

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.



PENANG: The Catholic Church in Malaysia marked a historic milestone with the 360th anniversary of College General Seminary, one of the oldest seminaries in Asia. Founded in 1665 in Ayutthaya, Siam (present-day Thailand) by the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP), the seminary has long stood as a cornerstone of priestly formation in the region.

The three-day celebration, which began on September 29, opened with a keynote address by Fr Jean L'Hour, MEP, former Scripture professor and missionary who once served at College General in the 1960s and 1970s. Now in his 90s, Fr L'Hour returned to Penang after more than five decades, describing the invitation to speak as "a precious gift in my old age."

"From the very first day, I felt welcomed in your home," he recalled. "I had come to teach, but on that first day, I discovered that I had first to learn." Being back, he added, was like "returning home," since Penang was where he spent the first years of his missionary life.

Fr L'Hour traced the seminary's transformation from an MEP institution into a regional seminary under the Bishops' Conference in 1968, and later into local leadership. "I had the chance to live through that exciting period of transition between, so to say, the 'Old Testament' and the 'New Testament' — between the old MEP College General and the new

Regional College of Malaysia and Singapore," he said.

He emphasised that College General has been a "nursery of Christian communities in Southeast Asia," producing over 2,000 students, more than a thousand priests, 20 bishops and three cardinals, while also remembering the 47 former students and two directors who gave their lives as martyrs, among them Saints Philip Minh and Companions, and Saints Imbert and Chastan.

Reflecting on his own years in Penang, he recalled the awe of joining a seminary community where seminarians from Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Laos, Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei lived together in unity despite diversity. Teaching theology in Latin amidst so many languages, he said, revealed College General as a "polyphonic community" bound together by the Gospel.

He also highlighted the *Aggiornamento* spirit of Vatican II, which called seminaries worldwide to renewal. "The College became a buzzing beehive," he said, citing reforms such as replacing Latin with English, seminarians electing their own student leaders, and strengthening pastoral formation. These, he added, were "only the beginning of a long history which, I know, will never stop."

A defining moment came when Archbishop Dominic Vendargon visited the College after the first session of Vatican II to brief staff and students on Rome's deliberations. "Western theologians told us that great changes had to be made in the Church, and then explained how they would proceed," he recalled. For the community, his words signalled that priestly formation was moving from the hands of the MEP Fathers to local leadership — a decisive step that

has continued to shape the seminary's mission in Asia. This vision soon became reality. In 1970, Fr Archilles Chung was appointed the first Malaysian rector, and by 1973, the teaching staff was fully Asian.

At the heart of his message, Fr L'Hour underlined the enduring pillars of priestly formation: *Pietas* (prayer and communion with Christ), *Labor* (study and work), and *Amor* (love). Of these, he reminded seminarians, "the greatest is love" — not found in books but in daily encounters with people, especially the poor and voiceless. "Only such daily and ordinary love can make us happy heralds and builders of the Kingdom of God."

He urged respect for cultures and traditions, echoing the 17th-century instructions of Pope Alexander VII to the first MEP missionaries: "The Church needs all your colours, all your voices and traditions in order to be faithful to the mission assigned to her."

To the younger seminarians, Fr L'Hour exhorted, "Remember — not by repeating the past, but by drawing strength from the College's deep roots to face new challenges with courage. Remember our martyrs. Remember Jesus who was put to death because He loved us to the end."

As celebrations unfolded under the leadership of Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Fr L'Hour closed with gratitude and hope. "We celebrate today a glorious history of human and Christian achievements... but walking in the steps of our fathers, we turn with confidence and hope to a future where the Lord is calling us and awaiting us. Long live the Spirit of College General!"

See more on Pages 4 and 5.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Fidelity in storms, courage for tomorrow

The College General Seminary in Penang marked its 360th anniversary from September 29 to October 1, a celebration not of years passed, but of a mission that has walked through fire and storm. This is no mere milestone of survival; it is a summons to renewal. For centuries, the seminary has stood as a crucible of faith, tested by exile, persecution, and upheaval, yet unshaken in its calling to form shepherds for the Church. Founded in 1665 in Ayutthaya, Siam, it endured political storms and wars that forced four relocations — to Chanthaburi in Thailand, Hon Dat in Vietnam, Pondicherry in India — before finding a permanent home in Penang in 1809. Each move was more than a shift of ground; it was a sign of resilience, adaptability, and fidelity to Christ's call.

