The Catholic Weekly
HERALD

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Mission Statement

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

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
Phil 4:12-13



Many cultures, one welcome ■ P4



A shared loss, different grief ■ P7



The good you choose can change a life ■ P16

Fifty million ‘Hail Marys’ rising to Heaven

VATICAN: “Give us peace!” With this shared plea, children joined Pope Leo XIV in a worldwide Rosary for peace, as he urged them to turn their prayers into good deeds and acts of love.

At the Grotto of Lourdes in the Vatican Gardens, children from schools and parishes around Rome prayed with the Pope, united spiritually with young people across the globe through Aid to the Church in Need’s (ACN) One Million Children Praying the Rosary initiative.

About 1,300 people, including 700 children, attended the October 1 gathering. Held over an entire week for the first time, the campaign ran until October 7, the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, enabling families, schools and communities across continents to participate.

Pope Leo welcomed the children warmly, drawing them into a conversation about the love at the heart of their prayer.

“We have gathered together to be with the two people who love us more than anyone else. Who are they?” he asked, reminding them that Jesus and His mother, Mary, never leave them alone.

He then invited them to respond together: “I love you, Jesus. I love you, Mary.”

From that expression of love came their petition for “a special gift: peace for all the children of the world”, especially those living where there is war.

Together with a child, the Pope offered a small bouquet of flowers to Our Lady — a simple expression of love before a prayer embracing the needs of a wounded world.

Each decade was recited in a different language — Italian, Spanish, Urdu, German and Arabic. Across those languages, the intention remained the same: peace for people whose lives have been disrupted by conflict, persecution and uncertainty.

The prayers remembered children in Ukraine and all victims of war; families in Lebanon, Syria and the Holy Land; persecuted Christians in Pakistan and elsewhere; reconciliation in South Sudan; and families in Cuba and Venezuela.

Before the Rosary, Cardinal Kurt Koch, ACN International President and Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, explained that the initiative invited children to discover that, together with Mary, they could bring the world’s suffering to Jesus.

The trusting voices of the youngest, he said, find a special welcome in God’s heart.

“As we contemplate the risen Christ, we ask that fear and hatred may not have the final word,” he said.

Through the Luminous Mysteries, Pope Leo invited the children to reflect on moments when Jesus brought light and peace into people’s lives: his baptism in the Jordan, the wedding at Cana, the proclamation of the Kingdom, the Transfiguration and the institution of the Eucharist.

Remembering these gifts, he encouraged them to express their gratitude: “Thank you, Jesus!” Then, with confidence, to ask together: “Give us peace!”

For ACN Executive President Regina Lynch, the hope was that this shared prayer would become part of family life, continuing throughout October and beyond. The initiative began with a small group of children in Venezuela in 2005 and grew into an international network involving families, schools and parishes. She described the Pope’s participation as “a dream come true”.

Pope Leo reminded the children that their prayer was part of a much larger offering, joining young voices in every corner of the world.

“Think about it,” he said. “Fifty million ‘Hail Marys’ rising to Heaven from every part of the world and in every language, asking for peace, joining together like one enormous Rosary, embracing all the continents, peoples, and nations of the world.”

He brought that worldwide hope back to their everyday relationships. Praying for peace, he reminded them, also meant committing themselves to kindness at home, at school, in catechism classes, with their parents and even during games and sport.

“Prayers must also be accompanied by good deeds and acts of love,” he said. “That is how peace grows.” **Agencies**



Children raise their Rosary beads before the start of a prayer marathon in a Catholic school in Manila. (Photo by Maria Tan for LiCAS.news)

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

From the Editor's Desk

Make mental health a pastoral priority



A teenager grows quieter, but everyone assumes it is a phase. A professional gets through the working day, then goes home exhausted by the effort of appearing fine. A daughter caring for an elderly parent says she is managing because she cannot imagine what would happen if she admitted she was not.

Mental distress is often hidden in ordinary lives. We hear of young people taking their own lives and of people who seemed to be coping until they could no longer do so. We grieve when tragedy brings their suffering to light. Then the headlines fade, while others continue to carry burdens we have yet to notice.

Pope Leo XIV's prayer intention for October offers the Church a clear invitation: to pray that mental health ministry be established throughout the Church and help overcome the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental illnesses. Prayer is where we begin. It must also shape the welcome a person in distress finds when they come to us.

At the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026, delegates reflected on Family, Church, Ecology and Society. Mental health did not emerge as a distinct concern in the synthesis presented to the gathering. It may have been raised in individual *Conversations in the Spirit*; a synthesis cannot carry every voice. When the pastoral pathways flowing from MPC2026 are drawn up, mental health must be named explicitly. The pathways should set out how dioceses and parishes will work with qualified services, support caregivers and help people seek care without shame. The need is already present in our homes, schools, workplaces and Church communities.

Depression does not always look like sadness. Someone may still go to work, attend Mass, answer messages and smile at familiar faces. They may also be finding it harder each day to sleep, concentrate or believe that things can improve. Shame can keep them silent, especially when they fear being told to pray harder or be more grateful. Faith can sustain a person through illness; it should never be used to dismiss the need for care.

Caregivers, too, can disappear behind the needs of the people they love. Looking after an ageing parent, an ill spouse or a child who needs constant support may be an act of deep devotion. It can also mean interrupted sleep, lost income, difficult decisions and the fear of making a mistake. A son or daughter may say, "I'm fine," because anything else feels disloyal. Love does not remove the need for rest, practical help or someone who will listen.

Mental health ministry does not require parish volunteers to become clinicians. It calls us to listen without judgement, recognise when someone needs professional care and know how to help them reach it. Confidentiality matters. Nobody should fear that speaking honestly to someone in the Church will turn their pain into parish gossip. A person's suffering does not make them any less welcome or any less a part of the Body of Christ.

There are practical ways to begin. Parishes can build links with qualified services and create spaces where people can speak openly. They can support caregivers with a meal, an errand, a few hours of respite or a regular visit long after others assume the family is coping. Priests, religious and lay leaders need that same freedom to seek help for themselves.

Each of us has a part. Instead of asking "Are you all right?" while hurrying away, we might ask, "How are you managing this week?" — and stay long enough to hear the answer. We can take a young person's despair seriously, check on someone caring for an ageing relative, and remember that seeking treatment is not a failure of faith. Prayer and professional care can belong together.

MPC2026 called us to *Celebrate, Listen* and *Walk Together*. If those words are to shape our pastoral pathways, they must include people struggling with mental illness and caregivers close to exhaustion. Walking together begins when we notice their burden. It becomes real when our Church makes room, offers help and stays beside them.

● *See also page 10*

Patricia Pereira

Called to the feast, clothed in grace

Reflecting on our **Sunday Readings**
with Bro Alvin Lucas

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: Isaiah 25:6-10;
Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20;
Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14 or 22:1-10

There is a mountain in today's readings, and if we are honest, there is a mountain in every human life. Isaiah takes us there first: a mountain where God prepares a feast for all peoples, wipes away every tear, and destroys death forever. Psalm 23 answers with a shepherd who leads us through the valley and sets a table for us even there. Both readings point toward the Eucharist, the banquet to which Christ calls each of us.

Paul shows what it means to live on that mountain. His confidence is not theory but testimony, forged in prison and hardship: "There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength." He has known abundance and he has known need, and in both he learned the same secret, which is surrender. Paul does not master his circumstances through his own resilience. He is mastered by grace, and that surrender, not stoic self-sufficiency, becomes his freedom.

Then the Gospel turns the mirror toward us. A king prepares a wedding feast for his son, and those first invited will not come. Some brush the invitation aside and go off to their farm or their business; others seize the servants and mistreat them. Notice how ordinary most of the refusals are. There is no dramatic rejection of God, only busyness, and good things crowding out the best. We can decline the king's invitation just as quietly, by drifting from Sunday Mass, from prayer, from Confession, until God becomes one commitment among many.

Yet the king's love is not defeated by refusal. He sends his servants to the main roads to gather everyone they can find, "good and bad alike," and the hall is filled. This is the scandal and the mercy of the Gospel. The invitation is not earned. Through Christ's death we are made equal, sinners and saints welcomed to the same table and given new life in Baptism. If you have ever felt too unworthy to walk through the church door, this parable is for you: the servants did not check anyone's record.

But the story does not end with the welcome. One guest is found without a wedding garment, and when the king asks how he came in, he has nothing to say. It is a hard ending, and it is meant to be. The garment cannot be a price of admission, since no one gathered from the roads could have brought one. Christian tradition sees in it the white garment received at Baptism, the gift of grace itself. The man's fault is not that he was poor or a sinner. He accepted the invitation but refused the transformation, present at the feast yet unchanged by it.

This is the heart of Jesus' warning: "Many are called, but few are chosen." No one is excluded by God; the call goes out to all. To be chosen, in the Gospel's sense, does not mean being favoured over others. It means allowing the call to become a life, letting grace reshape how we actually live. It is never our own achievement, since the garment is given, but it is not automatic either, because a gift must be put on. That happens in small, unglamorous choices: forgiving the person we would rather not forgive, showing mercy when it costs us, returning to the sacraments after we have drifted. Jesus does not speak these words to make us anxious but to make us honest. The question is not "Am I invited?" We are. It is "Am I wearing what I was given?"

I recognise myself in all of this. When I first said yes to the call to the priesthood, I did not know what awaited me in seminary formation, and I still do not fully know what the future holds. There have been, and still are, days of uncertainty, when the valley feels very real and the mountain very far. On those days I have learned that being chosen is not a single moment but a daily putting on, choosing again to trust. Paul's words have become mine: I can do all things in the One who strengthens me. He has not disappointed me. He has not neglected me. He is the Shepherd who led me when I could not see the path, and who prepared a table for me long before I ever thought to ask for one.

So the mountain puts a question to each of us: who is my mountain? We have all been called through Baptism into this feast, this hope, this new life. One thing remains to be decided. Will we grow into the grace already given and wear the garment we were handed at the door, or stand in the hall as spectators to our own invitation?

Full surrender. Everything in Him. That is the mountain worth climbing.

Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

October

5-23	Meeting – *Amoris Laetitia,* Rome
24	Meeting – KL Archdiocesan Pastoral Team
25	Pastoral Visit and Mass – Church of St Theresa, Nilai
26	Meeting – Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Core Team

Penang Diocese

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

October

17	Confirmation – Church of Sacred Heart, Kulim at 6.00pm
18	Confirmation – Taiping Catholic Church at 9.00am
20	Meeting – Council of Priests, Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam at 10.00am
21-22	Clergy Monthly Recollection with Religious – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
25	Confirmation – Church of Risen Christ, Air Itam at 9.00am
26	Meeting – Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Core Team

Malacca Johore Diocese

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

October

12-13	Meeting and Outing – South Johor Clergy
14	Meeting – Diocesan Finance Council, MAJODI Centre
15	Meeting – MJDYPN, MAJODI Centre
17	Meeting – Council of Pastoral Services, Church of St Louis, Kluang
18	Confirmation – Church of St Theresa, Melaka
18	Confirmation – Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Krubong
20-21	Clergy Monthly Recollection – Good Shepherd Catholic Seminary, Melaka
20	Diaconate Ordination – Gabriel Puvaneswaran Pillai, Church St Mary Church, Ayer Salak
24	Mass – 100th Anniversary, Church of St Simon, Labis
25	Confirmation – Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak
26	Meeting – Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Core Team

You are the Church

Aaron Lim

PENANG: "You are not outsiders or guests in the Church, you are the Church."

These words of affirmation captured the spirit of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees celebration at the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows on September 27, reminding City Parish's migrant communities that they belong at the heart of parish life.

Parishioners from the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, South Korea, Pakistan and other countries gathered for the celebration. Many wore traditional attire, giving colourful expression to the diversity of a community united in Christ.

Fr Fabian Dicom, National Director of Caritas Malaysia, celebrated Mass, with Penang-based Korean priest Fr Antony Lee Chang Seub concelebrating. Deacons Patrick Hilary Sandnasamy and Paul Kang assisted.

National flags were carried during the entrance procession, while the Indonesian community offered an offertory dance and representatives of the different communities presented gifts.

In his homily, Fr Fabian called for a shared commitment to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrant families and children into community life.

Reflecting on the celebration's theme, *Even just one of these children,* drawn from the Gospel of Matthew, he urged the faithful to see the world through Christ's eyes and recognise His presence in those who are small, vulnerable or easily overlooked.



Fr Fabian Dicom blessing the parishioners.

"One child has a name, a family, hopes and fears," he said, reminding parishioners that children needing care and support may be living among them. He encouraged the community to respond with empathy and become bridges to the help these children in need.

Fr Fabian also challenged the faithful to look beyond labels such as "migrant", "refugee" or "foreigner", and recognise each person as a child of God.

"When we meet a person face to face, the labels disappear; for we see a father, a mother or a child as a human being who needs hope," he said.

That invitation took on a personal dimension through a short sharing by Sybil, a Pakistani child receiving assistance and education at the parish's Fr Julien Agape Learning Centre. Her sharing brought the needs and hopes of migrant children closer to those present.

The celebration continued with lunch and fellowship at the school canteen, where home-cooked dishes from different countries were shared alongside traditional songs and cultural presentations.

Around the Eucharistic table and over a shared meal, the community gave visible expression to belonging. The invitation now is to carry that spirit into everyday parish life, so that every family finds companionship, every child receives care, and each person's gifts have a place to grow.

Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #290

F12 MJD NEWS UPDATES



Welcome dear friends,

Sometimes I wonder why national leaders do not know how to rejoice at the daily noble, the beautiful, the truthful and humane happenings and events that occur about us.

The Asian Games successes and sacrifices, the competitors and their families' commitment, the dedicated coaches and their teams, and the live and online supporters, make us proud to be Malaysians.

I can smile with the competitors, the good Samaritans, the animal rescuers and the many acts of random kindness. But it is difficult to be kind to ambitious, greedy and divisive national leaders. The ordinary men and women of the street have more love for the land than our politicians.

Local Takes! Everyday Quirks, Griping or Gracious!

The M40 or middle-income group have resorted to side gig-economy hustles to stay afloat, when not entitled to B40 perks.

Public trust erodes with an apparent "two-tier justice system" favouring the wealthy and the elite.

Voters are increasingly shifting towards BN and PN, perceiving PH's pragmatism and political compromises.

When Malaysians say: "I am on the way", it means I have just got up or I am just leaving the house or office.

One remarked: "Malaysia only has two seasons: hot and hotter, with a chance of a sudden flash flood."

A visitor observed: "Where else in the world can you string four languages in a single sentence and have absolutely everyone understand you perfectly".

"No matter how serious the situation is, a Malaysian can defuse it by simply saying, 'Relax lah, bro.'"

Reading the Signs: A Voice in the Wilderness

Pope Leo XIV wrapped up his ***four-day historic visit to France*** (September 25–28, 2026), drew over 1.3 million people and:

1. Condemned assisted dying, euthanasia, abortion, surrogacy, and genetic manipulation; and instead protect ***every human life*** as an absolute duty and the foundational pillar of all human rights.

2. Cautioned against "losing our humanity amid a paradise of machines," and urged strict international regulation so that ***AI serves human dignity*** rather than exploiting or replacing people.

3. Said ***true peace*** relies on dialogue and justice rather than a balance of power; and warned that international bodies like the UN risk becoming ineffective "charades" if leaders dismiss dialogue.

4. Argued that ***authentic secularity*** does not banish religion from society, but instead values faith communities as vital educational and social resources for the common good.

Thought for the Week: The decorated chair

An elderly lady was sick for many years, and the new parish priest visited her at home. She was seated on a chair and next to her, there was a decorated chair and a few others, arranged to face her.

The priest asked the lady why only one chair was decorated and others were not. She explained, that in the beginning it was difficult to accept the sickness but slowly she came to realise the presence of Jesus near her. This chair is for Him to sit next to me and I converse with Him.

After a few weeks the daughter of the sick lady dropped in to see the parish priest to tell him how her mother died the other day. She said, 'yesterday afternoon my mother died resting her head on the decorated chair'.

Lesson from the aged mother: Jesus was there. He sat with her till her passover. Create a space for God and "God is there".

QnQ? Q asks: Can we see God in the here and now?

1. ***Jesus saw God in all that He saw***. What's wonderful about this is that it didn't matter whether Jesus saw His own mother or a prostitute, the joy of those gathered at a wedding or the sorrow of those gathered at the burial of a loved one. It didn't matter whether He saw His Disciples or His executioners, or a bird or a tree — Jesus saw God in all that He saw.

