi, he said, challenges everyone to become peacemakers and bridge-builders, recognising that safeguarding religious harmony is a shared responsibility.

A solemn moment followed as participants observed a minute's silence in remembrance of those who had lost their lives to religious violence.

They then pledged to uphold mutual understanding and respect, promote dialogue, reject hatred and violence in the name of religion, and work together to preserve peace and unity.

In one of the evening's most symbolic moments, religious leaders offered prayers for peace according to their respective traditions before lighting a candle of peace, expressing their shared hope for reconciliation and harmony.

The gathering also provided an opportunity for participants to exchange greetings, engage in conversation and strengthen friendships across religious boundaries.

During the programme, Sr Christie Ho FdCC introduced the work of Canossa Home and highlighted six available places for needy secondary school pupils wishing to continue their education under the care of the Canossian Sisters. She encouraged participants to share the information with families who might benefit from the opportunity.

In his closing remarks, Fr Adrian Francis thanked the religious leaders and participants for their presence and prayers, encouraging them to continue serving as ambassadors of peace and hope within their communities.

The evening concluded with a fellowship meal, where conversations and friendships continued across religious lines. **Philip Packium**

Retro '80s fun brings generations together

KLANG: A delightful blend of youthful excitement and nostalgic charm marked a Retro '80s-themed International Children's Day celebration recently, as the Senior Citizens Committee (SCM) of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes joined hands with the headmistress and teachers of La Salle Kindergarten to make the occasion a memorable one.

The collaboration brought two generations together in a celebration filled with fun, laughter and fellowship, reflecting the joy of building connections between young and old.

Adding to the festive spirit, the SCM sponsored food and goodie bags for all the children and guests, ensuring everyone had a little something to enjoy and take home.

The cheerful celebration was a reminder that when generations come together, friendships flourish, memories are made and age is no barrier to sharing happiness.



From the heart to Seoul: A Malaysian's hymn of hope

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian Kelly Noel Jr, who began composing music just two years ago without formal training, has gained international recognition after her hymn, *Christ Our Hope, Christ Our Peace,* was selected for the World Youth Day (WYD) Seoul 2027 Liturgical Hymns Contest.

Her composition was among six selected entries, making her one of only two international composers recognised alongside four Korean participants.

A parishioner of the Church of St Michael, Ipoh, Kelly began singing Christian songs with her friend Rachael Yean in 2016. They launched a YouTube channel in 2022, sharing cover songs with permission from the original artists.

Although raised Catholic, Kelly had spent some time away from the Church before returning with the guidance of her spiritual father. Her renewed faith gradually became the inspiration behind her music.

When Rachael became occupied with church commitments in late 2024, Kelly took up songwriting to keep their channel active, composing during her free time despite working full-time.

By 2025, she was writing songs honouring priests and their vocations. One composition, *Thank You Father,* caught the attention of St John the Evangelist Catholic Community in Florida, United States, which sought her permission to use it for a priest's farewell celebration. Another of her compositions, *Thank You Lord, For the Priest You Choose,* was subsequently featured during the parish's Clergy Appreciation Sunday.

Her journey towards WYD Seoul 2027, however, began with disappointment when her first submission, *Take Courage, Shine His Light,* failed to reach the final round of the official theme song competition.

Undeterred, she entered the subsequent Liturgical Hymns contest, venturing beyond her familiar style of contemporary Christian music. Taking on the challenge of composing a traditional hymn, she refined the lyrics, developed the melody and arranged four vocal parts for soprano, alto, tenor and bass (SATB).

"One of my biggest challenges was finding the right balance between meaningful theological content and a melody suitable for congregational singing," she explained.

Rooted in Scripture and Catholic tradition, *Christ Our Hope, Christ Our Peace* proclaims Christ as the source of hope, peace and salvation. Kelly also incorporated English and Korean into the hymn to reflect the unity of Catholics across cultures.

On October 30, an email from Korean priest Fr Francis Yun brought the unexpected news of her selection.

"I honestly could not believe it," she recalled.

For Kelly, the recognition was a reminder of the importance of perseverance and trusting God's timing.

"Ultimately, my intention was not simply to compose a beautiful hymn, but to create a prayer through music," she said.

She hopes her composition will encourage young Catholics worldwide to place their trust in Christ, especially during life's uncertainties.

To those hesitant about pursuing their creative interests, she offers this encouragement: "Do not be afraid to use the gifts and talents God has given you."

Christina Lazaroo

Readers can listen to Kelly's compositions on her YouTube channel, Kelly Noel Jr. & Rachael SnoopYean, at *https://www.youtube.com/@kellyrachael.*



Four languages, one faith, 18 original hymns

Tianne Pereira

SHAH ALAM: Eighteen original Entrance Hymns in four languages took centre stage at the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur's inaugural 'Entrance Hymn Presentation', celebrating the creativity of local Catholic composers and the cultural diversity of the Church in Malaysia.

Held at the Church of the Divine Mercy on October 31, the event, themed *Four Languages – One Faith, One Celebration,* featured five compositions each in Bahasa Malaysia, Tamil and English, and three in Mandarin.

Organised by the Liturgical Music Committee under the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission (LMC-ALC), the presentation brought together composers, musicians, choir members and representatives of different language communities, united by their desire to enrich the Church's worship through sacred music.

Launching the event, Archbishop Julian Leow reflected on music's ability to unite people across languages, cultures and backgrounds. He recalled having spoken earlier this year during a celebration of choirs, about the importance of embracing hymns in different languages, both in composition and singing, describing Malaysia's cultural diversity as a blessing and an integral part of the local Church's identity.

Expressing gratitude to the composers for bringing this vision to life, he reminded them that composing sacred music requires not only musical talent but also a sound understanding of the faith and liturgy.

He encouraged further formation for aspiring composers, adding that the archdiocese would explore funding opportunities to support their development. In a remark that drew applause, he suggested that one of the composers might even become the first to be sent to Rome for further studies, returning with knowledge and experience to enrich the archdiocese and the Church in Malaysia.

The initiative aims to encourage original Entrance Hymns that reflect Malaysia's cultural richness while remaining faithful to the sacred character of the liturgy. It also provides a platform for local Catholic composers to contribute their gifts to the Church's treasury of sacred music.

In his address, Fr Leonard Lexson, ecclesiastical assistant to the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission, explained that the Entrance hymn serves a purpose far greater than accompanying the priest's procession.

Drawing on Scripture, particularly the example of King David, he said the hymn marks the gathering of God's people as one worshipping community, preparing their hearts to encounter Christ in the Word and Eucharist.

As the congregation joins in song, individual expressions of faith become a united act of praise and thanksgiving. Singing, he emphasised, is itself an act of participation in the liturgy, helping the faithful enter more fully into the Eucharistic celebration.

Fr Leonard outlined four essential foundations for composing sacred music: Scripture, the Magisterium and Catholic Tradition, sound liturgical principles, and the *sensus fidei,* or sense of faith, of the local community.

Each composition, he explained, must proclaim God's Word, remain faithful to Catholic teaching, serve the liturgy and express the faith of the worshipping community.

Encouraging composers, songwriters, musicians and choir members to nurture their gifts, he stressed that sacred music, when rooted in faith and a proper understanding of the liturgy, can become a powerful means of evangelisation, catechesis and spiritual formation.

The presentation of the 18 compositions showcased the musical creativity within the archdiocese. Each hymn reflected the language and cultural identity of its community while sharing a common purpose: to lead the faithful into a deeper encounter with Christ.

The event also affirmed that meaningful sacred music need not always come from overseas. Malaysia's Catholic communities have talented composers capable of creating hymns that resonate with the spiritual experiences, cultural expressions and prayer life of the local faithful.

Nurturing such talent can enrich parish worship while encouraging greater participation and ownership among the faithful, particularly younger musicians and aspiring composers.

Although presented in four languages, the hymns reflected the unity of a Church whose members, despite their diversity, gather around the same altar to celebrate the same Eucharist.

The Liturgical Music Committee will conduct a final evaluation of the 18 compositions before seeking the archbishop's endorsement for their use within the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and the wider region.

The inaugural presentation also marks the beginning of further initiatives to nurture local talent. Future calls for compositions will focus on hymns for other parts of the Mass, including the Offertory, Communion and Post-Communion.

Ultimately, the celebration affirmed that sacred music is not merely something to be heard or appreciated. It is prayer expressed through song, drawing hearts together and lifting minds to God.

The composers of the 18 original hymns

The presentation featured compositions from across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, with composers and lyricists representing several parish communities.

Bahasa Malaysia

1. *Damai BersamaMu* – Waldo Udos, Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya.
2. *Kami Datang Dalam Kesatuan* – Terence Zavier, Church of the Holy Family, Kajang.
3. *Kami Datang Menghadap Altar-Mu* – Chaziel Abner, Church of the Risen Christ, Kuala Lumpur.
4. *Kasih Setia Kekal Abadi* – Waldo Udos, Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya.
5. *Menuju Mezbah Kudus-Mu* – Laurensius Dodo, Church of St Anthony, Kuala Lumpur.

English

1. *His Praise We Proclaim* – Susan E. Tan, Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong.
2. *Lord We Gather in Your Name* – Venetia De Silva and Dominic Tan, Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya.
3. *One Table, One Song* – Melissa Fernando (composer) and Justin K. K. Chew (lyricist), Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras.
4. *Praise to the Lord* – Tony Pereira, Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya.
5. *We Wait in Hope* – Tony Pereira, Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya.

Tamil

1. *Aalaiya Manium Olittathu* – Albert Greg, Church of St Jude, Rawang.
2. *Iraikulame Ezhundhe Vaa* – Dr Christinna Vanathyar, Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Kuala Lumpur.
3. *Thiruppaliyil Naam Kalandhida* – Maria Emmanuel, Church of St Joseph, Sentul.
4. *Vinnaga Paliyil* – Julian Soosaipillai, Church of St Joseph, Sentul.
5. *Guruvudan Inainthu Kondu* – Vasu Leo, Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Kuala Lumpur.

Mandarin

1. *Meng Shou Zhu En* – Will Lim, Church of the Holy Rosary, Kuala Lumpur.
2. *Qing Da Jia Yan Wang Shi Zi Jia* – Jeremy Chua, Church of the Holy Rosary, Kuala Lumpur.
3. *Tian Zhu De Guo* – Adeline Law (composer) and Steven Yee (lyricist), Church of the Holy Rosary, Kuala Lumpur.

102 holy relics draw faithful to Tanjung Malim

Bernard Anthony

TANJUNG MALIM: The lives and legacies of 102 saints and blesseds came into focus at the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer during the All Saints' Day weekend, as parishioners were given a rare opportunity to venerate their relics and reflect on their own call to holiness.

Held on October 31 and November 1, the two-day exposition attracted approximately 250 parishioners, including families, youth and university students, who gathered to pray, seek the intercession of the saints and learn about their extraordinary lives of faith.



Fr Vincent Paul reading about the relics of some of the religious.

Organised by the Penang Diocese Catechetical Commission (PDCC) Relic Team, the exposition featured 102 relics associated with 85 canonised saints and 17 blesseds, including first, second and third-class relics.

In Catholic tradition, first-class relics are bodily remains of saints, such as fragments of bone; second-class relics are objects they personally used or wore; while third-class relics are items touched to first- or second-class relics.

Among the relics that drew particular interest were those of St Anthony of Padua, St Carlo Acutis, St Padre Pio and St Thérèse of Lisieux.

Throughout the exposition, members of the PDCC Relic Team, led by Johnson Louisnaden, guided visitors through the displays, explaining the significance of the relics and sharing insights into the lives of the saints.

The parish hall became a place of quiet prayer and reflection as visitors moved from one reliquary to another, pausing to venerate the relics and seek the intercession of those who had lived lives of remarkable faith, courage and love.

During the All Saints' Day Masses, parish priest Fr Vincent Paul encouraged the congregation to make time for the exposition, reminding them that the saints are not distant figures from Church history but our "friends" in heaven who continue to intercede for us.



Visitors viewing the relics during the exhibition.

His reminder helped bring home the meaning of the communion of saints: that Christians on earth remain spiritually united with those who have gone before them in faith.

Deacon Isaac Alfred Simbun was also present during the event.

Johnson shared that the PDCC Relic Team's ministry began in 2007 and has grown steadily over the years, with additional relics enriching the collection and offering more opportunities for catechesis and devotion.

In 2026, the team brought the exposition to five parishes: Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang; St Joseph, Sentul; St Anthony, Teluk Intan; St Ignatius, Kelana Jaya; and the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer, Tanjung Malim.

For many visitors, the exposition offered an opportunity to appreciate the saints not merely as names on the Church calendar, but as ordinary men and women who responded to God's call in extraordinary ways.