The seminary's story reflects the vision of its founders — missionaries of the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP), Bishops François Pallu and Pierre Lambert de la Motte. They were not content to replicate a European model on Asian soil but sought a seminary that would take root in local culture and faith. Pope Alexander VII's instruction to them in 1659 still echoes powerfully today: "Do not transport France, Spain, or Italy to these peoples, but bring them the faith which does not reject their customs and traditions." In that spirit, College General became truly Asian — not only in location, but in soul, language, and leadership.

The chosen theme of the anniversary — Gratitude, Fidelity, and Hope — captures

the essence of this legacy. Gratitude is owed not only to the visionary missionaries who planted the first seeds, but also to the countless seminarians, formators, bishops, priests, and lay faithful who carried the seminary's mission forward across centuries. Their sacrifices remind us that our faith today rests upon foundations laid by others who dared to dream beyond their own lifetimes.

Fidelity, however, is never about clinging to the past. It is about staying true to the heart of priestly formation — prayer, work, and love — while responding to the needs of the present. The seminary may have produced bishops, priests, and martyrs in abundance, but its true measure of fruitfulness today lies in whether it forms shepherds rooted in Christ, able to walk closely with the people of God, especially the poor and the forgotten. Fidelity demands courage — the courage to hold firm to the Gospel while engaging a world that is restless, fractured, and often indifferent to faith.

Hope, finally, is what propels us forward. But hope is not naïve optimism. It does not deny that vocations are fewer today than in decades past, that families hesitate to encourage priestly life, or that the noise of modern living often drowns out God's call. To simply acknowledge this is not enough. The pressing question is whether we are cultivating the soil where vocations can grow — or allowing indifference and apathy to choke new life. The future of the Church in Malaysia, and indeed across Asia, depends on

how we answer.

The story of College General teaches us that renewal is always possible. Just as the seminary endured exile, persecution, and transition, so too can the Church today rediscover the vitality of vocations — if we choose to nurture it. This anniversary challenges every Catholic family to honour the priesthood as a noble calling, every parish to encourage young people in discernment, and every priest to bear joyful witness to a life poured out for Christ and His people. Renewal will not come by chance; it will come by deliberate faithfulness.

The roots of College General run deep, reminding us that storms will surely come — but trees firmly planted endure. Still, strong roots alone do not guarantee a fruitful future; they must be cared for. As we give thanks for three and a half centuries of grace, we are called to look ahead with renewed fidelity, courage, and conviction. Will future generations be able to say that our age, too, gave rise to saints, martyrs, bishops, and priests who bore witness to Christ? The answer depends on our faithfulness today.

Gratitude anchors us. Fidelity steadies us. Hope carries us forward. May the spirit of College General continue to shape shepherds who will lead with courage, proclaim the Gospel with joy, and embody the love of Christ in new centuries yet to come.

Patricia Pereira

Gratitude that heals, faith that endures

The readings this Sunday invite us to pause and consider two great gifts that sustain our Christian journey — healing and gratitude. Healing comes from the Lord, but it is gratitude that opens our hearts to truly receive and live in the fullness of that healing. In a world that often forgets to give thanks, today's Scriptures remind us that gratitude is not a polite afterthought — it is the very posture of faith.

In the first reading (2 Kings 5:14–17), we encounter Naaman, a commander afflicted with leprosy. His healing came not through wealth, power, or influence, but through obedience to a humble instruction: to bathe seven times in the Jordan. At first, Naaman resisted the simplicity of the command. Yet when he surrendered his pride and trusted, he was healed — not only of leprosy but also of his inner blindness. He came to acknowledge the living God of Israel and offered thanksgiving. His story reminds us that healing requires humility, and thanksgiving is its natural response. How often do we, like Naaman, expect grand solutions, when God's grace meets us in the ordinary?