2. Jesus tells us, "You have eyes to see but you do not see" (Mark 8:18). You have not learned to ***awaken to your God-given capacity to see*** the God-given, godly nature of yourselves, others, and all things.

3. Never blame people in life. ***Good people*** give you happiness; ***Bad people*** give you experiences; ***Worst people*** give you a lesson; The best people give you memories. ***God is only a whisper away.***

The Spirit @ work: "Only love is trustworthy; only love is credible. While unity attracts, division scatters." ***Pope Leo XIV***

Something to tickle you: "If you concentrate on finding whatever is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul". ***Harold S. Kushner***

Bishop Bernard Paul



DIOCESE OF PENANG

PKK/BDN/2026/10/243

Notifications and Updates

1. Sacerdotal Ordination of Deacons Ashley Stephen Chau and Patrick Hilary Sandnasamy

I am pleased to inform that Deacon Ashley Stephen Chau and Deacon Patrick Hilary Sandnasamy will be called to the Order of Presbyterate on November 10, 2026 at 6.00pm at the Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam. Let us continue to pray for them as they prepare for their priestly ordination. *bit.ly/3VnopVD*

2. Incardination of Rev Fr Oliver Tham

The Diocese of Penang joyfully announces the formal incardination of Rev Fr Oliver Tham Sai Kit into our diocesan presbyterate, effective August 19, 2026. Following his canonical transfer from the Franciscan Friars (OFM), Fr Oliver has taken his formal Oath of Fidelity before Cardinal Sebastian Francis. We welcome Fr Oliver Tham permanently into our diocesan family and invite everyone to keep him and his ongoing ministry at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in your prayers.

3. Mission month, missionary October — Pray, Reflect, Contribute to the Church's mission of evangelisation

On World Mission Sunday, every Catholic community is invited to pray and offer spiritual and material sacrifices for the missionary efforts in areas of evangelisation and the support of young Churches. Through the intercession of St Therese of Lisieux, let us continue our missionary journey with joy and zeal in the Holy Spirit especially in this month dedicated for mission.

The World Mission Sunday will be celebrated on the weekend of October 18, 2026, with the theme, *One in Christ, united in mission.* Sharing the message of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV for the 100th World Mission Day 2026 along with the video for the mission month.

Kindly be reminded that the first collection at every Mass will be for the Diocese of Rome, joining in the missionary spirit of the whole Church, especially in areas where proclamation of the Gospel is only just beginning and where Church is still young.

May Blessed Fulton Sheen, longtime National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies who was recently beatified on September 24 in St Louis, Missouri intercede for all of us. *bit.ly/4rOGwQA*

Priests Appointments and Transfers for the Diocese of Penang

I have appointed the following priests:-

a) Rev Fr Anthony Liew as parish priest of Church of Risen Christ, Air Itam with effect from January 1, 2027.

b) Msgr Stephen Liew as parish priest of Church of Holy Name of Jesus, Balik Pulau with effect from January 1, 2027.

c) Rev Fr George Vaithynathan as parish priest of Taiping Catholic Church with effect from January 1, 2027.

d) Rev Fr Simon Anand as parish priest of Minor Basilica of St. Anne, Bukit Mertajam with effect from January 1, 2027.

e) Rev Fr Dominico Evan, CSE as parish priest of Church of Sacred Heart of Jesus, Kampar with effect from January 1, 2027.

f) Rev Fr Rudolf de Aquaviva, CSE as assistant priest of Church of Sacred Heart of Jesus, Kampar with effect from January 1, 2027.

Sebastian Francis

Cardinal Sebastian Francis

Many cultures, one welcome

Jane Buniel





Cultural performances by the local and migrant communities.

KUALA LUMPUR: National flags led the entrance procession, prayers rose in several languages, and familiar dishes brought people together after Mass. At the Church of St Joseph, Sentul, migrants, refugees and local Catholics shared a day of worship and friendship across cultures.

The September 20 gathering, organised by the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur's Migrant Ministry with the parish, drew more than 1,500 people ahead of the 112th World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Communities from Myanmar, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam joined local parishioners.

This year's theme, *Even just one of these children*, drew attention to children whose families have had to leave home and to the care each child deserves. It gave the celebration a purpose beyond the day's festivities: to ask how a community makes children and their families feel welcome and safe.

Archbishop Julian Leow presided at the multilingual Mass, concelebrating were Frs Christopher W. Soosaipillai, Frederick Joseph, Robert Kham, Sixtus Thawng and Mike Idoko. Representatives of seven communities carried their national flags in procession, each bringing a distinct identity into a shared act of worship.

Among the guests were Leyla Nugmanova, Deputy Representative of UNHCR Malaysia; Philippine Vice Consul Kirstoff Gail Ocampo; and Jocelyn Ortega, Philippine Labour Attaché at MWO Kuala Lumpur. Representatives of AOHD's umbrella ministries also attended, reflecting the partnerships that support migrants and refugees.

After Mass, an opening ceremony and the release of doves gave way to music, dance and food. A performance by local communities, with participation from Butterfly Community Centre, opened the cultural programme. At the food stalls, visitors sampled traditional dishes and had time to meet the people who prepared them.

Thirteen groups competed in *Migrants Got Talent*. Performers included members of Butterfly Community Centre and EduCare, migrant communities, and groups from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist and the Church of Our Lady of Fatima. Solo performers and local talents also took the stage.

Last year's champions, the Indonesian St Lourdes team from Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang, returned to perform their winning dance before handing over the trophy. The Myanmar group won the 2026 title with *Thway Chinn Tote Yae Myay*. Sri Lankan dancers placed second with *Kolattam*, while the Filipino group Harmonic Cape Guitar from St John took third place.

Traditional dress awards celebrated Nigerian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Sabahan and Javanese cultures. The Sri Lankan community won the award for best decorated food stall, while a lucky draw added to the afternoon's excitement.

The organising committee, volunteers and participating communities made the gathering possible. Its lasting invitation, however, extends beyond a day of celebration. A welcome offered at Mass, over a meal or during a conversation can become the beginning of a relationship. For a child and family far from home, that relationship can help a new place feel less unfamiliar.

Friendship across borders



Migrant communities displaying their respective national flags.

KAJANG: Catholic migrants from Indonesia, Africa, Vietnam and Myanmar joined parishioners at the Church of the Holy Family for Migrant Sunday Mass on September 20. Their participation in the 9.30am celebration gave expression to the many cultures that make up the parish community.

The celebration echoed the theme of the 112th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, *Even Just One of These Children* (cf. Mt 18:10). In his message, Pope Leo XIV draws attention to the dignity of migrant and refugee children and the responsibility to welcome and protect them.

The Holy Family's flight into Egypt offered a reminder of what it means to leave home in search of safety. It invited parishioners to see the needs of families seeking refuge, especially children who long for a place where they can feel secure and welcome.

After Mass, representatives of the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) and UNHCR briefed refugees on the Refugee Medical Insurance (REMEDI) Programme and access to more affordable healthcare through insurance coverage. Fellowship and a sharing of gifts followed, giving parishioners and guests further time together.

The parish thanked its clergy Fr Michael Chua, Fr Bonaventure Rayappan, the Parish Coordinating Council, AOHD, UNHCR, volunteers and benefactors who helped make the celebration possible.

Migrant Sunday offered a simple hope for the parish: that every family who comes through its doors will find friendship, care and a place to belong.

A place to belong

Bernard Anthony

KAMPAR: A small piece of wood from the Church of the Sacred Heart's windows became an unusual keepsake for worshippers marking the 112th World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Presented with a crucifix keychain, it bore the words: "A piece of our Church, a piece of our history." For the migrants gathered there, the gift carried a message of welcome: this parish's story includes them.

About 220 migrants, many from Flores and Belu in Indonesia and from Timor-Leste, joined some 80 local parishioners and pilgrims for a Mass in Bahasa Malaysia on September 27. Some wore traditional attire. The migrant community helped coordinate the celebration, and its 38-member choir led the singing.

Parish priest, Fr Simon Anand, who presided at the Mass, drew attention to this year's theme, *Even Just One of These Children*. He spoke of children caught up in migration who may lose opportunities for education or face exploitation, child labour and abuse. Their vulnerability, he said, calls for protection and practical responses, not simply sympathy.

The day's Gospel offered another challenge. Jesus told the chief priests and elders that tax collectors and prostitutes were entering the Kingdom of God ahead of them. Fr Simon asked the congregation to consider whom society looks down upon today. The vulnerable person might be a migrant or a local resident, a child, an elderly person, someone with a disability, or someone carrying difficulties others cannot see.



Worshippers raising their crucifix keychains for blessing.

"How do we treat the most vulnerable among us?" he asked. Pope Leo XIV's message for the World Day urges the Church to see each migrant child as a person with a story, dignity and rights. Fr Simon called on the faithful to seek ways of protecting those exposed to exploitation and to uphold their human rights.

He offered a simple image to explain why people with greater needs may require greater care. "Love is like water," he said. When poured out, water flows first to the lowest point. In the same way, love should reach those who most need help. Justice does not always mean giving everyone the same thing, he explained, because people do not begin from the same place or carry the same burdens.

That concern should also shape how people use what they have received. Food thrown away could feed someone in need, Fr Simon observed. He urged parishioners to be mindful of waste and generous with resources that could help others.

His homily then turned from how the community treats vulnerable people to how it treats those seeking a fresh start. Like the religious leaders in the Gospel, he said, people can become quick to notice others' faults while overlooking their own need to change. Even after someone has repented, a community may continue to judge that person by the past.

"Gossip can be a barrier to repentance," he warned. Fr Simon said he hoped the Church in Kampar would be a place where people could return to God, seek healing and be welcomed. The call to repentance, he reminded the congregation, belongs to everyone.

A short video screened during the gathering showed the Borgo *Laudato Si'* project at Castel Gandolfo, on the papal estate near Rome. Its work training programmes include opportunities in agriculture, gardening and hospitality for people facing social vulnerability, among them migrants and refugees. Fr Simon pointed to it as an example of welcome taking practical form: giving people space and opportunities to rebuild their lives.

Towards the end of Mass, Fr Simon invited worshippers to raise their crucifix keychains for a blessing with holy water. He asked the migrants to pray with the crucifixes in their *kelompok* communities and to bring their pain and discouragement to Christ. He also encouraged them to pray the Rosary together each day during October, the month of Mary.

The celebration was seminarian Bro Clement Lee Swee Meng's last day in Kampar after a two-month pastoral assignment. Thanking Fr Simon and the parish community, he said their welcome and his encounters with migrants had taught him much about being a good shepherd. He encouraged the faithful to keep listening for God's voice and serving Him.

Migrants and local parishioners continued their fellowship over lunch at Mercy Hall. Some stayed on for karaoke, ending the day with music and laughter. The small piece of wood they took home recalled Fr Simon's hope for the parish: that those who come through its doors will find a place among its people.

Caritas Penang empowers refugee children



PENANG: For 30 Rohingya children, an outing with Caritas Penang offered a chance to learn something they could put into practice: how to reduce waste and care for the place where they live.

Caritas Penang and Parish Caritas brought the students to the Tzu Chi Environmental Protection and Education Centre as part of their observance of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees and the Season of Creation. Through games, a workshop and hands-on activities, Tzu Chi volunteers introduced the children to waste segregation and the 5Rs. A reflection session gave them time to consider what they had learnt.

The visit grew out of Caritas Penang's continuing relationship with a Rohingya community whose parents are determined to give their children an education. When the community's learning centre closed, the children continued their lessons in a small mosque. The cost of renting a place in the city made finding a replacement difficult.

Caritas Penang worked with their teacher, parents and supportive Malaysians to secure a new space for learning. Young adults from the community were encouraged to teach the younger children. The effort faced legal, protection and resource challenges, while parishes continued to offer reading materials, volunteer teachers and friendship.

The trip to Tzu Chi extended that learning beyond the classroom. It gave the children room to ask questions, try things for themselves and take part in caring for their surroundings. It also showed what becomes possible when communities share their knowledge and resources.

The initiative speaks to two invitations Pope Leo XIV has placed before the Church. His theme for the 112th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, "Even just one of these children", calls attention to the dignity and needs of every child affected by migration. In his message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, he urges a renewal of heart that leads to peace and care for the earth.

In Malaysia, some 215,600 refugees and asylum-seekers were registered with UNHCR at the end of February 2026. About 64,680 were children, and close to 90 per cent of those registered were from Myanmar. Behind those figures are families seeking safety and a future for their children.

For Caritas Penang, supporting the Rohingya community means staying alongside families as they pursue that future. A place to study, people willing to teach and an afternoon learning to care for the environment are distinct parts of that commitment. Together, they give children opportunities to learn, contribute and know that others care what happens to them.



A Tzu Chi volunteer introducing the children to waste segregation.

Parish turns care for creation into help for shelter animals

KUALA LUMPUR: Caring for God's creation sometimes begins with a simple question: What do you need? For the PIHDM members of the Church of the Risen Christ, that question led them to the Malaysia Animal Welfare Association (MAWA) pet shelter in Ulu Langat.

On September 26, ministry members visited the shelter to deliver supplies and spend time with its animals. The visit grew out of an earlier conversation about the help MAWA needed. A month beforehand, three ministry members had gone to the shelter to learn about its work and see how the parish could respond.

They found that MAWA was caring for approximately 360 dogs, 15 cats and several tortoises. Behind that figure were daily needs: food to provide, spaces to clean and animals requiring attention. Sustaining that work called for both willing hands and a steady supply of essentials.

The ministry invited parishioners to take part in whatever way they could. Some gave rice, dog and cat kibble, shampoo, detergents and turtle food, while others made cash donations. Parishioners were also encouraged to consider adopting an animal or joining the visit. Together, their contributions became a welcome supply of practical help, which the group handed over to the shelter's owner, Mr Mukunan.

The visit gave participants an opportunity to see the animals they were helping. Spending time with them brought a personal dimension to an appeal that had begun with a list of needed items. It also drew attention to the patient, ongoing work involved in caring for animals that depend on others.

The parish initiative reflected the theme of *Laudato Si'* Week 2026, *From Hope to Action*. Although the week was observed in May, its invitation to turn concern for our common home into practical steps remains relevant throughout the year.

For the Risen Christ community, the September visit was one such step. The parishioners could not meet every need at the shelter, but they could listen, gather what was needed and respond together. Their example is a reminder that care for Creation grows through choices within our reach — and through the willingness to keep making them.



PIHDM members at the MAWA pet shelter.



A faith worth passing on

Christopher Kushi

BUKIT MERTAJAM: Two hymns sung in Khmer filled the Minor Basilica of St Anne as 43 students from Cambodia joined the parish community for Mass on September 27. They had travelled to Malaysia with Bishop Olivier Schmitthaeusler MEP, Apostolic Vicar of Phnom Penh, and a group of Paris Foreign Missions (MEP) priests.

For the visitors, the pilgrimage was an opportunity to pray with Catholics in Malaysia and see how faith is lived in another country. For those who welcomed them, it was a chance to encounter a Church whose story holds both deep suffering and enduring hope.

The students belong to the St Justin School of Faith in Phnom Penh. Established in 2011, the school forms lay Catholics, many of them working adults, in Scripture, liturgy and pastoral leadership. They return to their communities equipped to serve as catechists, pastoral workers and parish leaders.

Their commitment carries particular meaning in Cambodia. During the Khmer Rouge regime of 1975 to 1979, the country suffered devastating loss, and the Catholic Church was almost destroyed. In the years that followed, missionaries and Cambodian Catholics worked to rebuild its communities. The students at St Justin are continuing that work through their own faith and service.

Presiding at the Mass, Bishop Olivier encouraged them to seek deeper roots in their faith. He said he had brought them to Malaysia partly so they could witness how Catholics here express their faith in family life, parish communities and devotion.

"Faith is lived in our daily lives," he said.

He reminded the congregation that faith is passed on through people. Historic churches and treasured places can tell its story, but the Gospel remains alive when disciples practise what they believe and share it with others. For young Catholics, too, an example of faith can begin with how they listen, serve and treat the people around them.

Bishop Olivier praised the harmony he had seen among Malaysia's diverse communities and encouraged Christians to build peace through mutual respect. "We must listen to one another, give witness through our lives, and continue proclaiming the Gospel," he said.

His commitment to education, social development and friendship between Catholics and Buddhists has also been recognised in Cambodia. On June 25, he received the Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Cambodia. Among his earlier honours are the Grand Order of National Merit, the Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Sahametrei, two ranks of the Royal Order of Monisaraphon and the Gold Medal of National Construction. He has also been granted Cambodian citizenship.