As the Church celebrated All Saints' Day, the gathering reminded the faithful that holiness is not reserved for a chosen few. The saints, whose lives were marked by struggles, sacrifices and unwavering trust in God, continue to inspire Christians to persevere in faith and strive for holiness in their own daily lives.

Building authentic connections in faith formation

SITIAWAN: Meaningful faith formation begins with authentic relationships and an understanding of oneself and others. This was the focus of a workshop attended by 13 evangelising catechists from the Church of St Francis de Sales (SFDS) recently.

Held at the parish hall under the theme *Authentic Encounters,* the half-day workshop was initiated by parish priest, Fr Stanley Antoni to help catechists strengthen their interpersonal skills and better accompany children in their faith formation.

Facilitated by Annie Ling Ming Choo, a PRH professional and licensed educator, the session combined practical insights with interactive activities that encouraged participants to reflect on their personal strengths, understand others and develop effective coping strategies.



Catechists listening attentively to the facilitator, Annie Ling.

Through discussions and hands-on exercises, the catechists explored how greater self-awareness, empathy and meaningful communication could help them build stronger relationships with the children entrusted to their care.

The workshop concluded with participants gaining fresh perspectives and practical tools to enrich their ministry, reminding them that effective catechesis is not simply about imparting knowledge of the faith, but also about creating an environment where children feel understood, valued and encouraged to grow in their relationship with God. **Punithamarya Anthoney**



Annie Ling Ming Choo, a PRH professional and licensed educator.







Golden Jubilee inspires renewed commitment to Christ

Melania Liza Magnus

KOTA KINABALU: "Is there still oil in our lamps?" Archbishop John Wong posed this question to the faithful as the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu celebrated its Golden Jubilee with a thanksgiving Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral on November 8.

Marking 50 years since the establishment of the Diocese of Kota Kinabalu in 1976, the celebration was both an occasion to give thanks for God's faithfulness and an invitation to renew one's commitment to Christ.

Among those present were Archbishop Julian Leow of Kuala Lumpur, Bishop Richard Ng of Miri, Bishop Cornelius Piong of Keningau and Bishop Julius Gitom of Sandakan.

Reflecting on the parable of the ten bridesmaids (Mt 25:1–13), Archbishop John reminded the congregation that while all ten carried lamps, only five had brought extra oil. The oil, he explained, symbolised God's grace, which sustains faith, while the bridegroom represented Christ, whose coming the Church awaits.

He challenged the faithful to examine whether their spiritual lamps were still burning brightly, stressing that the faith inherited from parents and grandparents must be continually nurtured through a personal relationship with Christ.

Beautiful churches and active parish programmes, he said, must be accompanied by a deep prayer life, repentance and a commitment to living the Gospel.



Archbishop John Wong gifting the jubilee plaque to the Parish Pastoral Council representative.

Faith must also be expressed through love and service in families, schools, workplaces and society, particularly in reaching out to the poor, the marginalised and those who suffer.

Looking back on the Church's growth over five decades, Archbishop John paid tribute to the bishops, priests, religious, catechists, lay leaders, teachers, parents and young people who had contributed to its development. He also acknowledged the countless faithful whose quiet sacrifices and service may never be recorded in history but whose contributions helped build the local Church.

Through moments of joy, hardship and uncertainty, he reminded the congregation, God had remained faithful to His people.

Turning to the future, Archbishop John posed another question: "What is God asking of each of us for the next 50 years?"

He urged the faithful to deepen their prayer life, make the Eucharist central to their lives, nurture the faith of younger generations and continue Christ's mission with renewed hope.

Praying that every parish would shine with faith, every family with love and every young person with hope, he encouraged the faithful to remain spiritually prepared to welcome Christ.

The archbishop also announced that the Golden Jubilee celebrations would continue throughout 2027, including pastoral visits to parishes across the archdiocese.

At the conclusion of Mass, commemorative jubilee gifts were brought in procession into the cathedral. Archbishop John unveiled the gifts to officially launch the celebrations before presenting them to Parish Pastoral Council representatives from the archdiocese's 23 parishes.

The gifts symbolised the shared heritage, gratitude and unity of the parish communities, while serving as a reminder of their responsibility to keep the flame of faith alive through prayer, love and service.

From a cinema to a church

KULAI: What began in a converted cinema in 1952 has grown into a thriving Catholic community embracing different cultures and languages. Seventy-five years on, the Church of Christ the King, Kulai, recently celebrated its Diamond Jubilee, recalling a history shaped by missionary dedication, sacrifice and perseverance.

The milestone was marked with a Thanksgiving Mass presided over by Bishop Bernard Paul and concelebrated by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, parish priest Fr James Rajendran and former parish priest Fr Matthew Bun. Approximately 500 faithful gathered for the multilingual celebration, reflecting the parish's growth into a community of different generations and cultural backgrounds.

In his homily, Bishop Bernard emphasised the importance of unity and inclusion, encouraging parishioners to welcome newcomers and ensure that everyone finds a place within the Church community. The celebration also provided an opportunity for long-time parishioners to reconnect with Cardinal Sebastian Francis, who had previously served as their parish priest.

A thanksgiving luncheon followed, featuring cultural performances, recognition of parishioners celebrating their 75th birthdays and a historical video recalling the contributions of generations who had helped build the parish.

The parish traces its beginnings to late 1951, when French missionary Fr Henri Jean-Marie Dugast MEP arrived in Kulai. It is from this pioneering missionary presence that the parish marks its 75-year history. With the assistance of Bishop Michel Olcomendy, a former cinema was subsequently purchased and converted into a chapel by April 1952, providing a much-needed place of worship for Catholics scattered across Kulai and neighbouring villages.

Previously, many depended on monthly Masses at the Chapel of St John in Senai. With limited transport, attending Mass and receiving the sacraments were considerable challenges, particularly for poorer families.

Successive French missionaries, including Fr Felix St Martin MEP and Fr Francois Jego MEP, continued nurturing the fledgling community. Fr Jego, who had previously served in China, was especially remembered for his compassion towards poorer families and people with disabilities, often providing them with food, clothing and other necessities.



Performance by the Mandarin-speaking group.



Migrant workers during the offertory procession.

As Kulai developed and its Catholic population increased, the original chapel became inadequate. In 1971, Fr Matthew Lee established a church-building committee, beginning a 15-year effort to provide the growing community with a permanent church.

The undertaking continued under successive priests, including Fr Louis Wee, Fr James Tan and Fr Moses Lui. Despite financial constraints and delays involving the land grant, fundraising efforts continued, supported by parishioners and Catholics elsewhere.

Construction finally began in 1984, and the new church was completed in May 1986, fulfilling a dream sustained through years of determination and generosity.

The parish's development also benefited from the Canossian Sisters, who established a convent in Kulai Besar around 1966. Through their kindergarten, vocational training programmes and free medical services, they extended the Church's presence into the wider community until their departure in 1981.

Over the decades, parish life expanded through catechesis, youth activities and pastoral ministries serving different language groups. A significant development came in 2010 with the establishment of the Bahasa Malaysia Pastoral Team, initially serving approximately 30 faithful at Saleng Chapel before moving its Masses to the Church of Christ the King in 2011.

Following major renovations in 2018 and the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the parish gradually resumed its communal activities and continued strengthening its pastoral life. Fr James Rajendran became parish priest in January 2025, guiding the community as it prepared to mark its diamond jubilee.

From its humble beginnings in a converted cinema to a church welcoming Catholics of different backgrounds, the story of Christ the King, Kulai, reflects a faith nurtured and handed down through generations.

As the parish looks towards the future, its Diamond Jubilee theme, *One God, One Faith and One Belief — Be Rooted in Him and Built Upon Him* (Colossians 2:7), serves as a reminder that the legacy of its pioneers must continue through a community rooted in Christ, united in faith and committed to welcoming others. **Helen Xavier**

Liturgical year invites the faithful to live the mystery of Christ

Sandra Ann Inbaraj

PETALING JAYA: The liturgical year is not merely a calendar of feasts and celebrations, but an invitation to encounter Christ more deeply and allow His life, death and Resurrection to transform everyday living.

This was the central message of Fr Leonard Lexson, ecclesiastical assistant of the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission (ALC), during a half-day formation at the Church of the Assumption on November 7.

The session was the fourth and final instalment of the ALC's formation series, *Celebrating the Seasons of Grace: The Liturgical Year and Calendar.*

Drawing on the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Fr Leonard explained that the liturgical year unfolds the mystery of Christ, from His Incarnation and Nativity to His Ascension and Pentecost, while anticipating His second coming.

Through the liturgy, he said, the saving events of Christ are made present, enabling the faithful to encounter His grace today.

He outlined the structure of the Church's calendar, including its cycles of Scripture readings, celebrations of the saints and liturgical seasons, each with its distinct spiritual character.

Advent invites hope, watchfulness and preparation, while Christmas celebrates the mystery of God becoming human. Lent calls for conversion and mercy through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.



Fr Leonard Lexson explaining in detail on the liturgical year and its significance.

Holy Week and the Easter Triduum, culminating in the Easter Vigil, form the heart of the liturgical year. The 50 days of Easter celebrate the joy of the Resurrection, while Ordinary Time encourages growth in holiness through daily discipleship and service.

Fr Leonard also described liturgical colours as a form of "silent catechesis", helping the faithful recognise the meaning of each season. White signifies joy and resurrection; red recalls Christ's Passion, martyrdom and the Holy Spirit; green represents hope and growth; and violet expresses penance and preparation. Rose signifies joy during Advent and Lent, while black may be used at Masses for the Dead.

"Colour is not the message. Colour points to the message. The message is Jesus Christ: His coming, His saving Passion, His Resurrection, and His presence with His Church," he said.

The formation also addressed practical aspects of liturgical celebrations, including sacred furnishings, liturgical postures, music, the Book of the Gospels and the order of precedence governing feasts and solemnities.

Fr Leonard emphasised the importance of noble simplicity, reminding participants that church decorations and sacred furnishings should enhance worship rather than distract from it.

Turning to daily Christian living, he encouraged families, as the "domestic church", to embrace the spirit of each liturgical season through prayer, Scripture reading, forgiveness and meaningful traditions at home.

Parish ministries, too, were urged to reflect the character of the seasons in their liturgical preparations, music, catechesis and service.

Above all, Fr Leonard stressed that the fruits of the liturgy must be evident in how Christians live.

"If we celebrate Advent but do not become more hopeful, we have missed part of Advent's grace. If we celebrate Lent but do not become more merciful, we have missed part of Lent's grace. If we celebrate Easter but do not become witnesses of the Resurrection, we have missed part of Easter's grace," he said.

The formation concluded with participants reflecting on their personal commitments for the different liturgical seasons and considering a question: "Which season of the liturgical year is God inviting you to enter more deeply at this time of your life?"

The session reinforced the message that the liturgical year is not simply about observing sacred seasons, but allowing each celebration to shape how Christians pray, love, forgive and serve.

Sitiawan parish marks milestone with multilingual LSS

SITIAWAN: The Church of St Francis de Sales marked a milestone in its faith formation efforts by organising its first four-language Life in the Spirit Seminar (LSS) on November 7. Held from 9.00 am to 5.00pm, the seminar brought together some 300 parishioners for a day of prayer, reflection and spiritual renewal.

Conducted simultaneously in Bahasa Malaysia, Tamil, English and Mandarin, the seminar enabled parishioners from different linguistic backgrounds to engage more meaningfully with the teachings and deepen their faith in a language familiar to them.

To ensure effective participation and engagement, the attendees were divided into six groups according to their language preferences and age categories, with youths and children having their own separate sessions. This arrangement enabled participants of different ages to engage more meaningfully with the seminar's teachings and activities.

The seminar was facilitated by Fr Dominic Santhiyagu, Fr Simon Anand, Msgr Henry Rajoo, Deacon Charles Lazaroo and Christina Lazaroo, together with the parish priest, Fr Stanley Antoni, who served as presenters and facilitators throughout the programme.

The seminar focused on two central themes: *Idol vs God of the Bible* and *Jesus, the Idol Breaker.* Through these sessions, participants were invited to reflect on the meaning of idolatry in their daily lives and recognise the various forms of modern-day idols that can gradually take priority over God. The talks also encouraged participants to examine their personal relationship with God and rediscover Jesus Christ as the centre of their lives.

Following the first session, Holy Mass was celebrated at the church hall, allowing the participants to come together in prayer and worship before continuing with the second session.

The seminar concluded with a special prayer-over and healing session, providing an opportunity for participants to seek God's grace, healing, strength and renewal. It was a meaningful moment for many as they entrusted their personal struggles and intentions to the Lord.

The significant turn-out reflected the parish community's enthusiasm and willingness to grow together in faith. More importantly, the first-ever four-language LSS demonstrated the parish's commitment to inclusivity, unity and spiritual formation across different generations and language communities.