The Gospel (Luke 17:11–19) deepens this lesson. Jesus heals ten lepers, but only one — a Samaritan — returns to give thanks. The others receive their healing, but only this foreigner receives a deeper gift: the assurance of salvation. Jesus says, "Your faith has made you well." Gratitude here is not mere politeness; it is the recognition of God's hand at work and the willingness to enter into relationship with Him. Healing is not just about restored health; it is about

restored communion with God and others. And gratitude is the bridge that makes that communion possible.

It is striking that the one who returned was a Samaritan — an outsider, despised by the Jews. Perhaps he knew more keenly the depth of mercy he had received. Gratitude often flows more easily from hearts that know their poverty. Those who recognise how undeserving they are of grace tend to treasure it more deeply. Are we like the nine who rushed off with their blessing, or like the one who returned, whose heart overflowed with gratitude?

St Paul, writing to Timothy in the second reading (2 Timothy 2:8–13), connects these themes of healing and gratitude to the ultimate healing act: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He reminds Timothy: "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead." To "remember" here means more than recalling a fact; it means living in the power of that reality. Paul, enduring chains and hardship, finds strength in gratitude for Christ's faithfulness. "If we die with him, we will also live with him... if we are faithless, he remains faithful." God's love does not falter even when ours does. Gratitude, then, is not simply for what God gives, but for who God is — ever faithful, ever merciful.

Taken together, the readings challenge us to cultivate a grateful heart. Gratitude is more than words spoken at mealtimes or after a favour. It is a way of seeing life, an orientation that acknowledges everything is a gift. Gratitude keeps us from pride,

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr George Packiasamy

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Readings: 2 Kings 5:14–17;

2 Timothy 2:8–13;

Gospel: Luke 17:11–19

entitlement, and forgetfulness. It grounds us in humility and opens us to deeper intimacy with God. Without gratitude, even the greatest blessings can pass unnoticed. With gratitude, even small blessings become radiant signs of God's love.

In our own lives, where are we called to return and give thanks? Have we perhaps received healing — physical, emotional, or spiritual — yet failed to turn back and recognise God's hand? Gratitude transforms not only our relationship with God but also with others. A grateful heart is generous, compassionate, and hopeful. Gratitude is contagious — it draws others to faith, just as Naaman's thanksgiving became a witness to the living God.

As we reflect on these Scriptures, let us not be content with being among the nine who received but forgot. Let us strive to be like the one Samaritan who returned. For in returning, he not only received healing but also encountered salvation itself. Gratitude, then, is not optional for Christians; it is the essence of our response to God's unmerited grace.

In every circumstance, may we echo Paul's words: "Remember Jesus Christ." To remember Him is to live daily in gratitude — for His healing, His faithfulness, and His love that never ends.

Interfaith conference urges unity for peace

Christopher Kushi

GEORGE TOWN: The Allied Coordinating Council of Islamic NGOs Malaysia (ACCIN Malaysia) and the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID) successfully hosted the International Interfaith Peace Conference (IIPC 2025) at the Bahang Bay Hotel on September 13–14.

This year's conference, themed *Embracing Multicultural and Multi-Religious Unity Towards Peace and Harmony in a Troubled World*, brought together diverse faith and civil leaders, with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Penang among the collaborators.

Penang Chief Minister, YAB Tuan Chow Kon Yeow, in his keynote, underlined the importance of interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding initiatives, particularly involving policymakers, religious leaders, and grassroots communities. Against the backdrop of ongoing global conflicts — the genocide in Gaza, the war in Ukraine, and unrest in Southeast Asia — he reminded participants that “peace is not an abstract dream, but a daily practice rooted in justice,

compassion, and shared responsibility.” The Chief Minister added that Penang is well-positioned to be a hub for such initiatives due to its strong civil society presence.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, was one of the panel speakers and his topic was, *Imagine a World of Peace and Harmony: Is it a Dream?* He reflected that dreams and visions are inspired by the Spirit of God, echoing Acts 2:17: “In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.” He stressed that a vision rooted in faith becomes the foundation for outreach, creativity, inclusivity, bridge-building, and authentic spirituality.

Cardinal Sebastian urged participants to respond actively to the cries of the poor, the sick, the displaced, and the marginalised, aligning with the vision set forth in the 2019 Abu Dhabi Declaration on Human Fraternity, signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. He concluded with an African proverb: “When



(Buletin Mutiara/Muhamad Amir Irsyad Omar)

you pray, move your feet”—a reminder that prayer must be matched with concrete action.