The pilgrims visited College General Major Regional Seminary, where rector Fr Ryan Innes recalled its founding by the MEP Fathers. "This is your homecoming: Welcome home!" he told them.

The visit also brought to mind Fr Marcel Truong Sang Samronh, a Cambodian who studied at College General in the 1970s alongside the future Cardinal Sebastian Francis. Cardinal Sebastian has recalled that, as violence overtook Cambodia, Marcel was offered the chance to go to safety in France. He chose instead to return to his homeland and be with his people. He was later lost during the Khmer Rouge years.

Marcel is among the Cambodian martyrs whose cause for beatification and canonisation is being studied by the Church. For the visiting students, his story gave College General a personal connection to their country's past. It also brought Bishop Olivier's message into focus: faith is passed on by people who choose to live it, even when that choice asks much of them.

Parishioner Faustina Wang said that, despite the language barrier, she was struck by the students' humility and friendliness. Their brief encounter gave her an opportunity to share how Catholics in Penang live their faith and to hear from her Cambodian brothers and sisters.

Bishop Olivier thanked Archbishop Julian Leow, Cardinal Sebastian Francis and their teams for welcoming the pilgrims. The students had come to learn from the Church in Malaysia. Through their songs, their presence and their commitment to serving at home, they offered something in return: a reminder that the faith we receive is also ours to carry forward.

Children's liturgy returns to Kristus Aman



Children listening intently as the facilitator breaks the Word of God.

KUALA LUMPUR: There was a special sense of joy at the Chapel of Kristus Aman as we welcomed back Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLOW) for our young parishioners.

After a period of absence, CLOW returned at the 8.30am Sunday Mass on September 27. Held once a month, it offers children aged 4 to 8 a chance to encounter the Word of God in a way they can understand.

During CLOW, the children are invited to listen to the Sunday Gospel, reflect on its message in a simpler way, and discover how Jesus' teachings can be lived out in their everyday lives — at home, in school and with their friends.

And, as children often do, they sometimes get straight to the heart of things. One of our little ones asked, "Is CLOW happening because we fall asleep during Mass?"

The innocent question brought a few smiles, but it also gave us a chance to explain CLOW's purpose. CLOW isn't about taking children away from Mass; it's about helping them come closer to Jesus in a way their little hearts can understand. It gives them a space to listen and discover that the Word of God speaks to them too. It makes them feel that they belong in church.

When Scripture is shared in a way that they understand, children can begin to recognise Jesus' love and carry what they learn into everyday life. Each encounter plants a seed of faith that families and the parish can nurture together.

"Our children are not just the future of the Church; they are very much a part of our parish community today. Through Children's Liturgy of the Word, we hope to help them encounter Jesus and understand His Word in a way that speaks to their young hearts. I encourage parents to bring their children and allow them to experience the joy of growing in faith together with their parish community," shared Fr William Michael, the Chapel Administrator of Kristus Aman.

As CLOW begins this new chapter at Kristus Aman, we hope children will look forward to hearing the Gospel and sharing what they have discovered with their families. We look forward to welcoming more children and helping each one know a simple truth: Jesus loves them and they belong to His Church. **Joanne Wong**

Mary's 'Yes' challenges pilgrims to look within

SHAH ALAM: Pilgrims came to the Church of the Divine Mercy to learn about Mary. Over 12 days, from August 28 to September 8, the Marian Convention also invited them to look honestly at their own lives. Mary said "Yes" to God without knowing where it would lead. What fears or uncertainties might be holding them back from answering His call?

The theme, *Where Mary Is, There Jesus Is*, shaped the gathering. Redemptorist Frs Patrick Massang, Charles Anthony Santhiyagu, Terence Wee and Sikstus Atawolo led the opening sessions in English, Tamil, Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia respectively. Reflecting on Mary as Mother of God and the mother who leads people to Christ, they invited pilgrims to see her "Yes" as an act of trust with consequences for their own choices.

At the Marian Wall, those choices met the worries people carried. Pilgrims left petitions for healing, strained marriages, children, work, reconciliation and peace of mind. The boxes filled so quickly they had to be cleared daily. Nearby, candles burned beside prayers known only to those who offered them.

The Pilgrims' Rosary Walk offered space to slow down. Amid gentle Marian chants, participants walked through the Joyful Mysteries, considering Mary's trust, Joseph's fears and the place Christ might be waiting for in their families.

Fr Vithayathil Shinu Poulose, VC, from Delhi, led pilgrims towards the healing Christ with wounds of betrayal, rejection, illness, grief and loneliness. Some were moved to tears. In a further reflection, he invited families to remember those who had died; in another, he asked whether hearing God's Word would change the way they lived.

Fr Simon Labrooy drew attention to the faith and wisdom of elderly people, challenging families to listen to their stories and notice their loneliness. Speaking to young people on *Mary the Influencer,* Fr Simon Agbo asked whose approval they sought amid the noise around them. Mary's youthful "Yes" showed the courage that begins with listening to God.

On the Legionaries' day, Fr Andrew Manickam, Fr Paul Cheong, OFMCap and parish priest, Fr George Harrison guided reflections on Mary's place in their mission, the Catena, prayerful meetings and evangelisation. Their call to serve reached beyond meetings to neighbours who needed a visit, friendship or practical help.

Fr Peter Anthoney turned to family life, inviting pilgrims to consider the patience, prayer and forgiveness needed at home. A family consecration gave those hopes a place in prayer. On a day dedicated to *Mary, Mother of the Least, Less and Lost,* participants went out in service, then returned to share what their encounters had taught them.

Marian Fiesta Nite brought music, dancing and laughter. Fr Frederick Joseph's talk, *Becoming Women of Faith, Courage and Lasting Influence,* asked what gives a life lasting depth. His reflection pointed to the quiet choices through which faith becomes visible: courage when it costs something, steadfastness when no one notices and love that continues after inspiration fades.



Fr Patrick Massang, CSsR incensing the statue of Our Lady.

At the close, Fr Alvin Ng Sze Syn, SJ, reflected on *Mary, Mother of Faith and Mission.* He urged pilgrims to carry their prayer into their homes, parish and the lives of those who needed them. Fr George reminded the community that the Convention's measure would be found in hearts drawn closer to Jesus.

The Convention's theme now follows pilgrims home. Mary's "Yes" points them towards her Son; their own answer may begin with a call to an elderly relative, an apology long delayed or time given to someone who feels alone. In such ordinary moments, what they heard and prayed about at the Convention can become part of how they live. **Hariet Thomas**

A shared loss, different grief

PETALING JAYA: When a parent dies, the surviving spouse must face their own grief while helping their children make sense of a loss that may be expressed in very different ways. A child might cry one moment and return to play the next. Both parent and child need room to grieve, and neither should have to do so alone.

This understanding shaped *Parenting Through Grief,* the first programme of its kind organised by the Widow to Widow Ministry of the Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX). Held on September 5, at the Council of Churches of Malaysia in collaboration with the AOHD Women Ministry and SFX Grief Ministry, it was designed for young widows and widowers raising grieving children. Members of the widow support group from the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras, also joined the gathering.

While parents attended talks and heard personal testimonies, their children had space to play, create and speak about their experiences at their own pace.

Child psychologist Raymund Jagan described how children can move in and out of sadness through what he called "puddle-jumping grief". A child's return to play does not mean the loss has disappeared. One mother took to heart his reminder that grieving children need safety, connection, stability, hope and freedom to express difficult emotions. She was particularly struck by a simple point: not every difficult moment needs to become a lesson. Sometimes a child needs a parent to sit beside them and listen.

That can be hard when the parent is grieving too. Looking beyond a child's behaviour to what they may be feeling can help a mother or father respond with patience rather than frustration.

During the morning, Humankind Malaysia volunteers guided the children through play-based and creative activities. Some were hesitant at first, but gradually joined in and began connecting with one another.

In the afternoon, clinical psychologist Dr Valerie Jaques used drawing and conversation to help them explore their feelings and discover shared interests. The children differed in age and in how ready they were to speak or listen to painful experiences. Given time, the group relaxed and showed care for one another. Older children helped younger ones, and some supported children with special needs.

Each child made an angel in memory of the parent they had lost — a small, personal way to remember someone who remains close to their heart.

For the parents, the testimonies of Sok Teng and Peter offered an honest account of the years that follow a spouse's death: the fear, the decisions and the love that keeps a family going.

Sok Teng's husband died of cancer 21 years ago, when their sons were six and one and a half. She had prayed for his healing, and his death left her devastated. Holding to her faith, she passed up career opportunities so she could spend more time with her children. Looking back, she said many of the things she feared never came to pass. Now close to her adult sons, she encouraged widowed parents to place their difficulties in God's hands and face the future one day at a time.



Peter's wife died suddenly 16 years ago, leaving him to raise their six-year-old son. He spoke of loneliness, anger and self-doubt, and of wondering at times whether God had abandoned him. He put his career on hold, then relied on his mother's help as he balanced earning a living with being present for his son. Having raised him into adulthood, Peter encouraged parents to remain both firm and loving as their children grow, even when setting boundaries is difficult.



Children being guided to express their loss through creative activities.

Their stories resonated with one participant who said she had found group support for herself, but her son had not had the same opportunity. The programme helped her see that a child may still be grieving even when they appear to be coping well. She left with renewed confidence to accompany him.

Seeing Sok Teng's and Peter's children grow into adulthood, it is easy to miss the years of difficult choices, private grief and steadfast care behind that journey. Parenting Through Grief gave parents room to speak about those years and children a chance to meet others who know what losing a parent feels like.

The Widow to Widow Ministry hopes to reach more families who may not know support is available. For information, contact its coordinator, Caroline Tay, at 012-701 8185.



Mary inspires faith, hope and love for mission

PENANG: The *Seven Sorrows of Mary* invited parishioners of City Parish to reflect on faith, hope and love during a triduum from September 17 to 19, followed by a feast day celebration on September 20.

Parishioners from different language communities, including the Filipino and Vietnamese communities, gathered around the theme of Mary as a model of faith, hope and love who accompanies the Church on mission. The *Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows* was recited throughout the four days, drawing them into moments of Mary's life closely bound to the suffering of Jesus.

Preaching on the first day, Fr Joseph Heng parish priest of the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Krubong, Melaka, reflected on Mary's faith in accepting the mission entrusted to her. He urged parishioners to follow her example of humility and self-surrender as they discerned how God was calling them to serve.

The second day centred on hope. Fr Joseph spoke of Mary's perseverance through sorrow and reminded parishioners that Christian hope rests in God's mercy. Recalling Pope Francis' emphasis on forgiveness, he encouraged them to encounter that mercy through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

On the third day, the focus turned to charity and love, with particular attention to those who are sick and to young people. Elderly and unwell parishioners gathered for Mass and the Anointing of the Sick, praying for healing and strength. That evening, the parish youth animated the sunset Mass and prayed for young people facing the challenges of today.

Fr Joseph was the main celebrant at the multilingual feast day Mass. Concelebrating were City Parish assistant parish priest Fr Arulnathan Joseph and Fr Jerick de Leon of the Diocese of Calapan, Philippines. Deacon Patrick Hilary Sandnasamy and Deacon Paul Kang also assisted.

In his homily, Fr Joseph called parishioners to take an active part in the Church's mission, including through its ministries. The celebration ended with that invitation still before them: to carry the faith, hope and love they had reflected on into the lives of others. **Aaron Lim**

Letters to Editor

Caring for our chapels between Masses

Dear Editor,

On a recent outstation trip, I took the scenic route home and was pleased to come across a chapel. I stopped to say a short prayer. The main door was locked, but a side door was open, so I went in.

My pleasure turned to dismay when I saw lizard droppings on the altar. Outside, the grass had grown long and the grounds looked unkempt. I later learnt that Mass is celebrated there once a month. Even when a chapel is used infrequently, it deserves to be kept clean and cared for throughout the month.

Looking through the Catholic Directory, I was struck by the number of chapels and Mass centres across the three dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia. Some have Mass monthly, others less often, and a few only once a year. My visit left me wondering how these places are maintained between celebrations. Is someone checking on them regularly, or are they cleaned only when Mass is approaching?

Parishes responsible for chapels and Mass centres could put a simple cleaning and grounds maintenance schedule in place, along with regular checks. Where funds or manpower are limited, chapel committees might invite willing parishioners, BECs and young people to share the work.

Caring for these places can become a community effort, with clear responsibility for ensuring they remain welcoming and ready for prayer.

A chapel may stand quiet for weeks at a time. It remains a house of God, worthy of our care even when no congregation is expected.

Disappointed Traveller
Kuala Lumpur

Send your letters to ▶ letterseditor@herald.com.my
The Editor, HERALD, 5 Jalan Robertson, 50150 KL | Please include your name and address. *Letters without name and address will not be entertained.*

Sabah priests return to their 'first love'

BUNDU TUHAN: Behind every priestly vocation is an encounter with the Lord and a "yes" that begins a lifelong journey. For Sabah's priests, their annual retreat offered an opportunity to revisit that encounter and renew the love that first inspired their calling.

Priests from the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu and the Dioceses of Keningau and Sandakan gathered in Bundu Tuhan from September 21–25 for the Annual Priests' Retreat 2026.

Guided by Fr Robert B. Manansala OFM of the Philippines, the five-day retreat provided space for prayer, reflection, spiritual renewal and priestly fraternity.

Fr Robert invited the priests to return to their "first love" — their first encounter with the Lord and the call that moved them to embrace the priesthood.

Drawing on the spirituality of St Francis of Assisi, he reflected on the saint's love for the Eucharist and the Word of God, as well as his deep respect for priests and the priesthood.

With the Eucharist at the heart of the retreat, the priests stepped away from daily pastoral demands to spend time in silence and prayer, rediscovering the grace and meaning of their vocation.



The clergy praying in silence. (ArchKK facebook)

At the closing Mass, Archbishop John Wong described the retreat as a time filled with inspiration, enlightenment and wisdom. Among the questions that stayed with him was a simple but searching one: "What are we doing? What are you doing?"

For the archbishop, it was an invitation to examine his ministry and return continually to the encounter from which it began.

"I think I should constantly return to my first love, to my first encounter with the Lord," he said, explaining that this calls for renewal, repentance and a return to the blessings already received.

The invitation "to start again" also resonated with him. Beginning anew, he said, requires renewed commitment, love and fidelity, sustained by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Archbishop John thanked Fr Robert on behalf of the bishops and priests for accompanying them throughout the retreat.

As the priests returned to their parishes and ministries, Fr Robert appealed to the faithful to accompany their shepherds through prayer and support.

"Love your priests, love your bishops, and pray always for them and support them," he said.

His appeal reminded the faithful that they, too, have a part in nurturing the vocations of those who serve them.

Closing the unseen gap

KUALA LUMPUR: Sometimes, inclusion begins with something as simple as learning to say "hello" with our hands. A small gesture can open a conversation, begin a friendship and reassure someone that their presence matters.

That spirit shaped the celebration at the Church of St Anthony on September 27, when the Catholic Ministry for the Deaf (CMfD) gathered to mark the International Day of Sign Languages (IDSL) 2026.

The celebration began with the Rosary, led in sign language by Boniface and Raymond. Parish priest, Fr Clarence Devadass celebrated Mass, with sign language interpretation by Fr Michael Chua, Ecclesiastical Assistant for CMfD. Fr Michel Dass and Fr Michael Fadamykidoko concelebrated.

An exhibition on Deaf culture and the Deaf community was held in the lobby of CahayaSuara, while a presentation on IDSL took place in the auditorium. Members of the Deaf community, Gui Chee Khiong and Veronica Cornelius, shared their experiences, challenges and journeys of resilience. Gejaletchumi and Ayappan also presented a short skit.

For the Deaf community, sign language carries culture, identity and the freedom to express thoughts, feelings, faith and dreams. This year's theme, *Declaring Deaf People's Human Rights,* calls communities to ensure that Deaf people can participate, contribute and lead, with barriers removed from education, employment, healthcare, Church life and society.

The importance of that responsibility emerged through Gui's sharing.

Born in Selangor, he faced significant challenges from infancy. A serious fever shortly after birth affected his hearing and physical development, and he needed physiotherapy before he could walk. Throughout these difficulties, his parents remained a constant source of love and support.

His education brought further struggles. He experienced bullying and had to repeat primary school before continuing his studies. Later, an opportunity to pursue his SPM ended when the absence of sign language interpreters and teachers who could sign prevented him from following the lessons.