Overall, the seminar was a grace-filled occasion that brought the parish community closer to Jesus through the Word of God, prayer and fellowship. It served as a reminder that regardless of language or age, all are called to encounter Christ personally and place God above all else in their lives.



Participants in groups sharing their thoughts.



Pakistan bishops urge dialogue rooted in action



Archbishop Indunil Janakaratne Kodithuwakku lights up the unity candle. (Catholic TV Pakistan Facebook)

LAHORE: Church leaders in Pakistan stressed that interreligious dialogue must become part of everyday life rather than remain confined to formal meetings during celebrations marking the 40th anniversary of the Catholic Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism (CCIDE).

The celebrations brought together bishops, Muslim leaders, representatives of other faiths and a delegation from the Vatican's Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue.

Archbishop Khalid Rehmat OFMCap of Lahore described dialogue as a pastoral priority in Pakistan's religiously diverse society, where discrimination, prejudice and religious tensions continue to challenge peaceful coexistence.

"As Christians, we are called not only to proclaim the Gospel, but also to understand people's suffering, feelings and needs, and to respond with compassion," he said.

He urged young people to deepen their understanding of other faiths and use social media responsibly to counter misinformation and prejudice.

Bishop Samson Shukardin of Hyderabad highlighted discrimination faced by religious minorities in employment, education and public life, as well as false blasphemy accusations and attacks against Christian communities.

"Dialogue must go hand in hand with justice, legal protection and respect for human rights," he stressed.

He cited an incident in which a member of the diocesan interreligious dialogue commission helped protect a Hindu man accused of blasphemy, accompanying him with police to ensure his safety.

Bishop Yousaf Sohan of Multan, CCIDE President, called for greater cooperation among religious communities in addressing poverty, education and social harmony, particularly through the involvement of women and young people.

Archbishop Indunil Janakaratne Kodithuwakku, Secretary of the Vatican's Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, warned that prejudice, stereotypes and ignorance of other faiths often hinder meaningful dialogue.

Fr Markus Solo Kewuta SVD, an official of the Dicastery, also cautioned against extremism, discrimination and religious disinformation on social media, which fuel mistrust and hostility.

During the celebrations, 25 representatives of religious communities and institutions were honoured for promoting dialogue and religious harmony.

Looking ahead, Bishop Sohan urged the Church to strengthen grassroots initiatives and transform interreligious encounters into lasting friendships and cooperation.

The anniversary, he said, should renew efforts to build a society where religious diversity fosters mutual respect and the common good. **Fides**

Child tissue donation raises ethical concerns in Vietnam



The Vietnamese government wants to allow tissue donations by individuals under 18 in certain situations. (AsiaNews photo)

HANOI: A Catholic bishop has called for stronger legal safeguards to protect minors as Vietnam's National Assembly debates legislation that would allow children to donate regenerative tissue to their biological siblings under certain conditions.

Bishop Joseph Nguyen Duc Cuong, head of the Episcopal Commission for Integral Human Development, stressed that efforts to save lives must not compromise donors' rights, safety or human dignity.

In an open letter on November 4, he warned that good intentions do not automatically justify every means of achieving them.

The proposed legislation would permit minors to donate regenerative tissue, excluding blood and blood components, to biological siblings when no suitable adult donor is available and written parental consent is obtained. However, only adults would be allowed to register as posthumous organ and tissue donors.

Bishop Cuong emphasised that children require special protection because they may not fully understand the consequences of medical procedures or be able to resist family pressure.

"Children must receive independent counselling, be protected from pressure and have their right to refuse respected," he said.

He stressed that parental authority must serve the child's best interests rather than solely the needs of a sick family member.

The bishop's commission has submitted recommendations to lawmakers, urging stronger safeguards for minors.

Catechist Anthony Nguyen Thanh also raised concerns about potential exploitation, organ trafficking and pressure on children, particularly in families where gender discrimination persists.

Ho Chi Minh City lawyer Vinh Thanh stressed that legislation must balance the urgent needs of transplant recipients with the rights and protection of donors.

Bishop Cuong also emphasised that death must be established before vital organs are retrieved from deceased donors, insisting that no life should be deliberately ended to save another.

"The treatment of sick people and the protection of vulnerable persons are not opposing responsibilities, but inseparable dimensions of the same Christian love," he said.

He urged authorities to consult widely before finalising the legislation, ensuring that efforts to expand life-saving treatments uphold human dignity, informed consent and the rights of vulnerable donors. **ucanews.com**

Oman's first Catholic church opens golden jubilee year



Parishioners carry the golden jubilee symbol in procession at Sts Peter and Paul Church in Ruwi, Oman. (Photo credit: Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia)

MUSCAT: Oman's first Catholic church has launched its golden jubilee celebrations, marking 50 years of faith, community and missionary witness among the country's diverse Catholic population.

Bishop Paolo Martinelli OFMCap, Apostolic Vicar of Southern Arabia, presided over the inaugural Mass on November 6 at the Church of Saints Peter and Paul in Ruwi, Muscat, opening a year of celebrations that will conclude on November 5, 2027.

Consecrated on Nov 4, 1977, the church was established during the reign of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, whose policies of religious tolerance enabled migrant communities to establish places of worship.

What began as a house of prayer for foreign workers has grown into a vibrant parish serving tens of thousands of Catholics from different countries, cultures and liturgical traditions.

The jubilee, themed *Built on the Rock, Driven by the Spirit,* began on Nov 5 with the raising of the jubilee flag and First Vespers, attended by representatives of neighbouring Christian denominations.

During the inaugural Mass, Bishop Martinelli blessed and opened the church's main entrance, consecrated the jubilee altar and lit the jubilee candle, symbolising spiritual renewal.

Reflecting on the lives of Sts Peter and Paul, he urged parishioners to deepen their faith and embrace their missionary calling.

"The Jubilee is a time to remember God's gifts, especially the gift of this church where the faithful gather to celebrate the Eucharist, the sacrament of love and unity," he said.

The bishop also reminded Catholics in the Gulf that they are called not merely to live as migrants, but to become witnesses of the Gospel.

"Jesus Christ has transformed us from a people of migrants into a people of missionaries called to witness the joy of the Gospel and to collaborate with every person of good will for a more humane world," he said.

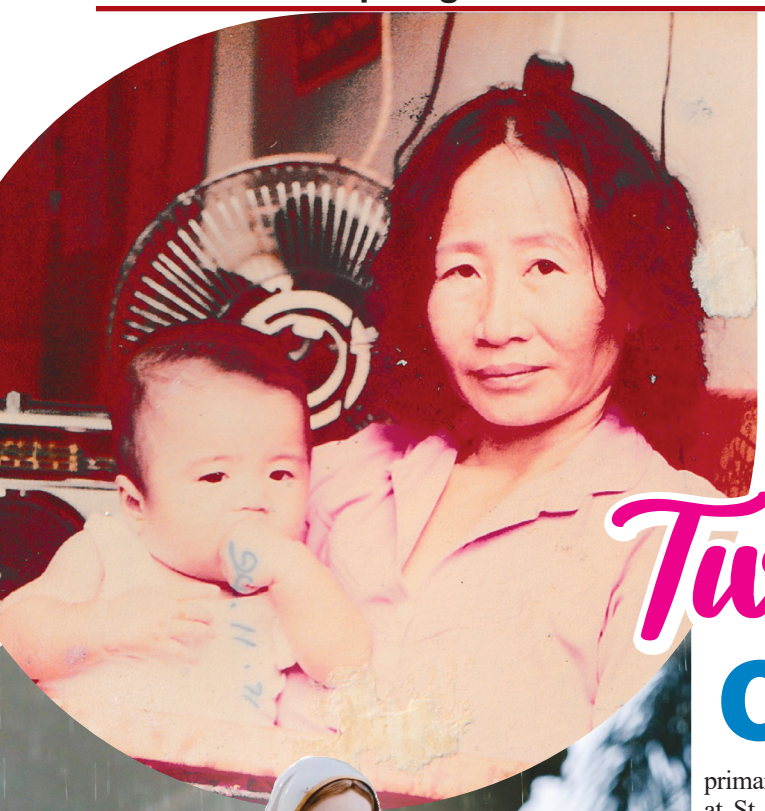
The Holy See, through the Apostolic Penitentiary, has granted a plenary indulgence to Catholics visiting the church during the jubilee year, subject to the customary conditions of confession, Holy Communion and prayer for the Pope's intentions.

The papal decree was read by Fr Darick D'Souza during the inaugural Mass.

A yearlong programme of liturgical celebrations, catechetical activities and community service projects will involve various parish ministries, ethnic communities and age groups.

Parish priest Fr Stephen Lewis expressed hope that the jubilee would strengthen the community's faith and unity.

"As we celebrate our past, we also look to the future with hope," he said, encouraging parishioners to serve one another and bear witness to Christ in their daily lives. **LiCAS News**





Two mothers, one call to serve





Patricia Pereira

Long before Ashley Stephen Chau earned a degree in Chemistry or spent 13 years working in industrial manufacturing, he had imagined himself standing at the altar — not as an altar server, but as a priest.

It was a childhood desire that would take years to mature. Along the way, two mothers would play an important part in nurturing his vocation: the woman who raised him in the Catholic faith and the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom he regards as his spiritual mother.

Ordained to the priesthood on November 10, Fr Ashley looks back with gratitude on a calling nurtured through family life, parish involvement, professional experience and the example of priests who inspired him.

Born in Papar, Sabah, into a Sino-Kadazan family, he is the youngest of five brothers. He attended Stella Maris Primary School in Tanjung Aru and then continued his primary and secondary education at St Joseph's in Papar. He later graduated from Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry.

His mother played a particularly important role in his early formation.

"I am particularly close to my mother. She has been a constant source of support and the main influence in nurturing my love for, and appreciation of the Catholic faith since I was young," he shared.

His interest in the priesthood began early. He recalled admiring priests as a young boy and entertaining the thought of becoming one himself.

As an altar server at the Church of St Joseph, Papar, he found opportunities to participate actively in parish life. His involvement continued into adulthood through the choir and youth ministries at St Joseph's and the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows in Penang.

"I have many wonderful and happy memories of being involved in the Church's ministries, especially in liturgy and faith formation," he recalled.

Yet his path did not lead directly from school to the seminary.

After completing his university studies, Ashley entered the workforce, spending 13 years mainly in industrial manufacturing. Throughout those years, however, the Church remained an important part of his life, and the childhood desire to become a priest had never entirely disappeared.

A significant turning point came during a year when he had opportunities to observe the lives of several priests up close.

Their example gave him a clearer understanding of priestly life and gradually strengthened his desire to follow the same path.

"Before long, I realised that I wanted to follow in their footsteps. So, never underestimate the power of role models, especially among the clergy, in fostering vocations!" he said.

He also acknowledged the encouragement and guidance he received from priest and deacon friends, as well as spiritual directors who helped him deepen his love for the Church and strengthen his response to God's call.

In 2019, after 13 years in the workforce, Ashley entered College General Major Seminary, beginning a new chapter in his vocation.

Among the saints who have influenced his spirituality are St Thérèse of Lisieux and St Ignatius of Loyola.

He is particularly drawn to St Thérèse's spirituality of littleness and her understanding of herself as the Lord's "little flower".

He affectionately compares her with the great Carmelite saints, St Teresa of Ávila and St John of the Cross, whom he thinks of as the "big trees".

St Ignatius also holds a special place in his spiritual life.

"St Ignatius' life story, on the other hand, has some similarities to the way I viewed and lived my life before entering the seminary," he explained.

"I admire his humility and openness to the Lord. These are heroic qualities that I deeply appreciate and aspire to."

Yet among all those who have influenced his vocation, Fr Ashley reserves a particularly special place for the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"However, if I were to give credit where it is most due, it would have to be to Our Blessed Mother, Mary," he said.

"From the beginning, Mary has been instrumental in my journey, from the initial call, through my formation, and right up to the present day."

His devotion to Mary is also reflected in the Scripture passages he chose for his diaconate and priestly ordinations.

His diaconate theme, *"Do whatever He tells you"* (John 2:5), recalls Mary's words to the servants at the wedding feast of Cana.

For Fr Ashley, those words are deeply personal.

"The latter is a loving, personal invitation from Our Blessed Mother. My desire is simply to follow what the Lord asks of me. At its simplest, this means abiding in His love," he explained.

His priestly ordination theme, *Manete in dilectione Mea — "Abide in My love"* (John 15:9) — expresses that desire to remain rooted in Christ.

Together, the two passages reflect a spirituality of trust, obedience and love. Mary's invitation to do whatever Christ asks leads naturally to His call to remain in His love, allowing that relationship to shape one's life and ministry.

As he begins his priestly ministry, Fr Ashley does so with gratitude for those who have accompanied him, particularly the two mothers whose love and prayers have sustained him.