Deacon Paul Kang of City Parish spoke on *Achieving Peace and Harmony by Avoiding a Zero-Sum Game in a Troubled World*. Drawing on St Teresa of Calcutta's insight, “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other,” he emphasised that peace is not solely forged by the powerful but can and must be cultivated in everyday relationships — within homes, families, neighbourhoods, and workplaces. He ended his presentation by leading participants in the timeless Prayer of St Francis of Assisi – Prayer for Peace.

Distinguished guests included Qatar's ambassador to Malaysia, H.E. Salah Mohammed Al-Sorour; DICID Board of

Directors chairman, H.H. Prof. Ibrahim Saleh Al-Naimi; and Dato' Dr Abdul Razak Ahmad, special representative of the Foreign Minister on Peacebuilding and Countering Islamophobia.

ACCIN Malaysia chief executive officer, Ir. Mohd Jamaludin Shamsudin, expressed hope that the message of interfaith harmony would reach ordinary people beyond the conference halls. He stressed the need for further efforts, including youth training programmes in schools and universities, as well as interfaith site visits to places of worship to deepen understanding and respect.

He noted that IIPC 2025 marked the fourth edition of the conference, and the first held outside the Klang Valley. Plans are underway for the next edition in Kuching, Sarawak.

KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

October

- 14-15 Clergy Monthly Recollection
- 16 Meeting – Archdiocesan Finance
- 18 Meeting – Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Pastoral Team
- 19 Jubilee of Migrants - Mission Sunday – Church of St Anthony, KL

PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

October

- 19 Confirmation – Church of St Anthony, Teluk Intan at 9.00am

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

October

- 17 Keynote Address for Borneo Care-Faith Strengthening Seminar 2025 – MAJODI Centre
- 18 2nd Assembly of Council Pastoral Services – Church of St Louis, Kluang
- 18 Combined Confirmation (Church of Holy Spirit, Jasin and St James Chapel, Merlimau) – Church of Holy Spirit, Jasin
- 19 Confirmation and Opening, Blessing of Lift cum Bell Tower and Exhibition Hall, Church of St Theresa, Melaka

Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #243

Welcome dear friends,

The Pilgrim Cross arrived at the Church of St Henry, Batu Pahat on September 27, and will remain there till October 25.

The CG360 was attended by 230 clergy, the married and seminarians. There were seminary representatives from Cambodia, Thailand, Singapore, Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and Penang. It was a three-day Remembering Gratitude, Fidelity and Hope experience.

Mission Sunday is coming next.

Local Takes. Sowing Forward. Pro-Palestine protests in Malaysia are increasing in public spaces like malls and stores, targeting brands as complicit with Israel.

A former minister warned about treating the federal budget as an annual distribution of “goodies” or a handout driven exercise, instead of focusing on radical reforms and long-term economic fundamentals.

Traditional employment in the country is now intersecting with the gig economy, automation, and more flexible models. Today's young people have made digital platforms their source of livelihood, single parents are working day and night to raise their children, and fresh graduates are looking for new entry points into the working world. They have been gig workers in a gig economy, without certainty, without justice, and without any security protection. The nation is taking bold steps to ensure social security.

Visit Malaysia 2026 was launched at Melaka by the Prime Minister, stating that Malaysia's history must be based on researched facts, not dictated by the West, and that all Malaysians should know. Strangely where there is inclusivity, there is no fear of the other.

The Spirit Is Saying Something: The UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has warned that the cycles of deadly violence in the Holy Land risk reaching ‘point of no return’, the two-state solution is nearing collapse, citing expanding Israeli settlements, forced displacement and de facto annexation.

Yet the Gaza children teach adults an alternative to hatred. They say and sing in the film *How Kids Roll*: “We have dreams, we have hopes. We are more than rebels. We are more than mere targets.”

“Women for Peace,” a unique concept-concert that unites voices, uses music, bridging cultures, inspiring reflection from around the world is promoting reconciliation, hope, and solidarity and peace; and is sending a clear message that “peace is not a luxury, it is human necessity.”

Pope Leo XIV invites the faithful to join in praying the Rosary every day during October to invoke God's gift of peace.