His experience showed how an opportunity can remain beyond reach when the support needed to access it is missing.

Gui went on to work in several jobs and continues to seek greater independence. Through these challenges, he has held firmly to his faith.



The Deaf community joining the parishioners at the Mass.

After discovering CMfD in Kuala Lumpur, he joined RCIA with sign language support in 2013 and was baptised in 2014. Today, he remains active in the Catholic community, drawing inspiration from Jesus.

"Never give up. Continue with hope, keep the faith, and trust that God will guide you," he encouraged those present.

Veronica, a CMfD sign language interpreter who is herself hard of hearing, reflected on the importance of accessible communication.

What began as curiosity about sign language grew into a deeper understanding of Deaf culture and community. Along the way, she recognised an "unseen gap": the distance created when people cannot communicate with one another.

Communication allows us to learn, build relationships and share what is in our hearts. When it is inaccessible, misunderstandings grow, opportunities are lost and people can feel isolated even in a crowded room.

Deaf people bring ideas, skills, creativity and aspirations to their communities. Making communication accessible allows those gifts to be recognised and shared.

Sign language carries emotion, humour and personality, with its own grammar and structure. Learning a few signs is a valuable beginning, but a conversation also requires us to understand the response.

For families with Deaf children, this can have a profound impact. Parents who learn sign language open a way to understand their child's experiences, worries and hopes. They make room for the everyday conversations through which affection and trust grow.

Imagine having something important to say and being unable to share it with the people you love most. The willingness to learn offers a child a powerful assurance: what you have to say matters to me, and I want to understand you.

Such love also has a place in parish life. Sign language interpretation, captions, clear visual information and greater awareness can help make churches accessible. Listening to Deaf people themselves enables communities to understand what meaningful participation requires.

A parish grows stronger when every member can pray, learn, serve and help shape its shared life. Each person brings gifts that the whole community needs.

Closing the unseen gap begins with a willingness to understand. As we learn to receive one another's stories, our hands can help express what our faith asks us to live: every person is precious to God, and every person has gifts to share.

Batik, *teh tarik* and a parish family

PENANG: How long could five parish leaders pull *teh tarik* without spilling it? The crowd at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit (CHS) cheered them on as the contest became one of the liveliest moments of a Family Day that brought about 230 parishioners together.

Held after the Thanksgiving Mass for *Merdeka*, the celebration gave people of different ages a chance to enjoy one another's company and share what being Malaysian means to them.

The gathering opened with the Penang State Anthem and a prayer led by Deacon Andrew Loh. Parish priest, Fr Raymond Raj, welcomed parishioners and thanked them for spending the public holiday together as a parish family. Parish Pastoral Council chairman Adrian Oyog also addressed the gathering before activities began across the CHS Hall.

At the Living Heritage Corner, parishioners shared memories and posed for photographs. A Social Media and Apps Station helped participants explore useful digital tools, while the *Merdeka Snap and Shine Contest* invited them to capture the spirit of the day in a 40-second video.

Children and families turned to clay creations, colouring and DIY Merdeka cake decoration. Elsewhere, the *Blind Food Tasting Challenge* tested how well participants could recognise familiar foods without seeing them. Correct guesses drew applause; unexpected ones brought laughter.

Fr Raymond, Deacon Andrew and three parish leaders then faced a 10-minute *Merdeka Batik Painting Challenge.* Parishioners watched as the five worked against the clock, offering encouragement before the same group took on the *teh tarik* challenge.

After prizes were presented, a fellowship lunch gave everyone time to linger, catch up and meet people they might otherwise only greet in passing after Mass.



Participants showing off their Batik painting.

The games made for a joyful celebration, but the day's quieter moments mattered too. A conversation across generations, a shared memory or a new friendship can help a parish grow closer. At CHS, *Merdeka* offered an occasion to celebrate Malaysia's diversity while enjoying the bonds of one parish family. **Jaslin Krishnan**

Vietnam puts families at heart of mission

HANOI: Vietnam's Catholic bishops have made the family the focus of the Church's 2027 pastoral mission, calling on Catholic households to become missionary communities rooted in prayer, faith formation, and parish life.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Vietnam designated 2027 as a year focused on every Catholic family becoming a missionary community, part of a three-year pastoral programme on evangelisation from 2026 to 2028.

The theme follows the Church's 2026 emphasis on every Christian as a missionary disciple and brings that responsibility into family life.

Describing the Christian family as a domestic Church, the bishops said Catholic households share in the Church's mission of evangelisation and are called to live it at home, in the parish and in the wider Church.

Married couples were urged to remain faithful to their marriage covenant, while parents were encouraged to pass on the faith to their children through prayer, formation and example.

Family members should also listen to one another, discern God's will together and help each other grow in faith.

The bishops said Catholic families should witness to the value of marriage in their parish communities and accompany other households, particularly as marriage and family life face serious challenges.

Prayer is a central part of the 2027 pastoral programme.

Families were encouraged to set aside time each day to pray together, read Scripture and recite the Rosary, while maintaining the tradition of prayer before and after meals.

The document said moments of family prayer and forms of popular piety can have a stronger evangelising effect than catechetical teaching or doctrinal lessons.



One year after lifting its longstanding two-child limit, Vietnam is actively encouraging people to have more babies as the communist country risks getting old before it gets rich. (LiCAS News photo/Nhac NGUYEN)

Parents were also described as the first and irreplaceable proclaimers of the Gospel to their children. The bishops stressed that faith formation should not be left solely to catechists or religious education classes.

They encouraged parents to teach through prayer, moral formation and personal example, while using family anniversaries and other occasions to give thanks to God, strengthen relationships and pass on the faith.

Church organisations and family ministries were urged to expand accompaniment and formation, especially for young families, migrant families, divorced families and households drifting away from religious practice.

The bishops encouraged these groups to create opportunities for families to meet, pray, share experiences and support one another.

Priests, particularly parish pastors, were also asked to give greater priority to family ministry.

The pastoral letter issued on September 24 also called for stronger marriage preparation, support for newly married couples and visits to families facing difficulties. Parishes were also encouraged to identify mature Catholic families that could accompany other households.

The bishops said parishes with families firmly grounded in the faith can become stronger communities marked by communion, participation and commitment to evangelisation. **LiCAS News**

Thai Church strengthens Deaf participation and leadership

BANGKOK: Deaf Catholics in Thailand are being encouraged to help shape the Church's life and mission through initiatives that strengthen formation, liturgical access and opportunities for leadership.

The efforts were highlighted as Catholic communities worldwide marked the United Nations International Day of Sign Languages on September 23.

Fr Peter Buravaj Searaariya, national coordinator for Deaf Ministry under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand, said the ministry is advancing co-responsibility and synodality, enabling Deaf Catholics to contribute as missionary disciples.

He called for "a community that listens, understands, and walks together in faith, embracing one another with love and dignity".



Volunteers and catechists take part in a formation workshop as the Thai Deaf Ministry focuses on long-term personnel development and pastoral formation. (LiCAS News/Fr Peter Buravaj Searaariya)

Fr Buravaj, who regularly celebrates Mass entirely in Thai Sign Language at St Louis Church in Bangkok and throughout the Diocese of Chanthaburi said that the ministry's pastoral roadmap centres on communion, participation and mission.

A key initiative is the Jerome Team, established in 2025 by the Diocese of Chanthaburi's Deaf Ministry, the bishops' conference's Deaf Ministry and the Catholic Deaf Association of Thailand.

Named after St Jerome, patron saint of translators, the 20-member group brings together Deaf, hard-of-hearing, visually impaired and hearing people.

With guidance from a priest, a religious sister, catechists and volunteers, specialised teams work weekly on sign language interpretation, voice narration and audiovisual support. They translate Scripture, liturgical hymns, catechetical materials and Church documents into Thai Sign Language.

Alongside this work, the ministry is investing in long-term personnel development, in line with the Thai Church's 2015 General Assembly decree. Priorities include training specialised catechists, recruiting seminarians interested in Deaf culture and fostering vocations among Deaf Catholics.

Fr Buravaj also outlined plans to explore a regional pastoral formation centre in Asia. It would offer local formation for Deaf candidates to the priesthood, religious life and lay leadership, providing an alternative to costly overseas programmes.

Feasibility studies are also assessing the establishment of a Catholic school for the Deaf in Thailand.

Digital outreach extends the ministry's reach through weekly Thai Sign Language Masses, catechetical songs and instructional clips shared on YouTube, Facebook and TikTok.

Researchers working with the Catholic Deaf Association of Thailand and the Diocese of Chanthaburi are compiling religious vocabulary glossaries, developing guidelines for translating the Bible into Thai Sign Language and documenting the history of Deaf evangelisation across Asia. **LiCAS News**

Carry Christ into the courtroom, lawyers urged

LILONGWE: Catholic legal professionals in Malawi have been urged to let their faith guide their work, particularly when defending truth and justice comes at a personal cost.

Auxiliary Bishop Vincent Mwakhwawa of Lilongwe made the appeal during a recent Red Mass organised by the Catholic Lawyers Association of Malawi (CLAM) at St Patrick's Catholic Parish.

More than 40 lawyers, judges, senior counsel, young advocates, academics and public servants attended. National Pastoral Coordinator Fr Joseph Sikwese concelebrated.

The gathering offered thanksgiving as Malawi marked 125 years of the Catholic Church's permanent establishment in the country, alongside an opportunity to pray for wisdom, fairness and integrity in the administration of justice.

The red vestments symbolised the fire of the Holy Spirit and the blood of martyrdom, honouring those who died defending truth and justice.

In his homily, Bishop Mwakhwawa called on legal professionals to carry Christ into every setting in which they serve.

"A Catholic lawyer should carry Christ into the courtroom, the chambers, the boardroom, the prison, at the negotiating table, because no lawyer can manufacture wisdom merely by reading a law book," he said.

Integrity, he reminded them, is often tested when telling the truth costs money, friendships, opportunities or influence.

"It is precisely in those moments that being rooted in Christ matters," he emphasised.

The bishop described law as a vocation requiring diligence, prudence and justice, and urged those present to practise their faith consistently throughout the week.

"Being Catholic cannot simply mean attending Mass on Sunday while one's professional life operates on completely different principles from Monday to Friday."

That consistency demands the courage to reject corruption, refuse clever arguments that produce injustice and challenge the excuse that "that is how things are done". Such courage, he said, calls for a conversion of heart.

This was the association's second Mass in Lilongwe. CLAM also intends to affiliate fully with the International Association of Catholic Lawyers, recognised by the Holy See as an international association of pontifical right.

Bishop Mwakhwawa concluded by reminding the legal community to recognise the person behind every case file, especially those unable to afford representation.

"Imagine a poor person standing outside a legal office because they cannot afford representation. That lawyer who helps to restore that person's dignity evangelises in his own way," he said. **Vatican News**



Paying attention amid clickbait

VATICAN CITY: The Church is urging Christians to rediscover attentive, loving communication in a digital culture competing for every moment of their attention.

Pope Leo XIV has chosen "*A New Gaze: Paying Attention in the Age of Clickbait*" as the theme for the 61st World Communications Day in 2027. The Dicastery for Communication announced it on September 29, the feast of St Gabriel the Archangel.

The theme invites Christians to see others and themselves as Christ does: personally known and loved.

The Dicastery warned that competition for fleeting attention amid an endless stream of content is affecting thought and relationships. Digital culture can encourage quick reactions, superficial connections and the tendency to label or dismiss others.

"Our communication changes when our gaze chooses to encounter others rather than judge them," the statement said.

Describing attention as an act of generosity, the Dicastery encouraged Christians to follow Jesus' example of seeing people and allowing their lives to touch Him. Communication should safeguard attention as a resource for relationships, calling the whole person to look, listen and respond to Christ.

World Communications Day will be observed on May 9, 2027, in many countries, with other dates set by national bishops' conferences. **Vatican News**



Pope's prayer intention for October

A ministry of presence for mental health

"I have come so that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)



Informed Opinion

Dr Xavier V. Pereira

A person struggling with anxiety may find it difficult to tell anyone at church. A parent worried about a teenager's depression may not know whom to approach. Someone caring for a relative with a mental illness may come to Mass each week, exchange greetings with familiar faces and still go home feeling entirely alone.

Sometimes the first thing such a person needs is someone who will listen without judgement. They may also need professional treatment, practical support and a community that does not withdraw when their difficulties become known. The Church cannot provide all these things on its own, but it can help people find them. It can make clear, through its words and actions, that a mental health condition does not place anyone outside the care of the parish.

This is the hope behind a Catholic community mental health ministry now taking shape in Malaysia.

The Catholic Counsellors, Therapists, Psychologists and Psychiatrists of Malaysia (CCTPPM) has spent the past year and a half training a first group of Catholics for this work. Their formation comes at a timely moment. For October 2026, the Pope has asked the Church to pray that mental health ministries be established throughout the Church and help overcome the stigma and discrimination against people with mental illness. World Mental Health Day, observed on October 10, gives us another occasion to ask how that prayer might take shape close to home.

The need is substantial. The National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2015 found that 29.2 per cent of Malaysians aged 16 and above experienced mental health problems. In the NHMS 2022 Adolescent Health Survey, 26.9 per cent of adolescents reported symptoms of depression, while 13.1 per cent reported having considered suicide. The proportion reporting symptoms of depression was higher among girls, at 36.1 per cent, than boys, at 17.7 per cent. NHMS 2023 also found mental health problems among approximately one in six children aged five to 15.

Figures can tell us how widespread a problem is, but they cannot show us what it takes for someone to speak about it. People may fear being labelled, blamed or treated differently. Some may have heard that they should simply pray harder, be grateful or have stronger faith. Prayer can sustain a person through illness, but suffering from a mental health condition is not a sign that their faith has failed.

According to the NHMS, only about 20 per cent of individuals with mental disorders received professional treatment due to social stigma and lack of awareness of mental health disorders.

What can a mental health ministry do?

A Catholic mental health ministry offers spiritual accompaniment, pastoral care and community support to people experiencing mental health challenges and to those who care for them. Its ministers are called to listen attentively, be present without judgement and help people remain connected to their community.

That presence can be simple, yet meaningful. It may begin with taking someone's concerns seriously, making time for another conversation or helping a family find an appropriate service. It may mean continuing to welcome someone who has become withdrawn, rather than assuming they no longer wish to be involved in parish life.

The ministry is non-clinical. Its volunteers do not diagnose mental illness or provide treatment. Professional medical, psychological and psychiatric care remain essential, and a parish ministry should help people reach those services when needed. Prayer and accompaniment can sustain a person alongside professional care. Neither should be presented as a substitute for it.

A ministry must also attend to caregivers. Parents, spouses, siblings and friends may be trying to help someone they love while managing exhaustion, uncertainty or their own grief. They need a place where they can speak honestly and receive support without feeling that they have betrayed the person in their care.

Mental health ministries have been established in Catholic dioceses elsewhere. Among those helping parishes develop them is the International Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers, which provides formation and resources. In Malaysia, we are working towards a community model that can serve people within their own parishes and existing ministries.

Preparing people to serve

The CCTPPM training draws on experience gained through Health Equity Initiatives (HEI), an organisation I co-founded with Dr Sharuna Verghis in 2007. HEI trained refugee community mental health workers to recognise distress, offer support and connect people who needed treatment with mental health professionals. These workers belonged to the communities they served. Their relationships and understanding of those communities helped people take a first step towards seeking care.

That experience has informed our approach to forming Catholic community mental health ministers. The trainees have learnt about stress and stress management, common mental health conditions, empathetic listening, communication and psychoeducation. Their formation has also included screening tools and ways to support people facing stress and anxiety, alongside activities intended to deepen self-awareness and strengthen their ability to relate to others.



(Magnific photo)

Knowledge matters, but so does knowing how to respond when someone entrusts us with a painful part of their life. A minister must be able to listen without rushing to explain away the person's experience or offering advice beyond their competence. Training should help volunteers recognise when a concern calls for professional assessment, and how to guide someone towards it.

The distinction between support and treatment must remain clear as the ministry develops. Any use of screening tools or structured interventions needs agreed procedures, professional supervision and a clear route for referral. Volunteers should know both what their training equips them to do and when a concern must be brought promptly to a qualified professional. These boundaries protect the people seeking help as well as those accompanying them.

Accompaniment close to home

Community mental health ministers would serve through the ministries and parishes to which they already belong. They may be among the first people someone approaches when life has become difficult. A person who would hesitate to call a clinic might be willing to speak to someone they know and trust at church. The minister's task is to receive that trust responsibly and help the person take an appropriate next step.