"For me, the Blessed Virgin Mary has been central to everything. I am grateful to have been loved by two wonderful mothers: my biological mother and my spiritual mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary," he said.

"Their love and prayers have helped me respond to the Lord's call, even though I know I am far from worthy."

The young altar server who once admired priests has now become one himself. And as he takes his place at the altar, he carries with him the love of two mothers — one who nurtured his faith from childhood and another who continues to point him towards her Son.



Pic top right and above: Wonderful experiences during pastoral assignments.



St Peter's College class of 2026.

This is my beloved



Dancing with Dementia

Dr Cecilia Chan

I know Mary — not her real name — rather well.

Mary lives with dementia. Yet when I look at her, I do not first see a diagnosis. I see a mother, a grandmother, a friend, and a beloved child of God.

Perhaps Mary is fortunate. She has a family that surrounds her with love and support.

Her daughter, son-in-law and grandson have created a safety net around her — not to restrict her life, but to help her continue living it. They enable her to remain connected to her family, her faith and her community.

Recently, I attended Mass with Mary and her family in Penang.

They were seated behind the choir. As I greeted Mary, she gave me her most genuine smile and reached out to take my hands. There was such warmth in that simple gesture.

Then came Holy Communion.

I happened to be standing behind them in the line.

Mary's grandson, Samuel, is only 15.

He gently took his grandmother by the hand and led her towards the Communion minister. He guided her quietly and patiently as she received Holy Communion.

There was no fuss.

No embarrassment.

No rushing.

Just a young grandson accompanying the grandmother he obviously loves.

As Mary said, "Amen," and received the Eucharist, something moved deeply within me.

For a moment, I felt as though I was standing in the middle of an ocean of love.

And I found myself thinking:

This is my beloved.

Then another thought came to me:

All of us are.

That moment was about much more than helping a person with dementia receive Holy Communion.

It was about belonging.

It was about communion.

It was about being seen not as a person with dementia, but as a person who is still loved, still valued and still part of the Body of Christ.

I have watched Samuel and his grandmother interact. There is a beautiful connection between them. He understands her deeply. He knows when she needs support. Most importantly, he does not appear to define her by her dementia. Not a grandma with dementia, just his grandma.

And perhaps that is something the Church can learn from a 15-year-old.

Too often, when dementia enters someone's life, participation becomes more complicated.

The person may speak differently. They may repeat themselves. They may become confused about the order of the service. They may need someone to sit beside them, guide them, or quietly explain what is happening.

And sometimes, without intending to, we begin to think:

Perhaps it is too difficult for them to come to church.

Perhaps they no longer understand.

Perhaps it would be better for them to stay at home.

But what happens when "making things easier" slowly becomes exclusion?

A person living with dementia may lose abilities. They may lose memories. They may eventually lose the ability to follow everything happening during a service.

But they do not lose their humanity.

And they do not lose their place in God's family.

Dementia should not become a reason to exile someone from the faith community.

Instead, perhaps it is an invitation for us to become a more compassionate and inclusive Church.

We may need a family member or church volunteer to sit beside them.

We may need to explain what is happening without making them feel embarrassed.

We may need to learn how to communicate when words become difficult.

We may need to look beyond behaviour and ask, "What is this person trying to tell us?"

And perhaps most importantly, we need to remember that participation is not always about understanding everything.

Sometimes it is simply about being present.

Hearing familiar prayers.

Listening to hymns.

Holding someone's hand.

Receiving a blessing.

Feeling that you still belong.

I am not suggesting at all that this is easy.

Caring for someone living with dementia can be challenging. It requires patience, time, understanding, and coordination. Families can experience burnout. Churches may not know what to do. Volunteers may feel uncertain.

But what if the answer is not to ask the person with dementia to leave the community?

What if the answer is for the community to learn how to walk alongside them?

Imagine if every church had someone who understood dementia.

Imagine if church members knew how to welcome a person who repeats the same question.

Imagine if families did not have to worry that their loved one would be judged, stared at or quietly excluded.

Imagine if a person living with dementia could walk into church and know:

I am still welcome here.

I am still part of this family.

I still have a place.

Mary's family gave me a glimpse of what this can look like.



And Samuel, in his simple act of walking beside his grandmother, reminded me of something profound.

The Church is not only a place where we come to worship God.

It is also a community where we are called to love one another.

Especially when life becomes difficult.

Especially when someone becomes vulnerable.

Especially when they can no longer give back to us in the ways they once did.

As I watched Mary receive Holy Communion that day, I felt an overwhelming sense of love.

And in my heart, I heard those words:

"This is my beloved."

Mary is God's beloved.

Samuel is God's beloved.

You are God's beloved.

And so is every person living with dementia.

Let us make sure our churches remain places where they know it.

Let us build bridges.

Dr Cecilia *is a Gerontologist and Dementia Advocate and Activist. She can be contacted via WhatsApp (013-4384388).*

What does our wealth say about our faith?



Informed Opinion

Dr Xavier V. Pereira

Walking towards the Church of St Francis Xavier in Petaling Jaya one Sunday, I noticed several luxury cars leaving the nearby school grounds. Mercedes-Benzes, BMWs, a Lexus, an Audi and even a Porsche Cayenne. My 12-year-old Toyota Vios seemed rather modest in comparison.

The sight prompted a question: In a society where wealth is often measured by the cars we drive, the houses we own and the size of our bank accounts, what responsibility does material prosperity place upon us as Christians?

There is nothing inherently wrong with owning an expensive car, living in a beautiful home or enjoying the fruits of honest labour. Many have worked hard and made sacrifices to achieve financial success. Some are also generous benefactors of charitable causes, often without seeking recognition. The question is not whether possessing wealth is wrong, but what we do with it and whether our possessions have begun to possess us.

This question is particularly relevant to Pope Leo XIV's November prayer intention, 'For the Proper Use of Wealth', which calls for wealth to serve the common good and foster solidarity with those who have less, rather than becoming an instrument of selfishness.

Jesus offers a sobering perspective in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). While the rich man enjoyed a life of luxury, Lazarus, covered in sores and longing for scraps of food, lay at his gate.

The rich man's failure was not that he possessed wealth, but his indifference to the suffering at his doorstep. He had the means to help but chose not to see or had become so accustomed to Lazarus' presence that his suffering no longer troubled him.

That danger confronts us today. We see homeless people on our streets, families struggling to put food on the table and elderly people living in loneliness yet continue with our lives as though their suffering has little to do with us.

The Gospel offers a contrasting example in Zacchaeus, the wealthy tax collector (Luke 19:1–10). His encounter with Jesus transformed his relationship with wealth. He pledged to give half his possessions to the poor and repay fourfold anyone he had cheated.

Unlike the rich man who ignored Lazarus, Zacchaeus recognised that genuine conversion demanded action. His repentance found expression in generosity, justice and restitution.

These two Gospel accounts challenge us to examine not only how much we give, but how we acquire and use what we possess.

Christian responsibility begins long before we decide how much to donate to charity. It begins with how we earn our money, how fairly we treat those who work for us and whether our prosperity comes at someone else's expense. Generosity cannot compensate for injustice.

In Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus makes the connection between faith and our treatment of others unmistakably clear. Feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and visiting prisoners are concrete ways of recognising and serving Christ in those who suffer.

Compassion cannot remain merely a feeling of sympathy. It must find expression in action.

Nor is generosity confined to financial contributions. Our time, energy, knowledge, skills and talents are also resources entrusted to us. A doctor providing free medical care, a teacher helping disadvantaged children or a parishioner visiting the elderly demonstrates generosity that cannot be measured in ringgit.

Within the Catholic Church, organisations such as the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Caritas Malaysia and numerous religious congregations have long served the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised, regardless of race, religion or social standing.

Yet charity alone cannot overcome poverty and inequality. Governments, too, have a responsibility to ensure that public resources are managed honestly and distributed fairly.

Every ringgit lost through corruption, mismanagement or waste represents resources that could otherwise provide healthcare, education, housing and essential services. Public office is a position of trust, not an opportunity for personal enrichment. Accountability must include appropriate restitution where wrongdoing has occurred.

Catholic social teaching reminds us that while private property is a legitimate right, the goods of creation are intended to benefit everyone. Those blessed with greater resources therefore carry a responsibility towards those who struggle to meet even their basic needs.

Equally, we should resist judging others by their possessions. Someone driving an expensive car may quietly support families in need, while a person living modestly may struggle with selfishness. Appearances reveal little about the generosity of the human heart.

Perhaps we should examine our own priorities. How much of our income goes towards satisfying wants rather than genuine needs? Are we willing to share when doing so requires sacrifice? Do we recognise suffering around us, or have we become skilled at looking the other way?

The rich man had Lazarus at his gate. Zacchaeus encountered Christ and changed his relationship with money. Both remind us that our response to wealth reveals something about our relationship with God.

The challenge is not simply to accumulate enough to live comfortably, but to ensure that our comfort does not make us indifferent to others.

When we finally stand before God, the question may not be how much wealth we accumulated, how impressive our homes were or what cars we drove.

It may well be how many lives were made better because of what we had been given.

Dr Xavier *is a medical doctor, psychiatrist and psychotherapist. He is the co-founder and director of Health Equity Initiatives (HEI), an NGO that provides mental health and psychosocial support services to refugees in the Greater Kuala Lumpur area utilising a health and human rights approach.*



The call that never went away







Patricia Pereira

Patrick Hilary Sandnasamy was accustomed to caring for the sick, attending to the vulnerable and confronting the uncertainties of life and death. As an Assistant Medical Officer, he found fulfilment in his work, particularly in serving the poor and those in need.

Yet, even as he attended to patients in hospital wards, a childhood desire continued to surface — one that would eventually lead him to the priesthood.

Ordained on November 10 at the Minor Basilica of St Anne in Bukit Mertajam, Fr Patrick's vocation was nurtured by his family, strengthened through parish life and shaped by eight years of discernment before he entered the seminary in 2019.

Raised in Ipoh, he grew up in a Catholic family with his parents, Sandnasamy and Sagaya Mary, and his elder brother, Bryan Jeremiah. His sister-in-law, Alice Viola, later became part of the family.

Faith and service were integral to family life. His home parish, the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Silibin, played a significant role in his upbringing, with both parents actively involved in the Church. His father, Sandnasamy, was ordained a permanent deacon in 2018 and continues to serve at the parish.

For Patrick, witnessing his parents' commitment to the Church helped nurture his own vocation.

"As I look back, I believe the seed of my vocation was planted by my parents, and my desire for the priesthood was carefully nurtured by God, first and foremost, within the context of my family," he shared.

His first attraction to the priesthood, however, was rather innocent. As a young altar server, he admired the priest at the altar.

"I had this childish desire that I wanted to become 'that man' for one reason only: to wear what he wore," he recalled.

What began as a child's fascination gradually developed into something far more meaningful, although it would take years for him to understand where that desire was leading.

After attending SK Guru Nanak and SMK Methodist ACS in Ipoh, Patrick received an offer, two years after completing his SPM, to pursue a Diploma in Medical and Health Sciences (often called the Diploma in Medical Assistance) in Alor Setar.

He graduated in 2010 and began working at Hospital Sultan Abdul Halim in Sungai Petani. About a year later, he was transferred to Hospital Raja Permaisuri Bainun (formerly Ipoh General Hospital), where he served for approximately eight years before entering the seminary.

"I loved my job and was very passionate because it involved the poor, sick and vulnerable," he said.

But hospital life could also be physically and emotionally demanding. Encounters with suffering, sickness and death prompted him to reflect on the fragility of human life and the power of God's grace.

"Looking back, I realised how blessed I am to have a job as a ministry," he reflected.

Throughout his working life, Patrick remained actively involved in his parish. Having begun as an altar server, he later participated in the lector and youth ministries and the Charismatic Renewal.

It was during these years that an encounter with a young priest brought his childhood desire into sharper focus.

Fr Stanley Antoni, then assistant parish priest at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, conducted youth sessions that Patrick found both engaging and challenging. After one such session, Patrick approached him and spoke about his longstanding attraction to the priesthood.

Fr Stanley listened, shared his thoughts and offered to pray for him. Placing a hand on Patrick's shoulder, he prayed silently.

"At that moment, I felt the overwhelming presence of God as I felt a burning desire within me," Patrick recalled, likening the experience to that of the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

That encounter marked the beginning of a more serious discernment, although the decision to enter the seminary would not come quickly.

The next eight years were, as he described them, "a roller-coaster ride" with Jesus.

Fr Stanley remained a faithful companion throughout, encouraging Patrick to seek answers through prayer and reflection rather than providing ready solutions.

Although this approach was sometimes challenging and tiring, Patrick appreciated how it helped him grow in conviction. Whenever he felt lost, his spiritual guide directed him back to Jesus.