A Thought for The Week: The Pet Duck

While playing with a slingshot, Johnny accidentally hit and killed Grandma's pet duck. Panicked, he hid it — only to realise his sister Sally had seen everything. From then on, Sally used the secret to make Johnny do all her chores, always whispering, “Remember the duck?” After days of this, Johnny finally confessed to Grandma. She hugged him and said, “Sweetheart, I already knew. I was watching from the window. I forgave you because I love you. I was just waiting to see how long you'd let Sally make a slave of you.”

Lesson from the Grandmother: God also sees everything in our lives — our mistakes, sins, and regrets. But His love means He forgives us when we sincerely ask. The real question is: how long will we let guilt and the devil enslave us, when forgiveness and freedom are already ours?

QnQ: Q asks: Ageing! A growing concern! How to handle this ‘growing old’ reality?

Mao Dun literary prize winner Zhou Daxin's latest novel to be published, *The Sky Gets Dark, Slowly*, is a sensitive exploration of old age and the complex, hidden emotional worlds of the elderly in a rapidly aging population. In it he writes, “Many of the elderly speak as though they know everything, but of old age they are in fact as ignorant as children.”

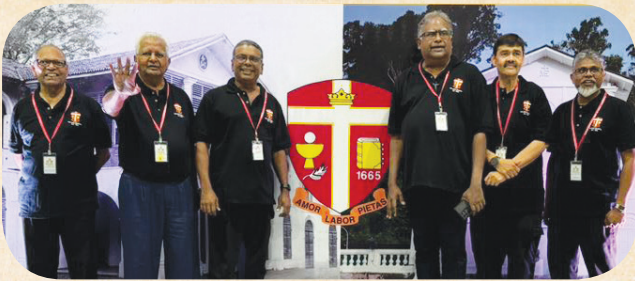
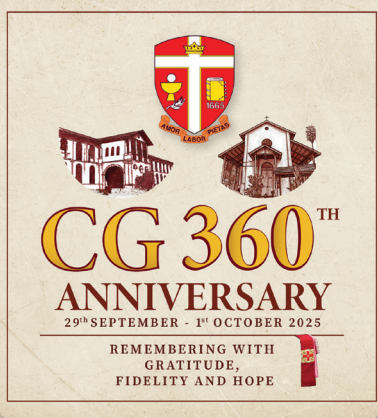
Many of the elderly are, in fact, completely unprepared for what they are to face when it comes to getting old and the road that lays ahead of them.

In the time between a person turning 60 years old, as they begin to age, right until all the lights go out and the sky gets dark, there are some situations to keep in mind, so that you will be prepared for what is to come, and you will not panic.

The Spirit @ work: “It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict, God's job to judge and my job to love,” *Billy Graham*

Something to tickle you: “If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way.” *Martin Luther King Jr*

Bishop Bernard Paul



College General 360 years of gratitude, f

PENANG: The three-day celebration, CG360, at College General seminary gathered nearly 230 participants — clergy, alumni who had returned to the lay state, former seminarians with their spouses, and current students.

Representatives from Cambodia, Thailand, Singapore, Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, and Penang graced the occasion, together with members of the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP) Fathers, whose courage and vision saw the seminary's foundation in 1665.

It was a true gathering of generations, uniting people from across regions and countries in thanksgiving for an institution that has remained a pillar of formation and faith for centuries. The theme, *Gratitude, Fidelity and Hope*, was deeply woven into the atmosphere of the three days. Gratitude for the rich history and legacy entrusted to them; Fidelity to the call of Christ and the mission of the Church; and Hope for the future, as new generations continue the journey of faith and formation.

It was a thoroughly hectic yet fruitful programme — daily Masses with the bishops, insightful reflections from former formators, alumni, and overseas guests, and opportunities for prayer, fraternity, and shared memories.

What made CG360 truly moving was the spirit of fraternity. Hierarchical distinctions melted away as bishops and clergy walked down memory lane, recalling their own seminary days — as young men discerning their vocation, as lecturers guiding others, or as rectors shaping the future of the Church. Laughter mingled with prayer as they reconnected with classmates and friends, some meeting again after decades apart. For a brief time, all were transported back to those formative years when, within the walls of College General, they first answered the call to the priesthood.