Accompaniment does not end with a referral. Someone receiving treatment may still feel isolated or fear being judged. A family may need support as it learns to live with a loved one's condition. With the person's wishes and privacy respected, a parish community can remain a source of friendship, prayer and belonging.

Support groups could also provide spaces for people who share particular experiences. Those who are grieving, for example, may find comfort in meeting others who understand that grief has no fixed timetable. Caregivers may value a place to speak about the demands of care and learn that they are not alone. Such groups need thoughtful organisation and clear boundaries, but they need not be group therapy to offer meaningful support.

Young people require particular care. A parish can help teenagers understand stress, recognise when they need support and know whom they can approach. It can also help adults listen to them without dismissing their concerns as passing teenage problems. Any proposal to screen minors, including through Sunday School, would need careful planning with parents, parish leaders and appropriate professionals. The young person's willingness to participate, confidentiality, safeguarding and a clear response to serious concerns must all be addressed before such a programme begins.

As the first cohort approaches the end of its training, a second is planned for next year in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. CCTPPM is willing to extend community mental health training to other dioceses. Priests and religious could benefit from such formation in their pastoral work. It would also be valuable for seminarians, who will encounter people facing mental health challenges when they begin serving in parishes.

The Pope's prayer intention asks us to imagine a Church in which people living with mental illness need not hide their struggles to feel that they belong. Establishing a ministry requires sound formation, professional guidance and care for those who serve. It also asks something of the wider parish: the willingness to listen, to set aside easy judgements and to remain alongside people as they seek help.

We may not always know what to say when someone tells us they are struggling. We can begin by believing that they deserve to be heard. From that first act of welcome, a person may find the courage to ask for the care they need — and know that their Church will continue to walk with them.

Xavier V. Pereira ***is a medical doctor, psychiatrist and an internationally certified psychotherapist, supervisor and trainer in Interpersonal Psychotherapy. He is a former professor in Psychiatry and the co-founder of Health Equity Initiatives. In the Catholic Church he serves as the founding chair of the Catholic Counsellors, Therapists, Psychologists and Psychiatrists (CCTPPM)***

The girl who built a hermitage from stones



Long before St Teresa of Ávila taught the Church about prayer, she and her brother Rodrigo had a childhood plan: they would leave home and become martyrs. They had been reading the lives of the saints and wanted to reach heaven as quickly as they could. Their journey ended when an uncle found them and brought them home.

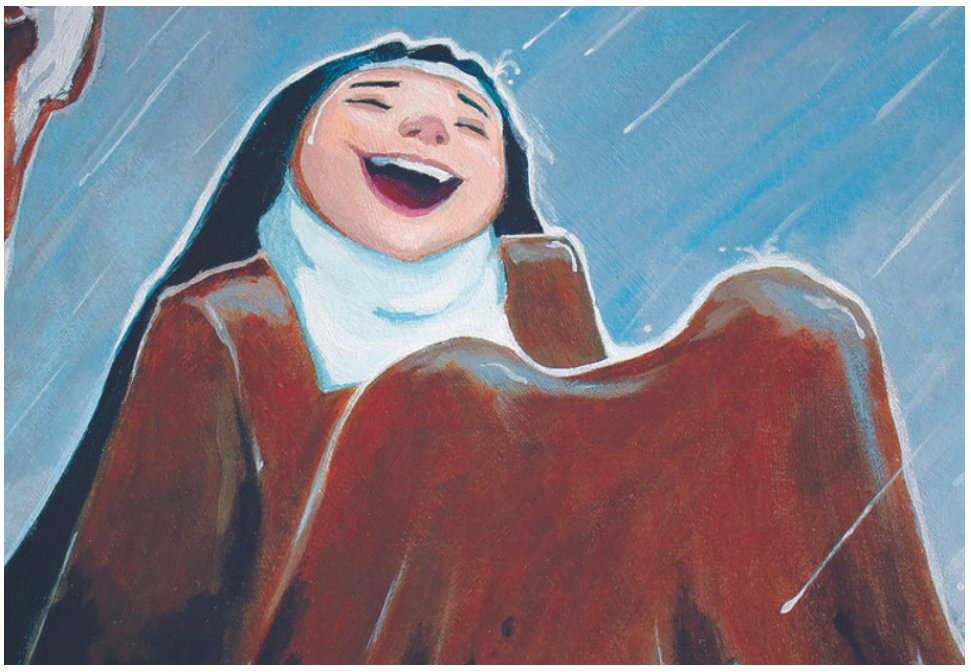
When they realised that martyrdom was beyond their reach, the children decided to become hermits instead. They piled stones in the family orchard to make little hermitages, but the structures kept falling down.

There is something endearing about that image. Teresa, later known as St Teresa of Jesus, did not begin as a serene figure who always knew how to pray. She was an imaginative child with enormous desires and very little idea of what to do with them. Those collapsing stones remind us that the first shape we give a longing may not be the one in which it finally grows.

Her teenage years were no less human. She loved tales of adventure and romance, took care over her appearance and enjoyed the company of others. In her later writing, she was candid about how absorbed she had become in these things. Then her mother died while Teresa was still young. In her grief, she turned to an image of Our Lady and asked Mary to be a mother to her.

The lively girl, the grieving daughter and the woman who would become a saint were the same person. Her story resists the idea that holiness belongs only to people whose lives have followed a straight path.

Teresa eventually entered the Carmelite convent, despite her father's reluctance. It was a costly decision: she wrote of the pain of leaving him and her family. Religious life did not immediately settle every struggle within her. She faced serious illness and spent years wanting a deeper life of prayer while finding it difficult to give herself to it wholeheartedly.



A turning point came when Teresa was 39. The sight of an image of the wounded Christ moved her profoundly. She saw the love before her and recognised how often she had drawn back from it. Her response began with allowing herself to be loved and choosing, again, to draw near.

This is why Teresa's description of prayer as time spent with a friend who loves us remains so inviting. Many of us arrive at prayer distracted or weary. We have let good intentions slip. Teresa's life suggests that we can bring even our reluctance into the conversation. Friendship grows when we return and speak honestly.

Years later, the child whose stone hermitages had collapsed founded her first reformed Carmelite community in Ávila. She was in her forties. Many more foundations followed, despite opposition, illness and the demands of travel. Her love of God had become a love that could gather people, encourage them and help them live faithfully together.

Teresa also wrote about what she had learnt along the way. *In The Life, The Way of Perfection* and *The Interior Castle*, she shared her struggles and insights into prayer with unusual honesty. She had no formal academic education, yet generations of Christians have learnt from her. In 1970, Pope Paul VI named her the first woman Doctor of the Church, recognising the enduring value of her spiritual teaching for the whole Church.

That title can sound imposing. Yet Teresa's authority came, in part, from having known how difficult prayer could be. She could guide others because she had struggled, returned and discovered that God had not ceased to welcome her.

Her feast falls on October 15. We may admire the reformer and Doctor of the Church, but her younger years offer a gift of their own. They allow us to recognise something of ourselves in her: the big hopes, the distractions, the losses and the slow work of learning what matters.

Perhaps the question she leaves us is not whether our first attempts have succeeded. Those little walls in the orchard did not stand. What matters is whether we will let God work with the longing that led us to build them.

● **This reflection draws on St Teresa's autobiography, *The Life*, and Jennifer Hornyak Wojciechowski's "*Teresa of Ávila: an Approachable Saint?*" (Faith+Lead, 2023).**

Bringing the spirit of Ávila home

What does it mean to belong to the Carmelite family while living, working and serving in different parts of the world? That question stayed with us as Secular Carmelites gathered in Ávila, Spain, the birthplace of St Teresa of Jesus, for our first world meeting.

Around 900 participants from about 80 countries came together under the theme *Witnesses to the Experience of God: Identity and Mission*. Malaysia was represented by Annie Yeo, Eta Ting and me from the Christ the King OCDS Community in Kuching, and Theresa Chuah from the Fraternity of St Teresa and St John of the Cross OCDS Community in Kuala Lumpur.

We came from different cultures and spoke different languages, yet we recognised in one another the same desire: to grow in friendship with God and allow that friendship to shape our lives.

Daily Mass, guided prayer and Eucharistic adoration gave the meeting its centre. Talks by Carmelite friars and Secular Carmelites explored formation, prayer, fraternity, responsibility and mission. They challenged us to ask whether our prayer changes the way we live with our families, serve our communities and respond to the needs around us.

The meeting also deepened our understanding of who we are. Secular Carmelites are members of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, sharing its spirituality and mission with the friars and nuns. Our vocation is lived amid ordinary responsibilities. Home, work, parish and community are places where we can bear witness to an encounter with God.

We had opportunities to speak with the Order's Superior General, Fr Miguel Márquez Calle OCD; the general delegate to the OCDS, Fr Ramiro Casale OCD; and his predecessor, Fr Alzinir Debastiani OCD. Conversations with Carmelites from other countries showed us both the different circumstances in which they live and the bond we share.

There was joy alongside the prayer and discussion. Songs and dances brought our cultures into the gathering, and a flamenco evening gave us a taste of Spain's own. On pilgrimage excursions, participants visited places associated with St Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross. Walking in the footsteps of these Carmelite saints reminded us that their friendship with God was lived through real choices, difficulties and service.

We are grateful for the chance to have shared these days in Ávila, especially amid the challenges each of us carried from home. We returned to Malaysia encouraged by the people we met and with a clearer sense of the responsibility that comes with our vocation.



Representatives from Malaysia with Superior General of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, Fr Miguel Marquez Calle, OCD (3rd left) and OCDS General Delegate, Fr Ramiro Casale, OCD (2nd right)

The meeting's call to "walk together towards the future" continues in our communities. It asks us to keep learning, to pray faithfully and to support one another in living what we profess. The journey begun in Ávila bears fruit when we return to our families, parishes and daily work with hearts more open to God and to the people beside us. **Catherine Sim, OCDS**

Telling his story for His glory



Christina Lazaroo

When Teddy Forte talks about his work, he is quick to correct one thing.

"I never consider myself a videographer."

It may sound strange coming from the Kota Kinabalu Archdiocese Social Communications Coordinator, who spends much of his time telling stories through videos and digital media at the Catholic Archdiocesan Centre (CAC).

But for Teddy, the camera has never been the point.

"When you love God, you tend to tell stories of Him."



That is the simplest way to understand the work Teddy does. For him, it is about telling your story for His glory.

Today, Teddy, a husband and father of three, has become an extension of something he has been doing long before he ever picked up a camera: telling stories.

A Sabahan-born Filipino, Teddy grew up in Keningau, Sabah, immersed in the local community and culture. He spent time in villages and developed an appreciation for Sabah's ethnic traditions.

Before media, Teddy was a dance choreographer, teaching children and working on performances for major events including Malaysia Day and Citrawarna, Malaysia's premier national cultural festival. At Lembaga Kebudayaan Sabah, he choreographed, served as an event director, produced music and worked as a musical director for events. He once brought children to the Dance World Cup, where they won gold in folklore dance.

For Teddy, choreography was never about teaching people how to simply move.

"We tell stories through dance," he said.

The art of storytelling would eventually follow him into Catholic communications.

But the road was not straightforward.

When faith felt distant

The youngest of eight siblings, Teddy grew up under strict parenthood. As his siblings finished Form Five, one by one they left home, leaving Teddy to spend much of his younger years mostly on his own.

Then came the pandemic.

With churches closed and communities physically separated, Teddy became increasingly isolated. What hurt most was not being unable to attend church, but feeling forgotten by his Church community. None of his church peers called to ask how he was doing.

At the time, Teddy did not realise he was experiencing anxiety attacks. He would wake early feeling afraid and wanting to run, without understanding why. His loneliness eventually became so overwhelming that he contemplated taking his own life.

Feeling betrayed by the Church and desperately searching for somewhere to belong, Teddy came close to embracing another faith.

Yet he never stopped talking to God.

One day, sitting alone in his room, he asked God: "You've given me so many gifts. But why are You not aligning me with Your Church? Why are You not letting me serve You? Am I not good enough?"

Around that time, Teddy was pursuing modern piano while working on a music project. When it came time to produce a music video, a videographer was hired.

Teddy saw the finished product and wondered what the outcome would be if he did it himself.

So, he learned. He researched cameras, bought his first second-hand camera and taught himself how to shoot through observing, asking questions and experimenting.

The camera eventually became another tool for something Teddy already knew how to do. Tell stories.

Eventually, it brought him back towards the Church.

Come, follow me

While serving in a charismatic ministry at Sacred Heart Cathedral as a worship leader, Teddy sought permission to film some footage for the programme.

Among those present was Msgr Nicholas Stephen, the programme's spiritual director, whom Teddy had come to know through the Church's media work during the pandemic. Teddy decided to take a chance.

"Father, *ada kerja kosong kah?*"

Was there a job vacancy?

"If *gulung-gulung* wire also can," Teddy joked. He would even roll cables if that was what was needed.

"I just want to serve."

After the programme, Teddy completed the video and sent it to Msgr Nicholas.

The priest called him and asked where he lived and what he was currently doing.

Then came another question.

"Can you come to Ranau?"

"You have met with the wrong people, now you have met with the right person, come follow me."

Teddy didn't hesitate. For the next two or three years, Teddy served in media ministry voluntarily.

Eventually, however, he needed a stable income to support his family. He applied for a position at an international school in Johor and became one of several candidates.

Unlike the other candidates, Teddy did not have a formal degree in child education. Yet the school saw something in his experience and abilities. After a several-hours interview, he was offered the job with a good salary.

Then Fr Nick asked him another question.

"Do you want to work with the Church?"

Teddy's yes eventually led him to meet with Archbishop John Wong of Kota Kinabalu.

For Teddy, he sees Msgr Nicholas, who at the time was not yet a monsignor, as the priest God used as a bridge where he could continue telling stories of God under the guidance of the Church's leadership.

With Archbishop John Wong's acceptance, Teddy was given the opportunity to work at the Catholic Archdiocesan Centre.

In 2023, his work in the visual side of Catholic communications became his professional ministry.

What sits behind the lens

Today, Teddy sees Catholic media as more than taking photographs, operating cameras or editing videos.

When he forms people for social communications, he does not begin by asking whether they know how to use a camera.

"I never asked them that question," he said.

Instead, he asks whether they want to serve.

"Do you like to talk about God? Do you like to talk about how God touched your life?"

For Teddy, the technical skills can be taught. What matters is what is behind the person telling the story.

"You have to have a relationship with God to tell stories of God."

A photograph is not simply a photograph. A video is not merely a video. Behind every story is a person, and behind that person is a life that can point others towards God.

He teaches his team to look beyond whether an image is beautiful and ask which image creates an impact.

"How does God reflect in your life?" he asks.

"How do you want people to look at a photo and see Jesus?"

For Teddy, this is the difference between creating content and witnessing.

He was particularly struck by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle's message during the First Asian Catholic Digital Missionary Assembly: "Don't be an *influencer*, be a *witness*."

"We don't influence people to know God; we witness God in our life," Teddy said.

Teddy remembers a young woman who lived near his home and whom he would greet whenever they crossed paths. Eventually, she left home. When she returned, she gave Teddy a small gift with a note.

She thanked him for saying hello.

Teddy later learned that she had been experiencing depression and had been contemplating what to do with her life.

That simple greeting had made a difference.

"By a simple hello, we can save a life," he said.

For Teddy, communication can begin long before a camera is switched on. It can begin by noticing someone, by listening, by being present, by living the story you are trying to tell.

"You and I are a walking Bible," he said.

People encounter the story of Jesus not only through words, photographs or videos, but through the way Christians live.

That is why Teddy believes the question for young Catholic communicators goes beyond whether they can create good content. The question is whether their lives give meaning to what they create.

When described as a man of many talents, Teddy does not claim the title.

"I am not talented. I just work hard and I really want to tell of God's story."

Then he adds: "God is good."

His story has taken him from loneliness to a thriving ministry where he now uses the gifts he once wondered why God had given him.

The choreographer who told stories through dance found another language through a lens, while the man who once asked God where he could serve now asks others whether they want to serve too.

And the person who once knew what it felt like to be unseen now reminds others that sometimes, a simple hello is enough to let someone know they are seen.

That is what Teddy hopes every young communicator, whether working in Church media or beyond it, to consider.

Not simply, *can I create good content?*

But, *what am I communicating through my work, and am I truly a witness?*







Made in His image, likeness and great sense of humour



God's So Funny

Martin Jalleh

Having recently celebrated my 70th birthday — I confidently affirm something I have increasingly discovered along the long journey (or should I say, God has revealed to me) that the God whom we believe in is a very humorous God!