In 2019, Patrick finally entered the seminary, leaving behind a profession he loved to respond to a call that had remained with him since childhood.

Yet seminary formation brought its own challenges, testing and deepening his relationship with Christ.

One of the most significant experiences came during a 30-day Ignatian retreat in Chiang Mai earlier in 2026.

For more than a week, Patrick experienced spiritual desolation and found himself struggling to persevere.

Towards the end of the retreat, he sat alone in a chapel early one morning, praying before the Blessed Sacrament and meditating on John 21:17, which recounts the risen Jesus asking Peter whether he loves Him and entrusting him with the care of His sheep.

As Patrick reflected on the passage, Christ's question became intensely personal.

"At that point, it was as if Jesus was asking me, 'Patrick, do you love Me?' This experience was so real that no words can describe it."

He identified deeply with Peter, who had denied Jesus three times yet was given the opportunity to profess his love and be entrusted with a mission.

"Likewise, I am a broken and wounded person myself, with all my weaknesses, vulnerability and imperfections but also my love for Jesus," he shared.

The encounter inspired his priestly ordination theme, *Love? Love is the Question. Love is the Answer. Love is the Command (Jn 21:17),* and strengthened his conviction that God's love could heal, renew and restore those who turned to Him.

It also deepened his appreciation of Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist, where he had experienced that love so personally.

Looking back on his vocation, Fr Patrick acknowledges the many people who helped him respond to God's call, particularly his family.

"Without the love, care, support and nurturing of my parents and my brother, I wouldn't have been able to even begin my priestly journey," he said.

Fr Patrick also speaks fondly of Msgr Henry Rajoo, under whom he recently completed a pastoral placement. Msgr Henry's prayerfulness, compassion for the poor, approachable manner and simplicity in leadership left a lasting impression on him.

His example reinforced a lesson Patrick had learnt during his years in healthcare — that compassion, patience and even the smallest acts of service, when offered with love, could make a difference in someone's life.

For Fr Patrick, the path to the priesthood was neither immediate nor without difficulty. It passed through hospital wards, parish ministries, years of discernment and moments when even prayer became a struggle.

Yet the childhood attraction that first drew him towards the altar had gradually matured into a deeper understanding of what it means to serve Christ and His people.

The little boy who once wanted to wear a priest's vestments has now discovered the responsibility that comes with the vocation they represent.

For Fr Patrick, the question that shaped his ordination remains the one Christ put to Peter: "Do you love Me?"

And the answer must now be lived, day after day, in the care of God's people.

When justice seems elusive in this world



Sunday Observer

Anil Netto

These are disturbing times for many of us around the world.

Some of the ultra-wealthy and the powerful are causing enormous harm to ordinary people and the planet through their theft of public funds and the destruction of ecosystems.

But they often appear to enjoy some kind of immunity.

At times like this, some of us may even question the existence of God. If there is a God, how does God allow the powerful and the corrupt to enjoy immunity for massive criminal wrongdoing and corruption against ordinary people?

Even the planet is not spared: think of the haze set off when the greedy burn the peatlands and forests to clear vast tracts of land. Think of the greenhouse gas emissions they are responsible for through wars and the burning of fossil fuels.

The corrupt elite rarely spend time in prison. Instead, they are surrounded by the trappings of power and the opulence of corruption in their palatial mansions.

Consider the time of Jesus. The grand Temple in Jerusalem functioned as the political, financial, and administrative centre of Judea.

The Jewish-Roman historian Josephus, who walked on the Temple grounds, described the edifice this way: "To approaching strangers, the Temple appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for whatever was not covered with gold was of the purest white. When the sun rose, it reflected so fiery a flash that those who tried to look at it were forced to turn their eyes away, just as if they were looking directly at the sun's rays."

The dazzling light was reflected from the gold-plated front façade of the Temple sanctuary building. The roof, lined with sharp golden spikes, glittered from a distance. From a distance, the polished white marble of its exterior walls looked like snow.

Even the disciples of Jesus stood in awe before the enormous stone blocks and the sheer grandeur of the Temple.

Jesus, however, was not impressed. He knew the Temple hid a dirty secret. It was the seat of collaboration between the wealthy Jewish aristocracy and the Roman occupiers.

Not only that, but it was also the centre for systemic institutional corruption, with the principal beneficiaries being the high priestly family of Annas.

It was the seat of socioeconomic oppression of the ordinary people, who had to pay the various taxes, exchange money at poor exchange rates, and buy animals for sacrifice at inflated prices.

In first-century Judea, the Temple also functioned as a central bank, with a centralised hub for monetary exchange. It had a treasury, safe deposit vaults, and large reserves of coins, bullion, and other precious items. After all, the wealthy elite deposited their riches in the Temple for safekeeping. The Temple itself served as an agent for tax collection and made loans to traders and land and estate owners.

Jesus made a lot of people uncomfortable with His parables on wealth and power that burdened the people. In the end, He was unjustly executed for being a threat to the established order.

It was the high priest Caiaphas who said: You fail to see that one man should die for the people, rather than for the whole nation to be destroyed" (John 11:50).

For a while, it appeared that he was right. Jesus' death may have protected the grip of the aristocracy, the Temple priesthood and the military occupiers of that territory – for a while.

How His followers must have mourned His loss. Who could blame them for wondering how God could allow such wealth and corruption and brutality to go on with impunity – in the very Temple dedicated to God.

But God operates on a different timescale. Sometimes, He gives people and leaders a chance to repent.

Jesus probably died in AD 30 or 33.

A decade later, in AD 36, the Roman governor of Syria sacked Pilate for excessive brutality when Pilate's troops committed a massacre while quelling a rebellion in Samaria. Imagine how cruel Pilate had to be that even a Roman governor thought that his troops had committed excessive brutality!

To appease the local people, the Roman governor also removed Caiaphas, who had collaborated with Pilate for 10 years, from his position as high priest.

Pilate was sent packing to Rome to answer charges before Emperor Tiberius. But by the time he reached Rome in AD 37, the emperor had died.

Pilate himself died soon after, in 37-30. We don't know for sure how he spent his last years. Back home, Caiaphas died sometime in AD 36-46.

Few people remember these people, and they disappeared from the pages of history.

What were their last years like? We don't know if any of them — Tiberius, Pilate, and Caiaphas — ever repented. It did not matter to the ordinary people. They were replaced by other equally awful, horrible leaders.

The suffering of the people continued. In 70 AD, the seat of local power, the Temple, was utterly destroyed by the Romans following a rebellion. Before that, the first thing the rebels had destroyed and burnt when they seized control of the Temple were the debt records.

The point is that systemic corruption, oppression, and cruelty often unleash uncontrollable forces on society. These forces can sometimes swallow up the very people who unleashed them. If not physically, they can take a terrible toll on the conscience of the perpetrators and consume their souls.

If they live long lives in apparent comfort, can they enjoy the simple things of life? More than the physical comforts they are surrounded by, can they enjoy peace of mind – the sort that humble people gain from a life lived with integrity?

God's justice, his desire for our repentance, it would seem, often takes time. For a while, the corrupt and the cruel may seem to enjoy immunity – but at what cost to their souls?

Anil *is a freelance writer and activist based in Penang. He believes we are all called to build the kingdom of God in this world.*

Santa Claus' birthday



Yours 'faith'fully

Georgina Fernandez

Hello dear readers,

I know we're still a month away from Christmas, but since this is the last you'll see of me this year, I thought I'd take the very fine opportunity to 'talk Christmas'. This story is about a year old. And when you read on, you'll understand why it remains so fresh in my memory.

Date: 15th December 2025

Location: A home improvement store selling Christmas ornaments

Thus goes a conversation between me and the check-out clerk.

"***RM32.80, Miss….***" As I fish for my wallet and fumble for my credit card, she adds, "***This decor is very pretty Miss. It just came in today! Where are you going to put it?***" She's so sweet, I cannot resist a conversation, even though I'm in a hurry. "***On my coffee table with a candle in the centre.***" She says, ***"Very nice, Miss. You celebrate Christmas?***"

"***Yes!***", I say. "***My favourite time of year.***" I can see she's looking at me with a question on her lips. "***Why do you ask?***", I gently nudge her. She looks a little sheepish yet says, "***But you're Indian.***" I smile at her and say, ***"Yes, I am. But I'm a Christian. And we Christians celebrate Christmas. Do you know why?***" And she says, "***Not sure Miss. Is it Santa Claus' birthday?***"

That answer sent me reeling, yet it locked a profound realisation into place — people still don't know who Jesus is. Even with infinite information at our fingertips today, He remains obscure, almost mythical, to many. A prophet. A good man.

If you are into Apps, you probably know *YouVersion.* It is a free digital platform that's designed to help people read, listen to, and study the Bible. In November 2025, *YouVersion* celebrated a mega milestone and surpassed 1 billion Bible App installs — a Herculean feat! However, after that conversation with the store clerk, it dawned on me that there is still much to be done. In a world carrying 8.3 billion souls, there are still so many who need to hear the message of a Saviour who gave His life for them. One who left the gold-paved streets of Heaven to be born in a musty stable, only to die on a cross that He Himself had to shoulder and collapse under. There are so many more who need to know that in every lash and stripe inflicted on His back, lies their own healing and salvation. And that every drop of His precious blood that was shed, conceals their own deliverance.

Christmas is the beginning of a love story between God and His people. The human race whom He created in His own image with tremendous love. So much so, that He was willing to sacrifice His very own, precious Son Jesus, to snatch them back from the jaws of Hell. That's sacrificial love only a father, with the purest of hearts, would have.

The story of Jesus is not an unknown one. The moment people see a cross, they think Christianity. But what the man who hung on that cross endured for every one of us is not very clear to one and all.

Perhaps one of the most famous verses in the Bible is John 3:16. You'll see it on T-shirts, mugs, bumper stickers & Bible covers. It says, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."*

Why? Why would He care? I mean, in the entire context of this inestimable universe, what are we? Dust? The dust gathering on dust? We are so insignificant, yet Father God thought it appropriate to send His Son to be born into a world so rotten and corrupt that we didn't recognise Him, condemned Him and nailed Him to a tree! So why? Because we are created in His image. And His deep love for His children moves Him, like any father, to step in and save us.

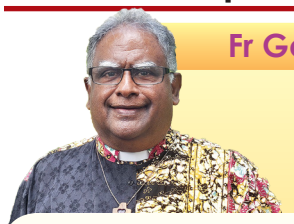
Scripture teaches us that the wages of sin are death (Romans 6:23). As our brother, Jesus our Saviour, stood in place of us and bore that penalty, in all obedience to His Father. So at Christmas, while we pass around the fruitcake and pour out that wine, know this, Jesus knew that He was born into this Earth to die. Not to live a long life, marry and have children. He knew He came to die — for you and me. To save us from eternal damnation. And that, my friends, is the true story of Christmas.

So, when someone asks me if Christmas is the Birthday of Santa Claus — a red faced, rambunctious, fat man in a red suit, struggling to pop his ample self down a chimney to deliver toys to well-behaved children, whilst flying around the world in 24 hours in a sleigh pulled by flying reindeer – it makes me feel ashamed. Ashamed that I haven't done enough to tell the world the real story of Christmas. About my Saviour's love for me. A love so great that He left His seat of royalty in Heaven to be born into the lowliest of places on Earth — in the coarse feeding trough of a manger, hewn from stone & mud. Wrapped in swaddling cloth — strips of linen from head to toe, instead of being wrapped in light (Psalm 102:4), as He would have been.

It makes me feel ashamed that I haven't done enough to correct the fallacy that the world believes about Christmas. So enough with Santa Claus and his antics. Can we focus on the real story of Christmas and share the truth about Jesus?

I wish you a very Blessed Christmas Season ahead. And pray, that, as you centre on the true meaning of Christmas, you will be a blessing to those whom you talk to about Him.

Georgina *is a writer, home chef, wife and doggy mama. She is of Indian origin and has lived in Tanzania, Muscat, Mumbai and is now based in Kuala Lumpur. She is an ex-advertising creative director turned Home Chef and is the co-owner of Five & Two Fine Foods, with her husband, John. In her spare time, she loves to travel, play the keyboard and craft.*



Fr Gerard Theraviam

Towards a spirituality of the elder person

One of the most active ministries at the Cathedral where I serve is the Golden Eagles, our senior citizens who gather regularly for prayer, fellowship, talks, outings and pilgrimages.

Some have been active in the Church for decades, while others are rediscovering their faith after years spent raising families and building careers.

Being in the same age group, I join them whenever possible. What draws them together, I believe, is not simply the activities, but a desire for companionship, spiritual growth and a renewed relationship with God.

Their gatherings have led me to reflect: Is there a spirituality particularly suited to the later years of life?

The autumn and winter years need not be a period of decline or withdrawal. They offer opportunities to deepen our relationship with God and rediscover what truly matters.

From doing to being

For much of our lives, we are occupied with working, providing for our families and fulfilling responsibilities. As we grow older, our priorities may change.

The spirituality of the elder person invites us to move from constant activity towards contemplation, acceptance and trust in God.

The Gospel account of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38–42) offers a helpful perspective. Martha was busy serving, while Mary sat at Jesus' feet, listening. Jesus did not reject service, but reminded Martha of the importance of what truly matters.

Perhaps growing older invites us to embrace Mary's attentiveness without abandoning Martha's willingness to serve.

Our worth is not measured by what we accomplish. There is grace in being still and resting in God's presence. Prayer becomes less about asking for things and more about deepening our relationship with Him.

This is also a time for transcendence — looking past material achievements, possessions, and recognition towards a deeper awareness of God and the eternal. We may discover that spirituality becomes simpler, less concerned with accumulating religious knowledge or activities and more centred on the essentials of faith, hope, love and trust in God's grace.

Finding meaning in later life

An important dimension of this spirituality is looking at the past with gratitude, living the present with purpose and facing the future with hope.

Looking back, we recognise life's blessings, but also regrets, disappointments and broken relationships.

Growing spiritually means acknowledging these experiences without being imprisoned by them. There may be people to forgive, apologies to make, or hurts to release.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation offers an opportunity to experience God's mercy and healing. Not every relationship can be restored, particularly harmful ones. Sometimes, healing means accepting what cannot be changed and entrusting it to God.

Yet we must not spend our later years living in the past.

Even when our health or circumstances change, we can still love, encourage, listen and pray. A kind word, a call to someone lonely or a conversation with a grandchild can become meaningful expressions of faith.

Growing older is not always easy. There are illnesses, bereavements, declining independence and loneliness. Some face financial uncertainty, while others continue working or caring for family members.

A mature spirituality does not deny these difficulties. Faith does not spare us from suffering, but our relationship with God and the support of others can help us face uncertainty with courage and hope.

We may also need the humility to accept help after years of caring for others. Our dignity does not diminish with age or physical weakness. We remain precious in God's eyes, created in His image and likeness.

The spirituality of the elder person also finds expression in our continuing contribution to the Church, family, and society.

Older people possess experiences and memories of faith that can enrich younger generations. Grandparents and other elders pass on the faith through their words and example, while remaining open to learning from younger people.

Our ways of serving may change. Those who once organised parish activities or held leadership positions may step aside, becoming cheerleaders on the sidelines rather than the principal players. Yet they can still mentor, encourage and support others.

There is also the important ministry of intercessory prayer. Older people can become prayer warriors, interceding for their families, parishes, the sick and the needs of the world. Even those confined to their homes or beds can participate in the Church's mission through prayer.

The Golden Eagles remind me that spirituality is not merely a private relationship with God. It also finds expression in friendship, companionship and concern for others.

We need people with whom we can laugh, share experiences and occasionally complain about the aches and pains that arrive uninvited!

Parish ministries, BECs and senior citizens' groups help us remain connected. So do neighbours, friends at the local coffee shop or *mamak* stall, community associations and exercise groups.

The Church must recognise that older people are not merely recipients of pastoral care. Their wisdom, experience and faith remain valuable gifts to the community.

Living with hope

Finally, the spirituality of the elder person invites us to face death with Christian hope.

As we grow older, we become conscious of our mortality. Even people of deep faith may experience fear or uncertainty.

Our hope rests in Christ's Resurrection and His promise of eternal life. As the Church reminds us in the funeral liturgy, "Life is changed, not ended."

Preparing for death need not mean becoming preoccupied with dying. Rather, it invites us to appreciate life, make peace where possible, and deepen our trust in God.

Perhaps this lies at the heart of the spirituality of the elder person: moving from striving towards surrender, from accumulating towards appreciating, and from needing to control everything towards learning to trust.

Whenever I join the Golden Eagles, their laughter, friendships and shared prayers remind me that God continues to work in us and through us, whatever our age.

We may walk more slowly and need more help than before. But we can still love generously, forgive sincerely, pray faithfully and encourage others.

The spirituality of the elder person is ultimately about recognising that while our circumstances may change, God's invitation to grow in holiness never ends.

Fr Gerard *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.*



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Adult children of Rene Descartes

For ten years, I was part of a pastoral team that conducted a programme for couples preparing for marriage. My job was to give a talk on the sacrament of marriage. The scenario was always the same. We would meet on a Monday evening, about thirty couples and I. There would be the standard introductions, and then I would give a fifty-minute lecture on the theology of marriage, followed by a question period. The first question was always the same: *"Why do we have to take this course?"*

This was fair enough, given that of the thirty couples present, only about four or five wanted to be there. The rest were there reluctantly, meaning they came only because they knew that if they didn't take this course, they could not get married in their respective churches.

So, their first question usually reflected some resentment, but it also reflected something much deeper, namely, the absence in them of any meaningful sense of the corporate body of humanity, of our interdependence in that body, and of the body of Christ.

Invariably they would justify their reluctance to be there in this way: "Why do we have to take this course? Whose business is this anyway? Why are my parents, the Church, and society trying to interfere in my life? This is *my* life, *my* choice, *my* marriage, *my* honeymoon, and skin off *my* teeth if it doesn't work out! This is not your business, the Church's business, my parents' business, or society's business! What's your stake in *my* life?"

Indeed, *what's your stake in my life?*

In that challenge, one hears the lonely voice of Rene Descartes (1596-1650), all those centuries ago, settling on the one thing that he could be sure of and build upon: *"I think, therefore I am!"* These young people, for all their sincerity and goodness, at least at this stage of their lives, were more children of Rene Descartes than of Jesus Christ.

Rene Descartes, the seventeenth-century French philosopher whose ideas helped to shape both the Enlightenment and many of our modern ideas, began his philosophy with the idea that the only thing we can be sure of as real is our own reality *(Cogito, ergo sum).* We are inside of ourselves, and our own reality is massive, real, and undeniable. Everything else appears less real and is real in relation to us.

In street language, this says: *I am real. My life, my thoughts, my feelings, my heartaches, my headaches are real. Everything else is outside me and less real.* I can relate to it, but it's separate from me. I'm independent of it, and it's independent of me. In the end, we're all separate from each other, isolated subjects, able at times to temporarily penetrate each other's reality, but ultimately separate, alone, independent. What's real is my life, my experience.

In the secularised world today, we are very much the children of that idea. Granted, it has a very positive side: Our belief in this idea is one of the reasons why we cherish and defend equality and individual rights. Western democracy and the various charters of freedoms that we so much take for granted have, to some degree, been underwritten by this idea of personal freedom.

However, Descartes' emphasis on individuality has an underside. Among other things, this is reflected in a lack of a sense of interdependence and a false notion of freedom that was so manifest in the objections of those young people who were reluctantly taking this marriage course. In their minds, nothing is inherently owed to family, community, and humanity. Why should there be? After all, we stand independent of these, and we can decide on our own, to what degree we want to buy in, get involved, give ourselves over, participate in, and acquiesce to others' expectations of us. Others have their lives, and I have mine!

This is also manifest today in the attitude people (of all ages) have towards marriage: "Why do we need to get married publicly? This is just between the two of us. We have our own commitment to each other, and that's enough. Who needs a piece of paper? This is nobody's business but ours."

Such an attitude would be valid if we weren't in our very makeup social beings, irrevocably bound to each other in life. How different from Descartes and contemporary culture is the Christian idea that we are all parts of one body, a single organism, within which one part can't say to the other: "This is my life, and it's no business of yours?"

Two voices, two choices, two visions: Rene Descartes and Jesus Christ. One speaks of private freedom, loneliness, and individuality; the other of interdependence, community, and shared life. *Like Adult Children of Alcoholics,* we, *Adult Children of Rene Descartes,* might want to reflect more on what we carry unconsciously in our lives because of the household we grew up in.

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

LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER

Dear children,

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to meet a king? You might imagine someone wearing a golden crown, sitting on a grand throne and living in a beautiful palace. But did you know that Jesus is a King who teaches us to love and care for others?

Today, we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King! In the Gospel, Jesus tells His disciples that one day, He will return as King and gather everyone before Him. Just as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, Jesus will separate those who have shown love and kindness from those who have ignored people in need.

Jesus explains that whenever we feed someone who is hungry, give water to someone who is thirsty, welcome a stranger or care for someone who is sick, we are showing love to Him. He reminds us that when we help someone in need, it is as though we are helping Jesus Himself.

We can show our love for Jesus through simple acts of kindness every day. This week, try to do one act of kindness each day. Share your snack with a friend, invite someone who is sitting alone to play, help your parents with a household chore without being asked, or spend time with someone who is feeling lonely. At the end of each day, ask yourself, "How did I show love to Jesus through someone else today?" Remember, even the smallest act of kindness is a way of showing love to Jesus, our King.



Love, Aunty C

Word Search

W	L	J	R	R	S	I	C	A	Y	N	G	D	H	T
B	D	S	X	L	E	V	O	A	K	J	L	H	M	T
D	R	R	E	O	A	D	M	S	O	Z	B	I	N	A
E	Y	G	I	S	T	H	E	I	B	P	Y	D	F	I
X	N	J	G	N	U	X	E	C	N	F	J	T	C	E
A	X	E	A	K	K	W	B	K	J	S	E	R	J	K
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T	P	L	T	T	S	T	R	A	N	G	E	R	Y	G
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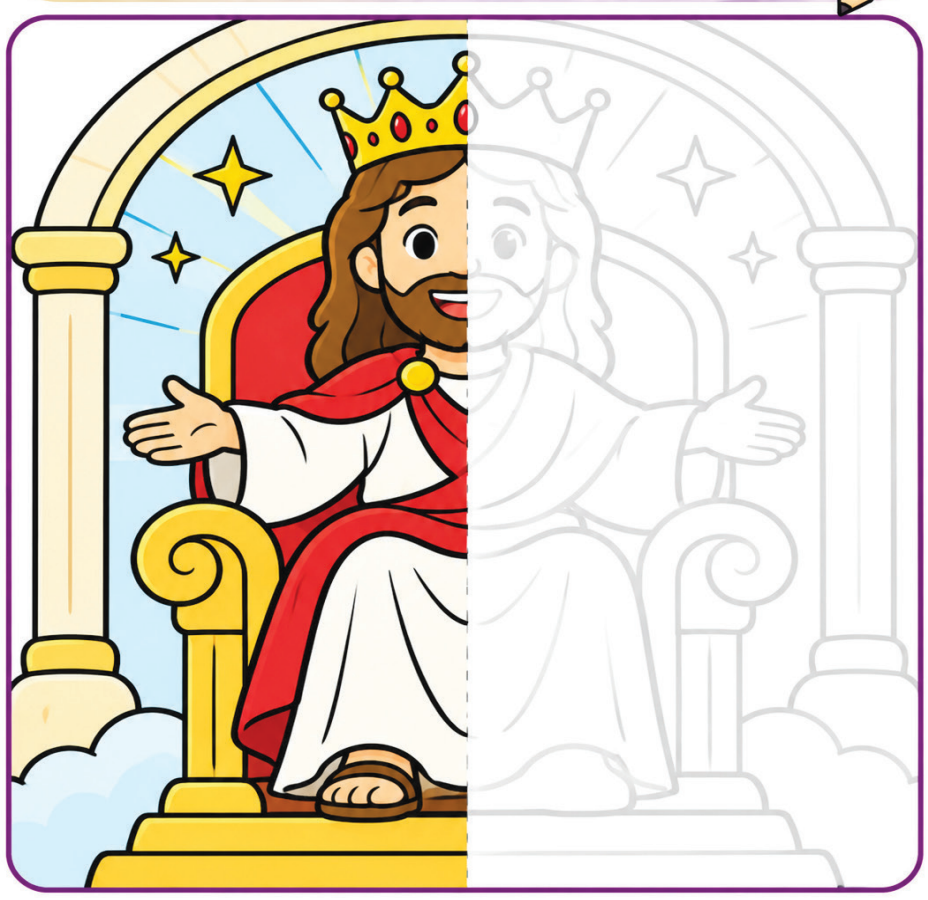
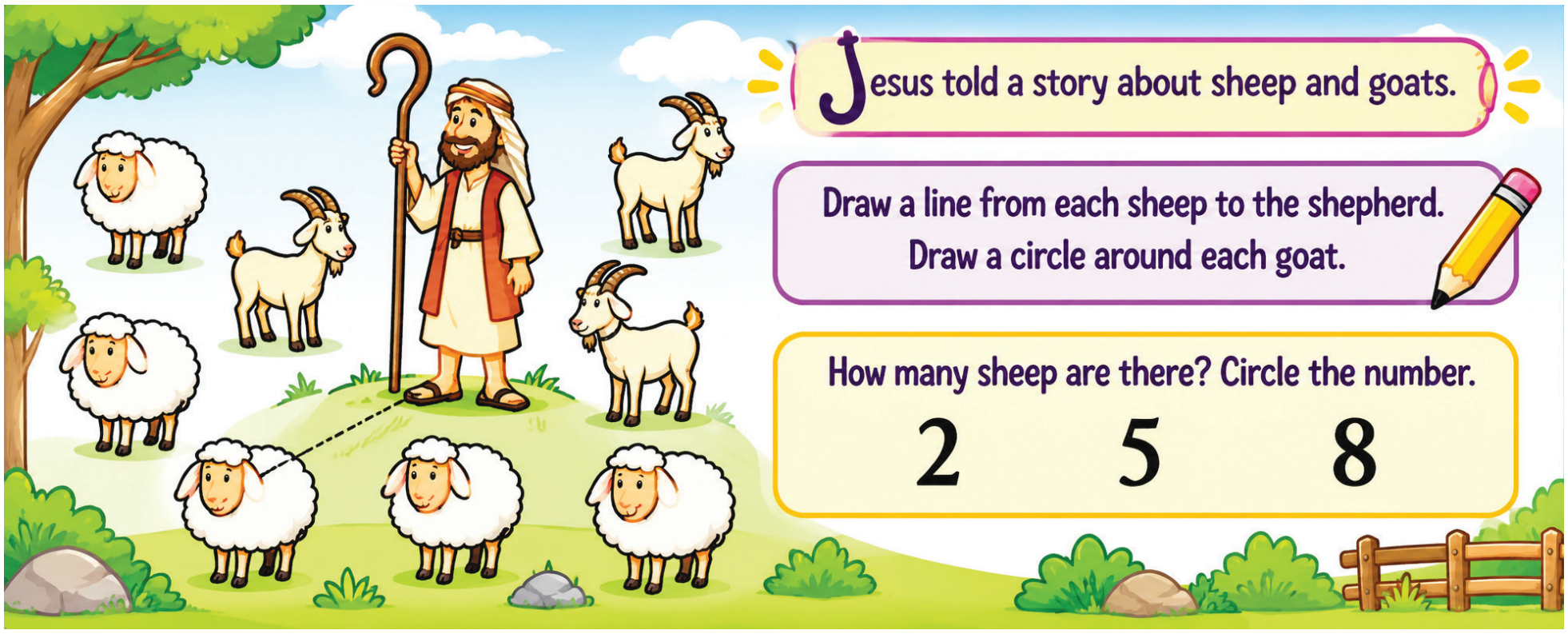
L	N	I	I	T	Q	X	E	T	E	R	N	A	L	W
R	E	F	R	S	H	A	B	R	O	T	H	E	R	S
D	G	A	N	S	O	E	M	B	L	E	S	S	E	D
C	N	P	S	T	T	N	D	Y	C	V	P	C	D	Q
N	K	E	Q	T	P	Y	F	W	U	G	L	O	R	Y