For seventy years, I have experienced His blessings, His surprises, His twists and turns, His answers to prayer — and sometimes His rather unexpected sense of timing!

Looking back, I realise that God has often had a way of making me smile, sometimes laugh, and occasionally say, "Lord, You really have a sense of humour!"

There were times when I asked, "Lord, what are You doing?" And perhaps God was smiling and saying, "Martin, just wait. You'll understand later!" And sometimes I still don't understand! But I have learnt to trust Him anyway.

At 70, I can laugh at some of the things I once took so seriously. I can laugh at my mistakes, my miscalculations, my impatience, my plans that didn't work—and perhaps even some of my prayers that God wisely chose to answer "No"!

One of God's greatest jokes

I have discovered that, God's sense of humour is often hidden in hindsight. This suggests that God's humour is not necessarily found in jokes, but in the unexpected twists, reversals, ironies and surprises of our lives that only become amusing when we look back.

I have come to appreciate the holy humour hidden in hindsight — the heavenly surprises, humorous happenings and hidden blessings that only become clear when we look back.

There have been moments when I thought I knew exactly where my life was going — only to discover that God had a completely different itinerary!

There were doors I desperately wanted opened that remained firmly closed. There were doors I never expected to enter that God opened wide.

There were opportunities I thought were meant to last forever that eventually came to an end. And there were blessings I never saw coming.

What I thought was the end was sometimes a new beginning. What I thought was a setback was sometimes a stepping stone.

What I thought was a disaster sometimes became a doorway to grace. I once considered problems were actually preparations.

Some disappointments were divine appointments; Some closed doors were God's loving redirections and some of my biggest mistakes became some of my greatest lessons.

Looking back, I can almost imagine God smiling and saying: "My child, you really thought you were in charge?" And perhaps that is one of God's greatest jokes!

I have spent so much of my life making plans, setting goals, organising my future and telling God what should happen — while God patiently smiles and says: "That's very interesting, Martin. Now let Me show you what I have in mind!" And He has certainly shown me!

Perhaps that is what the saints understood so well. They knew that holiness did not mean walking through life with a permanently serious face! Holiness did not mean becoming humourless.

They could pray deeply and laugh heartily. They could take God seriously without taking themselves too seriously. They could face suffering without surrendering their joy.

Sometimes holiness means being able to look at our own mistakes and laugh and sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is simply smile and say, "Okay, Lord... You win!"

Perhaps the greatest evidence of God's sense of humour is that, despite knowing all my weaknesses, failures, foolishness, impatience and imperfections, He still calls me, loves me, gives me opportunities to serve, blesses me with another day. That, to me, is grace with a smile.

My humble humorous prayer

So, Lord, as I enter this new chapter of my life, I have no grand demands. Just keep me close. Give me the grace to remain grateful rather than grumbling, joyful rather than joyless, hopeful rather than fearful, and humble enough to laugh at myself.

And if You have a few more surprises waiting for me...please give me the wisdom to recognise them, the courage to embrace them, and the sense of humour to enjoy them!

Keep me humble enough to laugh at myself, wise enough to learn from my mistakes, faithful enough to trust Your plans, and joyful enough to recognise Your little jokes along the way.

And when I reach the end of this earthly journey, I hope I can look back and say: "Lord, You certainly didn't do everything the way I expected — but You did everything far better than I could have imagined."

And perhaps God will smile and say: "Martin, you finally got the joke!"

When I finally meet God face to face, I have a feeling He may look at me, smile, and say: "Martin, now let Me explain why I did it that way!" And I suspect we will both have a very good laugh.

Thank You, Lord, for the 70 wonderful, surprising, challenging, blessed and sometimes downright hilarious years. I may not know what tomorrow holds — but I know Who holds tomorrow. I don't know how many chapters You have left for me — but I know who holds the pen.

So I shall keep trusting, keep serving, keep smiling, keep laughing...and keep walking with You — one grace, one surprise and one divine joke at a time.

And I will keep on heralding the Good News that "God is so funny!"

Martin *describes himself as what many have described him: "An Excellent, Exciting, Enlightening, Engaging, Empowering and Exceptionally-humorous speaker and motivator."*

Sin, slaps and second chances



Getting Sidetracked

Agnes Ong

Of late, I find myself engrossed in AI-generated microdramas on my phone and iPad.

If most people worry about doomscrolling on their mobile devices, that is, endlessly scrolling through one piece of bad or distressing news after another, wait until you find yourself sucked into the world of microdramas.

A single microdrama can run anywhere from 40 to 80 episodes, with each episode lasting barely a few minutes. But every episode comes with a cliffhanger designed to keep you glued to the screen. At two minutes an episode, an 80-episode drama adds up to nearly three hours for a single story.

Then the algorithm kicks in with frightening efficiency. As soon as one episode ends, a "recommendation" for the next one starts playing automatically. After a while, without having to do anything at all, the platforms seem to know exactly what kind of mental fast food I will consume next.

Stories with emotional happy endings are always a good bet with me. If you are the sort of person who reads the last chapter of a book first just to find out how it ends, we are in the same boat. I am perfectly happy skipping through however many episodes there are until I reach the last one, just to make sure the hero and heroine get their emotional happy ending. Only then will I go back and watch the whole thing from the beginning.

Many of the microdrama stories revolve around betrayal, revenge, forbidden love, secret identities, billionaires and women who discover that the person they had humiliated is actually the richest or most powerful person in the room.

Then comes the inevitable dramatic climax.

Someone gets betrayed. Someone gets humiliated — "Lick my shoes!" "Kneel!" "Kowtow!" — and, inevitably, there are many slaps. Admittedly, it gets tedious. Apparently, the more melodramatic the humiliation, the better. Someone wants revenge. Someone wants what someone else has. Someone wants to be loved, recognised or restored to the position they believe they deserve.

But the endings are always a sigh of happiness — again, thank you, AI algorithm! The bad get what they deserve, the good get their due, and the repentant get redemption.

And redemption comes in many forms in these microdramas. For some, it is a second chance to put things right by being reborn. For others, it is a second chance at love after misunderstandings, betrayal or circumstances have torn two people apart. Sometimes it is the return of a lost inheritance, the restoration of a ruined reputation or the chance to undo a terrible mistake.

Whatever form it takes, redemption in these stories comes down to one thing: the past does not have to have the final word.

Perhaps that is why I keep watching these microdramas. Beneath all the ridiculousness, there is something deeply human about wanting to believe that what has gone wrong does not have to be the end of the story.

I suspect this is where my guilty pleasure in microdramas collides with my faith. We are, after all, people who believe in redemption.

A friend of mine believes deeply in the possibility of redemption. He once chose to help his friend who had crossed a serious boundary at work. To be honest, my instinct was more black and white: his friend had made a serious mistake, caused emotional distress, and should face the consequences of his actions.

My friend saw something else. He genuinely believed that his friend had recognised the harm he had caused, learnt from his mistake, repented and wanted to move forward differently. For him, helping his friend did not mean excusing what had happened. It meant believing that a person can acknowledge the wrong they have done and still be given the chance to become better.

This made me pause. Redemption is not the same as absolution from consequences. To repent is not to erase what happened, nor does it mean that those who were hurt must simply forget and move on. Some consequences cannot be undone. Trust may be broken. Relationships may change. The person who caused the hurt may still have to answer for what he did.

But perhaps redemption asks a different question: not, "Can we pretend this never happened?" but, "What will you do with what happened?"

And perhaps that is where forgiveness comes in. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation. We can let go of the desire for revenge without handing back the trust that was broken.

Over the past year, I came across some of my mother's jottings that made me wonder if she had come to understand this too. Not everything has to be repaired for us to let go of the hurt.

Perhaps this is what makes redemption harder, and more meaningful, than a happy ending.

Sometimes there is no dramatic reunion, no perfect restoration, no moment when everything is magically made right. There is simply an acknowledgement of what has happened, an acceptance of the consequences, and the quiet effort, day by day, to rise above it.

That may not make for very exciting entertainment. But perhaps it is closer to what redemption actually looks like.

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



Fr Ron Rolheiser

An anniversary

In telling his faith story, C.S. Lewis shares that at the moment of his conversion, he was "the most reluctant convert in the history of Christianity", but that he gave himself over to Christ because *"God's compulsion is our liberation"*.

That phrase spoke to me recently when, on September 8th, I celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of making my first vows as a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate. I was eighteen years old then, far too young by today's assessment to be making that kind of commitment.

But I wasn't too young. Intuitively, I knew what I was signing up for. I wasn't starry-eyed and unaware that taking religious vows is a serious business. The decision I made to enter religious life with the hope of becoming a priest was the most difficult decision I have ever made in life and wasn't predicated on a natural attraction to that vocation. The opposite. That was something I didn't want, but something I felt called to and not morally free to resist. I was a reluctant novice, but there because of God's compulsion. Here's the story.

Until one month before I entered the novitiate as a novice, I resisted the call, planning instead to go to university to become psychologist. I made the decision to pursue religious life and the priesthood during the summer immediately after my high school graduation. During that summer I worked on a farm and spent long hours alone on a tractor working in the fields. During those long hours alone, a tension that I had long suppressed began to build up in me, namely, one between my natural desire regarding my choice in life and a call, a compulsion, inside me that simply would not go away, calling me to the priesthood. Eventually I gave in. I said yes to that call.

So, at the tender age of seventeen, I made the most difficult (but paradoxically, the clearest, freest, and most life-giving) decision I have ever made. And as I look back on it now, sixty-one years later, I see it as pure grace. There have been some difficult times, but there have been no regrets. From day one, I knew that this was right for me. All these years later, I have only deep gratitude for the grace to have made that decision and the ocean of grace that has surrounded me throughout these sixty years.

The renowned novelist Morris West published his autobiography sometime after his seventieth birthday. It's a slim little volume entitled *A View From the Ridge* and begins with these words: When you reach the age of seventy there should only be three phrases left in your vocabulary: *Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!*

I'm over seventy years of age now and were I to write an autobiography, like Morris West, I would begin with the words: *Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!*

And I remember clearly that day of my vows, sixty years ago. My mother and father were there, proud of me. I have a cherished photo of them with me, made even more precious because both of them, still young, died within the next six years. As well, I have sixty years of cherished friendship with some of my fellow novices — a couple of them who were even younger than I was.

And so, in celebrating this anniversary, I want to say thank you.

First, to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate for accepting me and through sixty years providing me with support, good community, friendship, exceptional educational opportunities, and with grace-filled, life-giving ministries. In these sixty years, I estimate that I have lived in community with over four hundred different men. That wasn't always without its tensions, but it was always supportive and life-giving — and full of the kind of healthy banter that breathes oxygen into a room.

As well, a huge thanks to my family, a large amorphous tribe, now spanning three generations. We have managed to stay close, despite distance, and I have always felt their unfailing support. They are still an anchor, *a home*, which helps steady me when things get confusing.

Next, and no superlative is up to the task here, a huge thank you to the untold number of people, friends and others, whom I have met in ministry through these sixty years. I was ordained sacramentally by a bishop but have been continually re-ordained by the people in my life. They've shown me what priesthood means. The highlights in my priesthood have been hearing the word "thank you" from people with whom I have had the privilege of being with.

Finally, the biggest thank you of all to God. Thank you for calling me. Thank you for the compulsion and the persistence in that call, for knowing what was best for me. Thank you for sustaining me during some difficult, obsessive, and depressive periods in my ministry. Thank you for staying with me all these years.

Indeed, God's compulsion is our liberation — and pure grace.

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***

A synodal Church needs synodal seminaries

The Church's commitment to synodality faces a decisive test in the formation of its future priests. How can Vatican II's vision of the People of God, rooted in the shared baptismal dignity of all the faithful, take hold if the institutions preparing ordained ministers remain bound to a culture of separation and control?

Seminary reform is central to this question. The challenge concerns the Church's understanding of herself and the place of ordained ministry within her.

Study Group 4 of the Synod on Synodality, coordinated by Cardinal José Cobo of Madrid, has examined priestly formation in a missionary and synodal perspective. Its final report proposes guidance for implementing the 2016 *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (The Gift of the Priestly Vocation) in light of the synodal journey.

Yet there is a danger that episcopal conferences, seminaries and theological faculties will reduce its recommendations to cosmetic changes. Courses on synodality and occasional workshops on listening will achieve little if the clerical culture remains untouched. Formators and professors must themselves practise the openness, discernment and pastoral engagement they expect of students.

Throughout history, major Church reforms have reshaped priestly identity and formation. The Gregorian Reform of the 11th century drew on monastic ideals, while the Council of Trent established diocesan seminaries in 1563. Six decades after Vatican II, another substantial renewal is needed.

In *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, Vatican II identified proclaiming the Gospel as a priest's primary duty, within a ministry that also embraces the sacraments and pastoral leadership. Ordained ministry belongs within the communion and mission of the whole People of God.

A priest is therefore a member of the faithful among the faithful, called to listen and discern with others how the Spirit is working in the community. Teaching and leadership require a willingness to learn from the people he serves.



Seminarians and those involved in priestly formation from around the world attend a reflection led by Pope Leo XIV in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican June 24, 2025, as part of the Jubilee of Seminarians. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

This vision challenges a seminary culture in which formation flows almost entirely from superiors to candidates, with little room for dialogue. Where disagreement is treated as disloyalty, seminarians may learn to conceal their questions and vulnerabilities to secure approval.

Maturity then becomes confused with compliance. Emotional struggles and human limitations can be hidden beneath spiritual language, while candidates learn habits of authority that distance them from ordinary life. Formation should help them grow in honesty, responsibility and openness to being challenged.

To contribute to this renewal, I am leading an international research project sponsored by the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Council (CELAM), involving over 30 theologians from Latin America, North America and Europe. We are examining the traditional seminary model and developing alternatives informed by Study Group 4's report.

Our findings indicate that an isolated boarding-school model, detached from communities, especially the poor and the excluded, is no longer viable. Such separation also risks weakening the connection between evangelisation and the promotion of human dignity.

If future priests are to serve a synodal Church, their formation must itself be synodal. This requires sustained participation in the lives of the communities they will serve.

Study Group 4 proposes alternating residence in the seminary with periods of residence in parishes or other ecclesial settings. Future priests should discover their vocation through relationships and shared formation with laywomen, laymen, religious and families.

Women must have a meaningful voice from the earliest stages of vocational discernment. Their involvement should extend to formation teams, teaching and the evaluation of candidates before ordination. Occasional consultation cannot substitute for shared responsibility.

Nor can suitability for ministry be assessed solely within seminary walls. The communities in which candidates live and serve must contribute to that discernment. They encounter qualities and limitations that may remain unseen in an institutional setting.

This would recover an ancient practice. In Epistle 67, St Cyprian of Carthage affirmed the community's role in recognising the suitability of those entrusted with ministry. The concern was that ministers should enjoy the trust of the people they were called to serve.

Seminary formation must also cultivate the practical habits of synodal life: attentive listening, shared discernment, collaboration and responsible decision-making. These cannot be assumed to develop automatically. They must shape daily relationships throughout formation.

Pastoral authority must take the community's discernment seriously. The Synod's final document recalls the ancient principle Nihil sine *consensu plebis* — nothing without the consent of the people. When pastors depart from the outcome of consultation and discernment, they should give reasons and remain accountable to the community.

Future priests must therefore learn to exercise authority through listening, discernment and service, accepting responsibility for their decisions within the whole People of God.

The reform of priestly formation is a test of the Church's credibility. Without spiritual, relational and structural renewal in seminaries, Vatican II's vision of a missionary People of God will remain incompletely realised.

The Church needs pastors who walk with the faithful, recognise the Spirit speaking through them and serve the communion of the whole community, especially in solidarity with the poor and excluded.

The courage to put this vision into practice will shape ordained ministry and Catholic life for generations. A synodal Church begins to take root when future priests learn, from the outset, to live and serve within it.

● **Edited and abridged from a commentary by Rafael Luciani, first published in the *National Catholic Reporter.***

LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER

Dear children,

Imagine your best friend invites you to an amazing birthday party with your favourite food, games and a special surprise. Would you ignore the invitation and carry on playing? Probably not!

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son. He invited many people, but they refused to come. Some were too busy with their farms and businesses, while others ignored the invitation. So, the king sent his servants to invite everyone they could find. Soon, the wedding hall was full!

The king's invitation reminds us of God's invitation to be part of His Kingdom. God wants everyone to know His love and share in His joy. His invitation is for all of us.