CLOTHED	SHEPHERD	HUNGRY	KING	STRANGER
LEAST	BLESSED	THRONE	SICK	EAT
GLORY	LIFE	ANGELS	DRINK	THIRSTY
BROTHERS	FATHER	ETERNAL	PRISON	COME

Complete the King's Throne!

Jesus is our King! Look carefully at the completed half of the picture. Draw the missing half and colour your masterpiece.





Jesus told a story about sheep and goats.

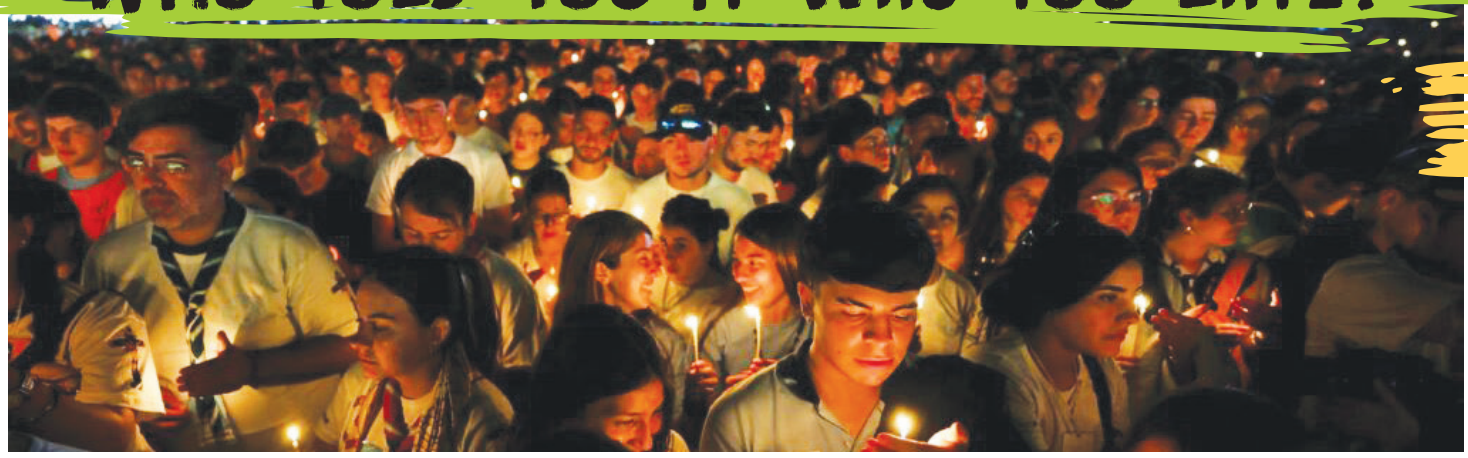
Draw a line from each sheep to the shepherd.
Draw a circle around each goat.

How many sheep are there? Circle the number.

2 5 8

YOUTH

WHO TOLD YOU IT WAS TOO LATE?





Pope to Argentine young people

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina: Pope Leo XIV joined around 1 million young people for a prayer vigil in Argentina's capital on Nov 10.

In his address, the Pope encouraged the Argentine faithful to show the world the fire of Christ's love, which purifies our hearts and allows us to love fully.

He recalled the story in the Book of the Prophet Daniel, in which three young men were thrown into a furnace in Babylon for refusing to worship an idol.

They stood out in the crowd, who had all bowed down at the order of King Nebuchadnezzar, said the Pope. The three young men refused to renounce their faith, even at the risk of their lives.

"What freedom there is in that response!" he said. "They knew the punishment that awaited them, but they also knew that they would find happiness only in God."

In our own time, said Pope Leo, we face the temptation to bow down in slavery before pornography and addictive substances.

"Today too, idols arise and demand our worship: success at any cost, money, an obsession with appearance, popularity or the unrestrained pursuit of pleasure," he said. "Do not bow down before anything that cannot give you life. And if you have ever fallen, get back up. Do not allow anything or anyone to take away the freedom God has given you."

The Pope then reflected on what it means to live as Christ's disciples: "everyone toward Christ, everyone with Christ, everyone like Christ."

Even if someone had not prayed in a long time or had drifted from the Church, they could still draw near to Christ, regardless of the difficulties they faced in life.

"Whoever you are and whatever you may have done, Jesus Christ knows you, Jesus Christ loves you, and wants you to be close to Him," he said.

The Pope picked up a question that had changed the life of one of the young people who offered her testimony: "Who told you that it was too late?"

Rather, he said, it was never too late to answer God's call, since no one has "fallen so low that Christ cannot raise them up."

Pope Leo XIV noted that, as the three young men walked around in the furnace, one of them raised a prayer to God: "With a contrite heart and a humble spirit may we be accepted."

Even as they defied the king, the men recognised their need for God's mercy.

"Christ loves us as we are, but His love is too great to leave us prisoners of sin, of what destroys us," he said. "The fire He came to bring has the power to break our chains and restore our freedom to love."

Pope Leo invited young people to become saints, who, he said, bore their weaknesses but allowed God's grace to transform their lives.

"The Lord gives us so many opportunities to be like Him," he said. "May your lives become pages of the Gospel, written in the ink of mercy, so that those who meet you may recognise in you something of the love and joy of Jesus."

During the prayer vigil, Pope Leo heard the testimonies of several young people and offered his thoughts.

Asked how to overcome frustrations and personal limitations, the Pope recalled St Ignatius of Loyola's saying: "Act as if everything depended on you, knowing that in reality everything depends on God."

Responding to a question about the value of work, he pointed to the hidden years of Jesus' life, during which the Son of God learned a trade and worked as a carpenter.

"When you work, study, or spend time with your friends, do so with love and offer it to the Lord," he said. "In this way, your work too becomes prayer and a path to holiness." **Devin Watkins, *Vatican News***

Young Catholics discover the gift of every person

Marlene Wargis

CHERAS: A total of 24 youth and nine young adults gathered at the Church of St Francis of Assisi from November 7-9 for a three-day Catholic formation programme, *Persons Are Gifts* (PAG).

Organised by the Church of St Jude the programme brought together young men and women from the Church of St Jude, Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Cathedral of St John the Evangelist and Chapel of Kristus Aman. The programme was facilitated by an experienced PAG team from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang.

Developed in the late 1980s by the late Fr Ignatius Huan at St Theresa's Church, Melaka, PAG is designed for young Catholics, typically aged 12 to 15, to help them discover their identity and self-worth as children of God while learning to recognise and respect the dignity of others.

At the heart of the programme was the simple yet profound analogy of a gift. Just as the value of a gift is not determined by its wrapping, participants were reminded that a person's worth is not defined by outward appearance, but by the dignity and goodness within. The analogy encouraged them to look beyond appearances and recognise the unique value of every person.



Throughout the camp, the facilitators emphasised the importance of recognising oneself and others as gifts from God. Through engaging sessions, group activities, skits, songs and dances, the team kept the participants energised and enthusiastic. Praise and worship also provided opportunities for the young people to deepen their faith and relationship with God.

Parish priest, Fr Simon Labrooy, expressed his joy at seeing the young people and parish facilitators come together for this meaningful experience. He encouraged the participants to bring home what they had learnt and to continue discovering, appreciating and celebrating the uniqueness and dignity of every person as a precious gift, created in the image and likeness of God.

Beyond the formation of the youths, the programme also served as a learning opportunity for nine young adults preparing to become PAG facilitators and mentors. Equipped with the knowledge and skills gained during the three days, they hope to bring the programme to more young people in their respective parishes.



A highlight of the programme was *Talent Night*, which brought parents and family members together to watch the youths showcase their talents through acting, singing and dancing. Beyond the performances, the evening reinforced one of PAG's central messages: that each person's talents are gifts from God, meant to be shared with others.

As the camp drew to a close on the final day, the focus shifted towards relationships and the practical application of what the participants had learnt. They reflected on how they could live out their understanding of being gifts in their relationships with one another, their parents and, most importantly, with God.

The three-day experience was more than just a camp or a series of learning sessions. It was an opportunity for the young people to discover their identity, recognise their God-given worth and appreciate the people whom God has placed in their lives.

Indeed, the message of PAG was clear: We are all gifts from God, called to be gifts to one another.





CHOICE KL SPREADS JOY AT BEAUTIFUL GATE

Gracianne Bosco

PETALING JAYA: What began as a community outreach to bring joy and encouragement to others became an experience of friendship, gratitude and shared blessings for members of CHOICE English Kuala Lumpur (CEKL).

On October 17, the CEKL 110 team and fellow Choicees visited Beautiful Gate Foundation in Petaling Jaya, a centre serving persons with physical disabilities, as part of their Make A Difference (M.A.D.) project. The initiative, undertaken after the CHOICE weekend programme, encourages participants to put their faith into action by reaching out to those in need.

After weeks of juggling work commitments and deadlines, the visit offered the team an opportunity to set aside their busy schedules, connect with others and reflect on what truly matters in life.

Preparations began six weeks earlier, with the team working together to raise funds and organise activities. The entire CEKL 110 group contributed to the fundraising effort, exceeding their initial target. This enabled them to purchase additional provisions requested by the foundation and present a love offering from the remaining funds.

The residents welcomed the visitors with warm smiles, and what began with tentative introductions soon developed into lively conversations and new friendships.

Divided into four groups, the Choicees and residents spent time getting to know one another before participating in ice-breaking games. Initial shyness quickly gave way to laughter, friendly competition and cheerful exchanges as everyone joined in the activities.

A shared lunch provided further opportunities for conversation and fellowship, followed by a relaxing afternoon movie session. Before leaving, the team distributed specially prepared goodie bags to the residents.

Yet, the most meaningful part of the visit was not the provisions delivered or the activities organised, but the relationships formed and the simple joy of being present to one another.