But accepting God's invitation means more than simply saying, "Yes!" We also need to prepare our hearts and live like people who belong to His Kingdom.

How can we respond? We can love instead of hurting, forgive instead of staying angry, share what we have, help others and make time for prayer. These simple choices show that we are saying "yes" to God every day.

God's invitation is always open. Like a special party invitation, it is up to us to respond. Will you accept God's invitation and show your "yes" through the way you live?



Love, Aunty C



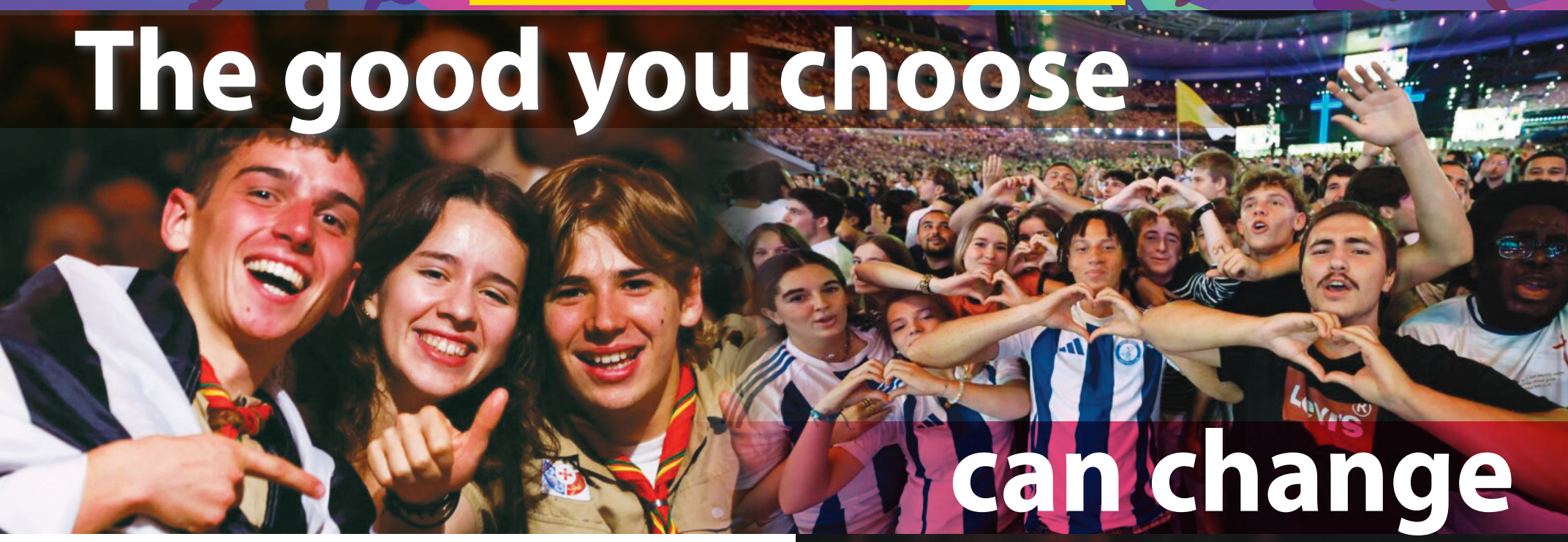


Colour this picture



YOUTH

The good you choose can change a LIFE



SAINT-DENIS, France: With a choir of nearly 2,500 young singers, music and testimonies filling the Stade de France, Pope Leo XIV gave the 80,000 people gathered there a challenge to take home: become holy through the choices you make each day.

"The first thing I want to tell you is: Thank you!" he said at the September 25 prayer vigil, thanking the young people for their courage, presence and faith. They had come from across France, including Catholic school students of other faiths in the diverse Diocese of Saint-Denis.

The Pope spoke to their desire for freedom. He said its source was a "living relationship with Jesus" — a relationship that can give direction to their hopes and lead them from indifference towards justice.

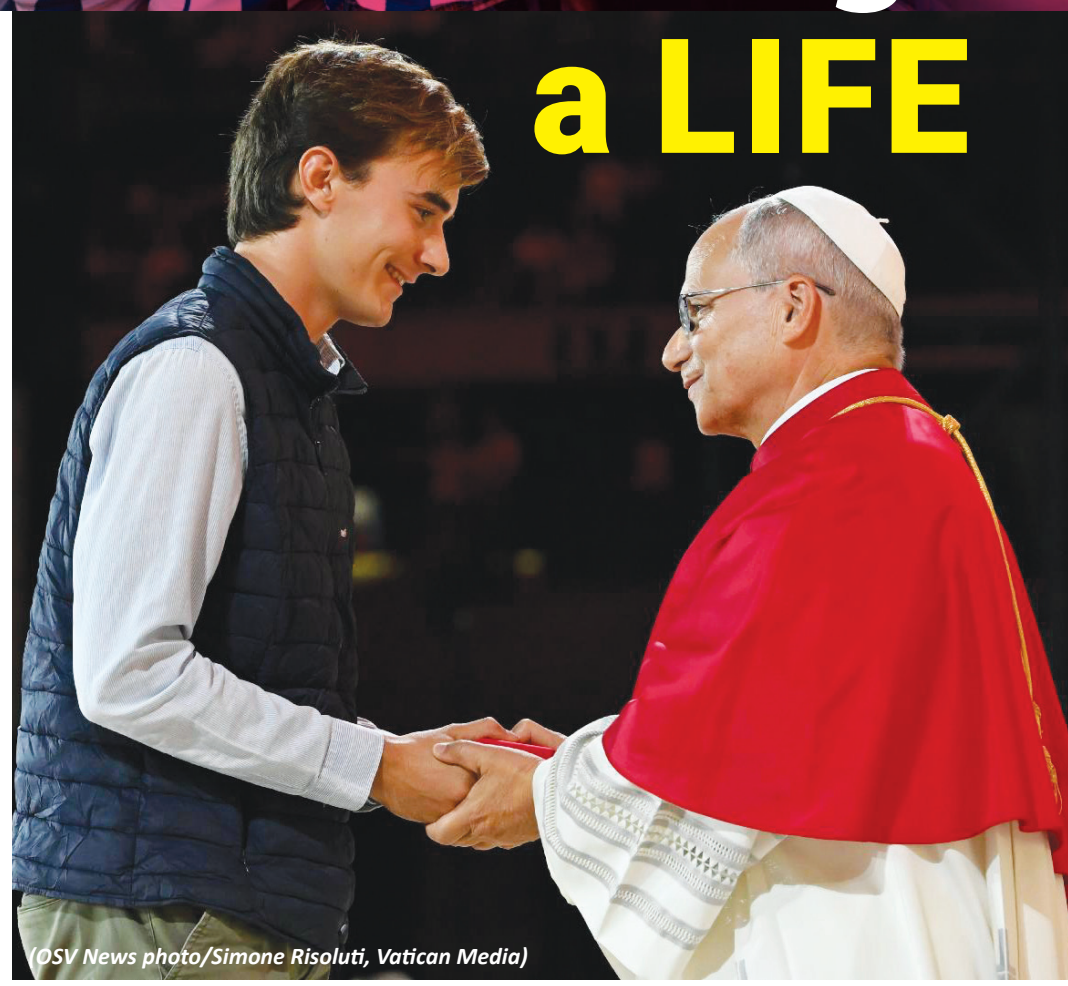
That message was heard in the stories shared by young people. Orvedi, a young man from Angola, spoke about how faith in Christ and the strength of the Holy Spirit helped him believe in himself while living with a disability. Chloé described her work with young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Their testimonies showed faith taking shape in lives with real challenges and real opportunities to care for others.

Throughout the evening, the Ecclesia Cantic choir helped turn the vast stadium into a place of shared prayer. Choir member Christel said the songs had been chosen so that everyone could join in. Young performers also brought figures from France's Christian history to life, while a statue of Our Lady of France was carried into the stadium.

Pope Leo held up Blessed Marcel Callo as an example of inner freedom. A young French worker sent to a Nazi concentration camp during the Second World War, Marcel continued to choose what was good even in its darkness. His witness led the Pope to offer a guide for difficult decisions: "The good gives life; it never takes it away."

That can be a demanding test. Does a choice help another person flourish? Does it make room for kindness and justice, especially when doing so costs us something? The Pope reminded the young people that holiness grows as they keep choosing the good, supported by Christ, the people around them and the example of the saints.

"You are the saints of France!" he told them with a smile. After an evening of singing and celebration, the words offered each young person something quieter to carry home: the possibility of living holiness in an ordinary week — in a friendship, at school, at work or in an act of service. **OSV News**



(OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media)

FRIENDSHIP STRENGTHENS ALTAR SERVERS' SPIRIT OF SERVICE





BATU GAJAH: The altar servers of the Church of St Joseph usually gather with a task before them: to help the parish community pray at Mass. On Sunday, September 20, they came together for a Coffee Morning with time simply to enjoy one another's company.

Over food and refreshments, the servers shared stories, laughter and conversation. The gathering gave them space to get to know one another beyond their duties at the altar and to strengthen the friendships that help them serve as a team.

Serving at Mass calls for attention, commitment and a willingness to help. It also gives young people a chance to grow together in faith. When altar servers encourage one another and feel that they belong, each has someone to turn to, both during their service and beyond it.

The Coffee Morning was a simple but meaningful way to nurture that bond. Thanks to those who organised the gathering and contributed food, drinks and their time, the servers were able to share a relaxed morning together.

May the friendships formed there continue to grow, and may the altar servers bring the same joy and care to their ministry each time they serve. As Psalm 100:2 invites us: "Serve the Lord with gladness!"

A faith to carry beyond camp



Bernice Del Robert

BUKIT MERTAJAM: Thirty-two young people from the Minor Basilica of St Anne and the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Kulim, came together from 28 to 30 August for a Confirmation camp at the basilica. Across three days, games and conversations gave way to prayer, difficult questions and a fresh sense of what it means to follow Christ.

Catechist Jason Tioh organised the camp with a youth team, supported by Juanita Ann, Joseph Sagayah and Maria Selvam.

Day 1: Opening up

The candidates began by getting to know one another. In a parish-wide Monopoly game, they moved between stations, completing tasks and earning points as a team. Jason drew on the experience in his talk, "Is This All My Life Going to Be?", inviting them to consider the choices that shape their lives and faith.



After praise and worship led by Alvinus Bryan and his team, a skit, "I Am God's Masterpiece", explored the frustrations young people can carry and the assurance that God remains close. The day ended in Eucharistic Adoration led by Deacon Ashley Chau. After an energetic start, the stillness gave the candidates time to bring their own concerns before God.

Day 2: Trust and discernment

The next morning's "Road to Emmaus" paired candidates for a blindfolded walk around the parish. As they relied on one another, some found the courage to speak about worries they had kept to themselves, including the pressure of approaching SPM examinations.

Following praise and worship led by the catechists, a game called "Make a Choice" raised dilemmas the candidates might face in daily life. Deacon Ashley's session on reason and faith encouraged them to think through their responses as Catholics. In a relationship forum, Juanita and Kenneth, and Gabriel and Amelia, spoke about love, commitment and sacrifice.

A Vocation Circle offered perspectives on the clergy, religious life, single life and marriage, shared by Deacon Ashley, Sr Tauria, Jael, Gabriel and Amelia. Deacon Ashley also spoke about the Holy Spirit and the meaning of Confirmation. The candidates later received the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Around a campfire that evening, they had time to talk with their catechists and reflect on what they had heard.

Day 3: Faith carried home

Jason opened the final day with *Source & Mission*, reflecting on Christ's Crucifixion and the love at the heart of Christian life. The candidates then wrote letters of thanks to their parents and read letters their parents had prepared before camp. For many, the exchange brought emotions they had struggled to put into words and offered a chance to recognise the care they receive at home.

Sherlyn Jouti, an RCIA trainer, led a session on community and mission, followed by a team activity. Meanwhile, Deacon Ashley met the parents to speak about accompanying young Catholics in their faith. Parents and children then came together for an interaction session. Fr Desmond Jansen celebrated the closing Mass, with music by TABS Choir.

On Confirmation Day

At the candidates' Confirmation Mass, Cardinal Sebastian Francis drew on the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16). Although the workers had laboured for different lengths of time, each received the same wage. "Are you jealous?" he asked, inviting the young people to examine whether they treat faith as a contract in which they earn God's favour, or trust in a Father whose generosity exceeds their calculations. Recalling Pope Leo's words that "the world awaits more saints", the Cardinal urged them to learn the "language of the Holy Spirit": love, unity, generosity and service. For the candidates, the call now is to speak that language in their families, schools and parish, long after the camp has ended.

Candidates' voices

Shauna Abigail Lourdes said Adoration felt like "a big weight" had been lifted from her shoulders. For Adrian Wilson, sitting quietly with Jesus after Reconciliation brought peace and joy.

The Emmaus walk gave Agatha Antoinette Andrew Michael space to express long-held feelings and reflect on herself from God's perspective. Eunice Del Robert said the camp helped her see Confirmation as a choice to grow closer to God and welcome the Holy Spirit's work in her life.

Ivony Anne Paul hoped to carry what she had learnt into daily life, while Harvish Nixon said he had begun to view his faith differently. Their responses point to where the camp's lasting work will happen: in the ordinary decisions that follow it.

CONFIRMED TO LIVE AS JOYFUL DISCIPLES

PENANG: Four young people of City Parish received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, at the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows on September 6. In his homily, the Cardinal invited them to see the gift of the Holy Spirit as a call to live their faith with courage and joy.

"The world today awaits new saints," he told them, echoing Pope Leo XIV's recent appeal to young people. Holiness, he said, is lived through joyful discipleship and the Gospel values they bring into everyday life.

Drawing on the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences' plenary assembly in Jakarta, Cardinal Sebastian spoke of the Holy Spirit guiding the Church to "see greater things" in its mission. As Catholics prepared for MPC2026, he likened that movement to a new Pentecost: just as the Spirit led the disciples out of the upper room, the Church in Malaysia was being called to step forward in mission.

He also praised young Catholics across the country for organising and coordinating the *Perjalanan Salib*. Days later, the nine pilgrim crosses were united at the opening of MPC2026 in Sibu.

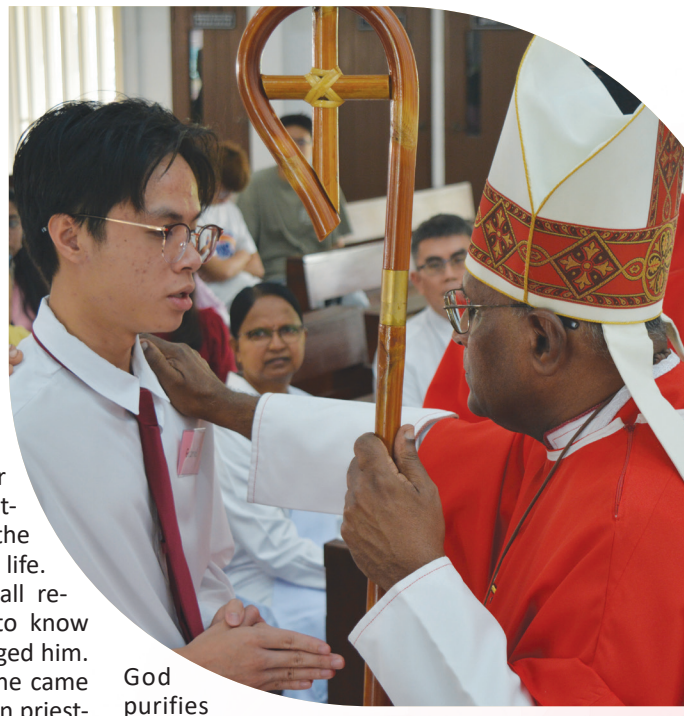
The Cardinal also looked ahead to Penang Diocesan Youth Day in Perak this November and World Youth Day in Seoul in August 2027. He shared plans for young people from his titular church in Rome, *Parrocchia Santa Maria Causa Nostrae Laetitiae*, to visit the Diocese of Penang after World Youth Day.



The four candidates then came forward to be anointed with Sacred Chrism. Their Confirmation placed the Cardinal's invitation before them personally: to allow the Holy Spirit to guide the way they live, serve and witness to Christ.

Cardinal Sebastian presided at the Mass, with parish priest Fr Edmund Woon and assistant parish priest Fr Arulnathan Joseph concelebrating. Deacon Paul Kang assisted. At the close, Fr Arulnathan and Confirmation class representative Abby Fong thanked the parents, catechists and others who had accompanied the candidates on their journey of faith. **Aaron Lim**

A new life in the Spirit at St Henry



BATU PAHAT: "Are you ready to receive the Holy Spirit, and will you keep your faith till the end?" Bishop Bernard Paul put this question to 14 youth and adult candidates at the Church of St Henry before they received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Presiding at the Mass, with Fr Patrick Tyoh Kai Hong concelebrating, Bishop Bernard spoke of the Holy Spirit's power to change a life. He recalled once believing that all religions were the same. Coming to know God as real, close and loving changed him. Through the Holy Spirit, he said, he came to recognise his call to the diocesan priesthood and, later, to serve as Bishop.

He described four "building blocks" of a life led by the Spirit: new birth, through which God purifies and frees us; a new heart, capable of loving God and caring for others; a new spirit, strengthened by the Holy Spirit as advocate and helper; and a new life, rooted in the knowledge that God is near and dwells within us.



For the newly confirmed, the bishop's opening question was one to carry beyond the celebration. The Spirit they had received would continue to guide them as they lived their faith in their families, parish and daily lives.

After Mass, Bishop Bernard blessed and opened the newly constructed St Henry Centre. Clergy and parishioners then gathered at St Henry Hall for fellowship.

Sr Gloria Felix: Small in stature, boundless in spirit



PASAY CITY, Philippines: Daughter of St Paul Sr Gloria Felix, whose energy, humour and inventive spirit enlivened her many years of service, was called to eternal life on September 23. She was 90.

Born in Malolos, Bulacan, Sr Gloria entered the Daughters of St Paul in 1951. She made her first profession in 1956 and her final vows in 1962. Small in stature but full of life, she took to heart the Founder's invitation to keep pressing forward. She remained curious about new technologies and attentive to politics and current events.

Her mission took her across continents. She served in Sabah from 1964 to 1965 and in Selangor from 1965 to 1966. In Italy, she assisted at the Ut Unum Sint centre in Rome and later cared for sick sisters in Alba and Albano. In Madrid, she prepared audiovisual materials; in Boston, she helped in the shipping and editorial offices.

In Pasay City, Sr Gloria worked in the shipping office and prepared radio programmes. She later took responsibility for the formation of Pauline Cooperators. Her gift for building relationships also reached beyond the congregation, to employees of the Pasay City government and members of the police.



The Pauline Family bids farewell as Sr Gloria Felix's coffin is carried out. (DSP Philippines)

A serious heart condition led her to stay at the Pasay Infirmary about two years ago. In her final month, she was admitted to hospital several times with an acute pulmonary infection. She died on the memorial of St Pio of Pietrelcina.

Sr Gloria's life was one of willing service and a readiness to meet each new need. Those who knew her will remember a sister who kept moving forward, with faith, creativity and a keen sense of humour. **Sr Anna Yap fsp**

Priests who stayed with their people beatified

BOLOGNA, Italy: Three priests who remained with their communities during the Nazi massacres at Monte Sole in 1944 were beatified at the Basilica of San Petronio on September 27.

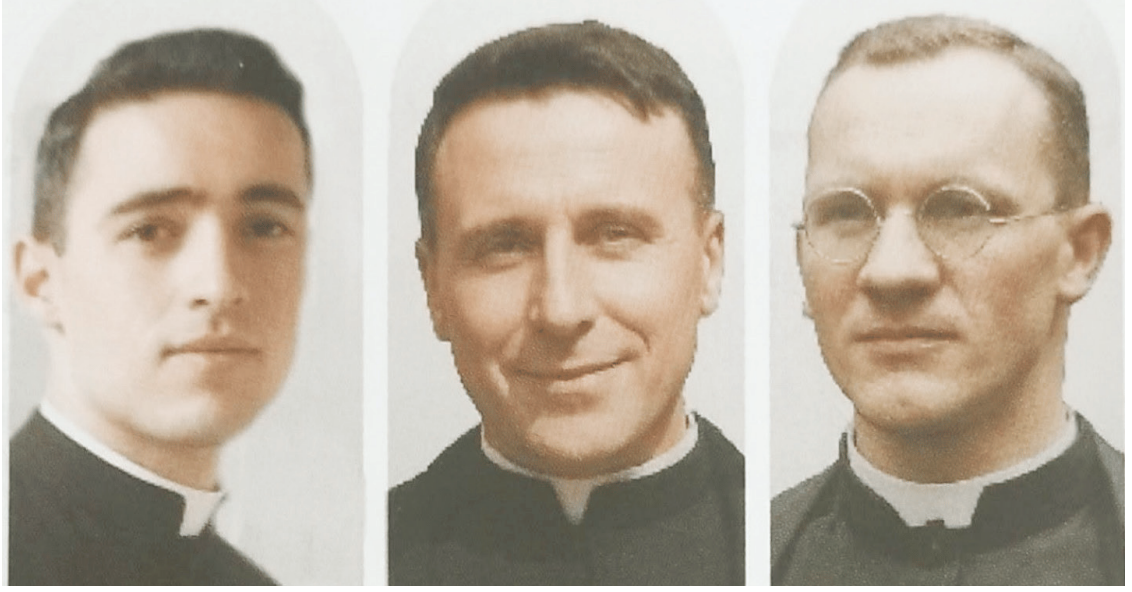
Fr Ubaldo Marchioni, a diocesan priest, Fr Elia Comini, a Salesian, and Fr Martino Capelli, a Dehonian, had opportunities to flee. They chose to stay and minister to people caught in the violence. About 770 people were killed in the massacres between September 29 and October 5, 1944.

Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, presided at the beatification Mass. He said the priests' witness sprang from love for the people entrusted to them. "The secret of the martyrs is not heroism, but love that is given completely," he said.

Fr Marchioni was killed on September 29 while helping people who had sought refuge in the church at Casaglia. Fr Comini and Fr Capelli were captured while bringing pastoral care to victims at Creda and were killed together on October 1.

Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, Archbishop of Bologna, said the new Blesseds had chosen to remain beside their brothers and sisters. Their witness, he said, calls the Church to stand close to those who suffer.

Their story also bears a sign of reconciliation. Years later, Fr Marchioni's father, Augusto, was among the few who did not oppose a plea for clemency from SS Major Walter Reder, who had coordinated the massacre. **Crux News**



Fathers Ubaldo Marchioni, Elia Comini and Martino Capelli. (Archdiocese of Bologna photo)

MEMORIAM

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31st Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Arul Jagan Savarinathan
Departed: 16-10-1995

Dearest Brother/ Brother-in-law/ Uncle

Thirty-one years have passed since God took you home;
No words can express our loss and sorrow.
Although we cannot see you, we know you are always with us in spirit.
Our hearts will always cherish fond memories of you.
May you rest in peace in God's arms.

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by sisters, brothers, sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews.

NOTICE

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40th Day Anniversary



MICHAEL RICHARD GEORGE

30th April 1961 - 27th August 2026

Forty days have passed since God called you home, but your love and memories remain forever in our hearts.
Until we meet again in God's heavenly kingdom, you will forever be loved, missed, and remembered.
Rest in eternal peace, Dad

Fondly remembered by wife, children, siblings and grandchildren.

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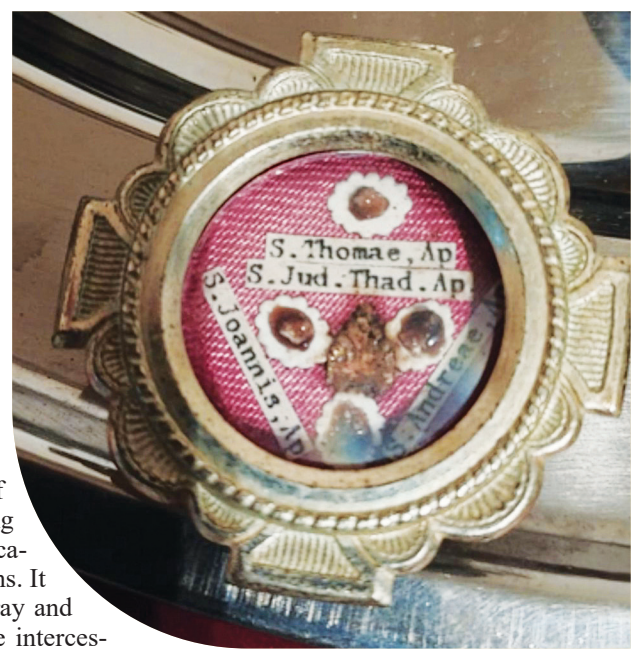
FOR MENTAL HEALTH MINISTRY

We pray that the mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illnesses.

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TOGETHER, WE MAKE EACH DAY DIFFERENT
Download the **Click To Pray** *updates now.*
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October 11, 2026

St Jude's relic comes to Rawang



RAWANG: Pilgrims gathering for the Feast of St Jude this year will have a special opportunity to venerate a relic of the parish's patron saint, whose intercession has long been sought by those facing difficult and seemingly hopeless situations.

Through the generosity of College General Regional Seminary, Penang, first-class relics of St Jude Thaddeus, St Thomas, St Andrew and St John will be at the Church of St Jude, Rawang, from October 16 to 28.

This will be the first time in the parish's history that a relic of St Jude will be present, making the visit a deeply meaningful occasion for parishioners and pilgrims. It offers an invitation to pause, pray and draw closer to God through the intercession of the saints.

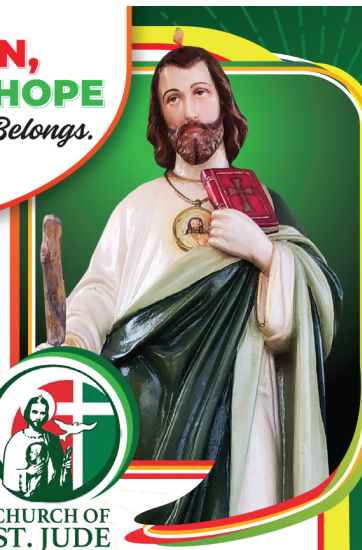
All are warmly invited to spend time in prayer before the relics, bringing their joys and struggles, hopes and fears, and the concerns they may find difficult to put into words. In the quiet of prayer, pilgrims can seek the saints' intercession and entrust their intentions to God, placing their faith in His mercy and love.

As the parish celebrates the Feast of St Jude under the theme *Celebrate, Listen, Walk Together in Hope — All Are Welcome, Everybody Belongs,* the visit of these sacred relics invites everyone to renew their faith and find strength for the journey ahead.



ST JUDE Feast Day Celebration
16th – 28th Oct 2026

CELEBRATE, LISTEN, WALK TOGETHER IN HOPE
All Are Welcome, Everybody Belongs.



CHURCH OF ST. JUDE RAWANG

Flag Raising

NOVENA DAY 1
16 Oct (Friday)
7:00pm: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Novena | **7:30pm**: Mass (ML)
Do Not Be Afraid — You Are Precious to God அஞ்சாதீர்கள்–ஆண்டவரின் பார்வையில் நீங்கள் மிக மதிப்புக்குரியவர்கள்
不要害怕 —— 你在天主眼中十分珍贵 *Jangan Takut — Anda Berharga di Mata Allah*

NOVENA DAY 2
17 Oct (Saturday)
5:30pm: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Novena | **6:00pm**: Mass (ML)
Listen to the Spirit — Courage to Witness with Hope தூய ஆவியானவருக்குச் செவிமடுப்போம் – எதிர்நோக்கோடும் துணிவோடும் சாட்சியமளிப்போம்
聆听圣神——怀着希望勇敢作证 *Dengarkan Roh Kudus — Keberanian untuk Bersaksi dalam Harapan*

NOVENA DAY 3
18 Oct (Sunday)
7:00am: Rosary & Novena **7:30am**: Mass in Tamil | **9:00am**: Rosary & Novena **9:30am**: Mass in English
11:00am: Rosary & Novena **11:30am**: Mass in Mandarin | **1:00pm**: Rosary & Novena **1:30pm**: Mass in Bahasa
5:30pm: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Novena | **6:00pm**: Mass (ML)
Belong to God — Living Faith in the World இறைவனுக்கு உரியவர் – உலகின் உயிருள்ள நம்பிக்கை
属于天主——在世界中活出信仰 *Milik Allah — Menghidupi Iman di Dunia*

NOVENA DAY 4
19 Oct (Monday)
7:00pm: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Novena | **7:30pm**: Mass (ML)
What Truly Matters — Rich in the Things of God உண்மையில் முக்கியமானது எது? – கடவுள் முன்னிலையில் செல்வம் உடையவர்
真正重要的事—— 在天主的事上富足 *Apa yang Sungguh Bernilai — Kaya dalam Nilai-nilai Allah*

NOVENA DAY 5
20 Oct (Tuesday)
7:00pm: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Novena | **7:30pm**: Mass (ML)
Stay Awake — Walking Together in Faithfulness விழித்திருப்போம் – நம்பிக்கையில் ஒன்றாகப் பயணித்தல்
保持 *醒悟* —— 忠信同行 *Tetap Berjaga — Berjalan Bersama dalam Kesetiaan*

NOVENA DAY 6
21 Oct (Wednesday)
7:00pm: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Novena | **7:30pm**: Mass (ML)
Trust the Lord — A People Responsible for One Another ஆண்டவரை நம்புங்கள் – ஒருவர் மீது ஒருவர் பொறுப்புள்ள ஒரு மக்களினம்
信赖上主——成为彼此负责的子民 *Percayalah kepada Tuhan — Umat yang Bertanggungjawab Satu Sama Lain*

NOVENA DAY 7
22 Oct (Thursday)
7:00pm: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Novena | **7:30pm**: Mass (ML)
The Fire of the Gospel — Conversion that Renews the World நற்செய்தியின் தீ – உலகைப் புதுப்பிக்கும் மனமாற்றம்
福音之火——更新世界的皈依 *Api Injil — Pertobatan yang Membaharui Dunia*

NOVENA DAY 8
23 Oct (Friday)
10:00am: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Novena | **10:30am**: Mass in English ***Anointing of the Sick***
7:00pm: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Novena | **7:30pm**: Mass (ML)
Recognize the Signs of the Times — Listening with Wisdom காலத்தின் அறிகுறிகளை அறிந்துகொள்ளுங்கள் – ஞானத்துடன் செவிமடுத்தல்
辨认时代的征兆——以智慧聆听 *Kenalilah Tanda-tanda Zaman — Mendengar dengan Kebijaksanaan*

NOVENA DAY 9
24 Oct (Saturday)
10:00am: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Novena | **10:30am**: Mass in English
5:30pm: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Novena | **6:00pm**: Mass (ML) ***Procession***
Love Is Our Mission — You Are Welcome, You Belong அன்பே நமது இலக்கு – உங்களை வரவேற்கிறோம்; நீங்கள் ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளப்படுகிறீர்கள்
爱是我们的使命——欢迎您，您是我们的一分子 *Cinta kasih adalah Misi Kita — Anda Dialu-alukan, Anda Diterima*

DONATION
CHURCH OF ST JUDES RAWANG
WEBSITE

25 Oct (Sunday)
7:00am: Rosary **7:30am**: Mass in Tamil | **9:00am**: Rosary **9:30am**: Mass in English
11:00am: Rosary **11:30am**: Mass in Mandarin | **1:00pm**: Rosary **1:30pm**: Mass in Bahasa
5:30pm: Rosary (ML) | **6:00pm**: Mass (ML) **Thanksgiving Mass**
எதிர்நோக்கின் திருப்பயணிகளாகக் கொண்டாடுவோம், செவிமடுப்போம் – அனைவரையும் வரவேற்கிறோம், அனைவரும் ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளப்படுகிறீர்கள்
庆贺、聆听、在希望中同行 —— 欢迎所有人，人人都属于这里
Rayakan, Dengar, Berjalan Bersama dalam Harapan – Semua Orang Dialu-alukan, Semua Orang Diterima

28 Oct (Wednesday)
Feast of Sts Simon & Jude
10:00am - Rosary (Eng)
10:30am - Mass (Eng)
7:00pm - Rosary
7:30pm - Mass (ML)
Flag lowering & Burning petitions

Come Home to Hope - A Parish Where Every Heart Belongs
எதிர்நோக்கு இல்லம் வாருங்கள் – ஒவ்வொரு இதயத்தையும் ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளும் ஒரு பங்கு
回归希望——让每颗心都有归属的堂区
Pulanglah kepada Harapan — Paroki di Mana Setiap Hati Diterima.

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