As the team bid farewell, they carried home a renewed sense of gratitude and peace. The experience reminded them that making a difference does not always require grand gestures. Sometimes, it begins with a willingness to give one's time, listen, share a laugh and make someone feel valued.

While the Choicees had arrived hoping to share Christ's love and joy, they discovered that they, too, had received these gifts through the warmth and friendship of the residents.

The visit was a reminder that Christian service is not simply about what we give to others, but also about recognising the blessings we receive when we open our hearts to them.





Aim high and put faith into action

ISLAMABAD: Young Catholics were encouraged to aim high in their studies, remain rooted in their faith and use their talents to serve society as students from 43 schools were honoured at a diocesan catechetical ceremony in Pakistan.

Organised by the Diocesan Catechetical Centre of Islamabad–Rawalpindi, the 15th Diploma Distribution Ceremony recognised students' dedication and achievements in catechetical and Christian formation programmes.

Archbishop Joseph Arshad presided at the opening Mass, attended by students, teachers, principals, parents and priests from schools under the Diocesan Board of Education.

In his homily, he reminded the young people that Christian education involves more than classroom learning. It helps them understand the Church's teachings and Christian history, form their consciences and grow in a living relationship with Christ.

He encouraged students to take their studies seriously, set high goals and work diligently towards their future. Highlighting opportunities in the civil service, government and judiciary, he urged them to develop their abilities and prepare for positions of responsibility.

Education, he emphasised, is both a means of personal growth and an opportunity to contribute to the common good. Students were encouraged to remain committed to their Christian values as they prepared to serve the Church, their country and society.

The students also took centre stage in a programme of tableaux and speeches highlighting Gospel values and the significance of the Year of Children. Their presentations explored faith, love, compassion, service, respect and responsibility, showing how Christian teachings can be lived out each day.

The programme gave them opportunities to share their talents, build confidence and learn from one another. Shields, medals and diploma certificates were presented in recognition of their efforts and achievements.

Addressing parents and guardians, Archbishop Arshad urged them to take an active interest in their children's faith formation and help them practise Christian values at home. Cooperation between families, teachers and the Church, he said, helps young people grow into responsible citizens who understand their Christian identity.

He also highlighted the diocese's vision of a Church strengthened through education, practical skills and fidelity to the Gospel, with young people equipped to put their faith into action. **Catholic Diocese of Islamabad–Rawalpindi**

Cricket builds friendships across parishes



ISLAMABAD: Young Catholics from parishes across the Diocese of Islamabad–Rawalpindi put their cricketing skills to the test while building friendships and learning lessons in teamwork, patience and respect during the seventh Diocesan Cricket Tournament.

Held over a period of two months, the competition brought parish teams together for fellowship and healthy competition, encouraging players to recognise one another's talents and form friendships outside their own communities.

St John Paul II, Islamabad, emerged as champions after defeating Our Lady of Fatima parish, Islamabad, in a nine-over final. Both teams received medals and certificates, with the champions lifting the winners' cup and Our Lady of Fatima taking home the runner-up cup.

Archbishop Joseph Arshad, who attended the closing ceremony as chief guest, offered the young players further encouragement by sharing his vision of establishing a cricket academy for Catholic cricketers.

The proposed academy would give players opportunities to receive training and develop their sporting abilities, reflecting his desire to nurture young people's potential through organised sport.

He also recalled organising cricket tournaments for Catholic youth during his time in Bangladesh, where those efforts continued to be remembered and appreciated. His experience highlighted the lasting difference that investing time and care in young people can make.

Throughout the tournament, the emphasis extended from sporting ability to character: respecting opponents, exercising patience, adapting to difficult situations and responding graciously to victory and defeat.

For the young participants, the competition offered opportunities to learn from one another and strengthen their sense of belonging to the wider Catholic community.

At the close, the teams were encouraged to carry that same spirit into everyday life — supporting one another, showing respect and building unity within the Church. The hope was that the friendships and sportsmanship nurtured on the pitch would continue long after the final match. **Catholic Diocese of Islamabad–Rawalpindi**



In the spirit of St Joseph

Remembering Joseph Tony Lim Chin Hau



Many will remember the widespread praise celebrating entrepreneur Tony Lim, the visionary who brought Southeast Asian culinary culture to the global stage. The tributes honouring his entrepreneurship, generosity, warmth, and humility were entirely true. By every earthly measure, he achieved the dream: prominence, influence, and an enduring legacy.

Yet while the world celebrated Tony Lim, very few truly knew Joseph Tony. This is where his deeper story begins, not with the empire he built, but with how the Good Shepherd left the ninety-nine to find him.

Tony's journey began with his mother faithfully leading her eldest son down the road to church. Back then, faith could not easily breach his intellect; he spent years trying to rationalise what can only be received by grace. Still, God was quietly shaping him. Tony was a natural leader among his siblings and cousins, rallying them into new adventures. Most telling was his heart: long before he recognised the Giver of all good gifts, he lived with an open-handed desire to share everything.

Stories of that open-handedness were endless. When an upset customer confronted him, Tony set aside pride, refunded the man from his own pocket, and took him for *teh tarik*, turning friction into a lifelong friendship. On a stormy night, seeing a young employee stranded trying to go back to his family but couldn't ride his motorbike in the downpour, Tony handed over his car keys without hesitation. As his sister fondly recalled, Tony simply loved sharing his blessings, holding worldly possessions loosely as tools to bring joy to others.

I experienced that warmth firsthand a decade ago on a bicycle. Between early-morning rides and quiet miles, an unspoken friendship took root. Noticing the crucifix around my neck one morning, he asked, "Bro, you're Christian right?" When I replied that I was Catholic, his features softened. He spoke of his mother and childhood faith, admitting his analytical mind could never force God into a logical framework. We left it there, simply riding together as good friends.



Joseph Tony at his baptism with his sister, Jojo Lim, and godparent, Andrew Jude Teo.

Years passed, careers blossomed, and our catch-ups grew rare.

Then illness struck with sudden weight, stripping away earthly momentum. While undergoing treatment far from home in Austria, Tony sent a message from a quiet local parish: "Hey, I got a crucifix for you. I'll see you when I'm back. Do you think you can go to church with me?"

Time stood still. Even in deep suffering, his instinct was to give. Behind that gift lay surrender: the fortress of his intellect had yielded to grace. The Good Shepherd was leading His lost sheep home.

Back home, off to church we went. That path soon brought him to RCIA at the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya. Guided by the facilitators, scripture, and community, his heart opened. He found deep solace in Fr Alvin Ng SJ's sharings, approaching the altar with profound humility, never once trading on his prestige.

Throughout those sessions, Tony quietly endured severe physical pain. Yet his attendance was relentless, his gentle smile unwavering. At Mass, he summoned every ounce of strength to sit on the hard wooden pews, standing whenever his body allowed. In his quiet fortitude, I was constantly reminded of the suffering of Christ.

Soon came the day of his baptism, sealing his search. Gazing up at the crucifix, his face reflected something I will never forget: worn by illness, yet radiant with joy and a quiet, St Joseph-like peace.

Even as his health declined earlier this year, his instinct to pour outward never faded. His friend Mark Darren witnessed that same self-emptying love. When Mark's father fell ill, Tony insisted, "Spend time with your dad first," pushing business aside, and remained a pillar of prayer when he passed. Facing discouraging scans, Tony simply resolved, "This time, I'll restart the journey with even stronger faith." When Mark offered daily prayers, Tony whispered, "This itself is all I would ever need."

By April, Tony volunteered for Sunday RCIC children's ministry. "I love children," he told Mark. "Pray I can make it more fun for them." He wanted young hearts to know Jesus not as an abstract concept, but as a best friend walking beside them.

The last time I saw him at church, surrounded by his family and his two precious girls, he carried an unmistakable grace and a radiant glow. We embraced, spoke of the future, and said our goodbyes. Six months later, the Shepherd called him home.

Tony often thanked me for walking this road with him. What he never realised was that I was the one truly blessed, honoured beyond measure to witness the Shepherd carry His sheep across the finish line.

Looking back, I realise something profound: Like his patron St Joseph, Tony did not preach long sermons; his faith was spoken in deeds. He was there walking beside his mother to church, pouring tea with a stranger, handing over car keys in the rain, and bearing silent agony on wooden pews with a smile. The world chased after Tony Lim. But God had already marked him as Joseph Tony: a man whose hands were always open, whose heart was always gentle, and who was finally, gloriously carried home into his Father's arms. **Andrew Jude Teo (with accounts by Mark Darren & Jojo Lim)**

MEMORIAM

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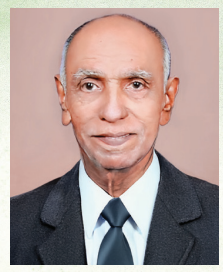
In Loving Memory of



Eruthyanathan @ Rogers

Departed:
November 23, 2023

"Happy the man who has placed his trust in the Lord."
Psalm 40:4

Forever cherished by family and all loved ones.

In Loving Memory of



Peter & Stella Dass

26th Anniversary	13th Anniversary
From the Lord: 16 July 1921	From the Lord: 6 June 1931
To the Lord: 17 June 2000	To the Lord: 29 November 2013

Close in our hearts you will stay, loved and remembered everyday by Children, Grandchildren and loved ones.

31st Anniversary
In Cherished Memory of



Ignatius Wilson Cherian
25.1.1965 - 20.11.1995

The day you were born
The sun rose in our lives
Though you are gone
That sun still shines.

Deeply and dearly missed



†

2nd Heavenly Anniversary
In Loving Memory of My Beloved Mum,
Madona M. M. Pereira
(Mrs Antony)
27 May 1948 – 24 November 2024

Mum, it has been two years since God called you home, yet my heart still longs for your voice, your prayers, and the warmth of your embrace.

Though tears still fall and I miss you beyond words, I find peace knowing you rest in our Lord's loving arms, embraced by His eternal light and peace.

I entrust you to His mercy, believing we will meet again in His heavenly home. Until then, I will carry you in my heart forever. Forever my mother, forever my guiding angel.

Loved beyond words, missed beyond measure.
Your loving daughter Claina Antonette a/p Antony.

NOTICE

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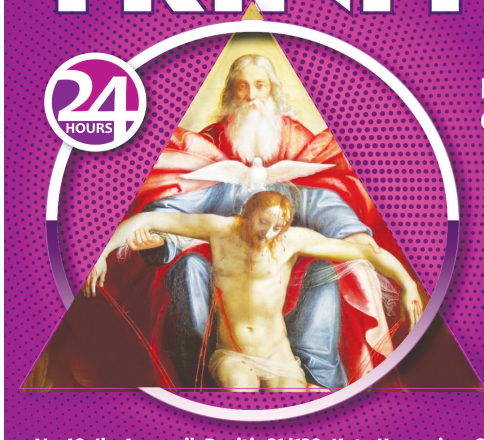

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Pope Leo brings hope across South America

VATICAN: From encounters with vulnerable communities in Uruguay to appeals for reconciliation in Argentina and a heartfelt homecoming in Peru, Pope Leo XIV's November 6–17 apostolic journey to South America has highlighted the Church's mission of faith, solidarity and hope.

In Uruguay, the Pope encouraged Catholics to live their faith through compassion and service. Visiting families in Montevideo's Casavalle neighbourhood, he emphasised human dignity and solidarity with those facing poverty and social exclusion. He also led a prayer vigil at Centenary Stadium and celebrated Mass at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Thirty-Three in Florida.

In Argentina, the homeland of his predecessor, Pope Francis, the Pontiff called for reconciliation and greater concern for the vulnerable. His encounters included visits to a residential facility for people with disabilities in Claypole and inmates at a federal prison in Buenos Aires.

A highlight was the Nov 11 Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Luján, Argentina's national Marian shrine, where he urged the faithful to overcome divisions and renew their missionary commitment.

The final stage brought Pope Leo to Peru, a country close to his heart, where he had served for many years as a missionary and later as Bishop of Chiclayo.

Welcomed warmly in Lima on Nov 11, he emphasised dialogue, human dignity and solidarity, while recalling the people and experiences that had shaped his priestly and pastoral life.

At press time on November 13, the Pope was continuing his visit to Peru, with a return to Chiclayo and visits to Cajamarca, Cusco and Pucallpa on his itinerary. He was scheduled to return to Rome on Nov 17.

Across the three nations, his message has been consistent: Christian faith must find expression in compassion, reconciliation and service, particularly towards those most in need.





Uruguay, Nov 6-8, 2026



(Vatican Media/Simone Risoluti)

Argentina, Nov 8-11, 2026



Pope Leo XIV stands before prisoners at the federal prison complex in Buenos Aires, Argentina. (Vatican Media)

Peru, Nov 11-17, 2026



(Vatican Media)



(OSV News photo/Yara Nardi)

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