Day One: Gratitude

The celebration opened at Mariophile on Sept 29, coinciding with the Feast of the Archangels. For many, it felt like stepping onto sacred ground — a return to the place where their vocational journeys first began.

The day commenced with the Eucharist, presided over by Most Rev Julian Leow, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur. This was followed by a keynote address by Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski, Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia, who encouraged the alumni in their ongoing witness. Fr Prof Jean L'Hour, MEP, now 92, also offered his reflections on the founding ethos

of College General — *Amor, Labor and Pietas* — the love, work, and devotion of the MEP missionaries who planted the seminary's roots in 1665.

Archbishop Emeritus John Ha gave a moving reflection on gratitude, reminding participants that God Himself is deeply grateful for the lives of His people, and that gratitude should, in turn, shape every Christian journey. The current Rector, Fr Ryan Innasi Muthu, expressed thanksgiving for the seminary's history and mission, linking its past to its continuing role in forming future priests.

The day concluded with Vespers, Adoration, fellowship, and entertainment—an atmosphere of joy that allowed alumni, clergy and seminarians to reconnect, celebrate their roots, and give thanks for God's enduring faithfulness.

Day Two: Fidelity

On the second day, the focus turned to fidelity. Bishop Bernard Paul of Malacca Johore presided at Mass, inviting participants to rekindle their passion for vocation, remember their roots and history, relieve the burdens of others with compassion, and live in creative fidelity to God's mission.

The morning continued with two enriching inputs. Fr Vincent Sénéchal, Superior General of the MEP, reflected on the enduring legacy of the seminary and the missionary spirit that has guided its journey across Asia. Cardinal William Goh offered a personal testimony on fidelity, drawing from his experiences as parish priest, rector, and bishop. He reminded participants that fidelity is not static but a dynamic response to God's ongoing invitation—remaining rooted in Christ while responding creatively to the evolving needs of the Church.

In the afternoon, participants deepened their encounter with God through Eucharistic Adoration and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, before visiting the Penang Diocesan Museum and the historic Church of the Assumption. The day ended with Vespers, Adoration, and a meaningful walk through the grounds of the old College General at Kelawi Road — a heritage journey that stirred both deep gratitude and fidelity for the seminary's legacy and mission.



Acknowledgement to Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis, Fr George Packiasamy, Fr Michael Chua, Fr Michel Dass, J.D. Lovrenciar and Penang Diocesan Social Communications Ministry.



At the historical ruins of Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pagar Tras, Bukit Mertajam. L-R: Fr Vy Samnang, Fr Vincent Senechel, Bishop Olivier, Fr Jean L'Hour.

BUKIT MERTAJAM: The parish community at the Minor Basilica of St Anne were blessed with a Mass, presided over by representatives of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP), as part of their visit to Penang for the 360th anniversary of College General.

Leading the delegation was Most Rev Olivier Schmitthaesler, MEP, Bishop of Phnom Penh accompanied by Fr Vincent Sénéchal, Superior General of MEP (128 Rue du Bac, Paris); Fr Jean L'Hour, MEP, former Scripture Professor of College General, Penang; and Fr Vy Samnang, Assistant Rector of St Jean Marie Vianney Seminary, Phnom Penh. They were joined by Fr Bernard Hyacinth, SJ with Deacon Lazarus Jonathan assisting.

For 360 years, the MEP Fathers have carried the Gospel with faith, resilience, and sacrifice across Asia. Their mission has touched countless lives in countries including Thailand, Vietnam, China, Cambodia, India, Laos, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma, and beyond.

Over 4,300 MEP missionaries have served in Asia — evangelising, establishing dioceses, translating Scripture, and producing spiritual works in more than 60 languages.

The enduring legacy of

Many gave their lives for the faith, and to date 23 have been canonised by the Catholic Church.

In Malaysia, their legacy is embodied in College General, Penang, founded by the MEP Fathers. Known as the College of Martyrs, it counts among its alumni and professors many who were martyred and later canonised, including St Laurent Marie Joseph Imbert; St Jacques Honoré Chastan; St Peter Qui, and St Philip Minh. Today, their relics are enshrined in the chapel of College General, a reminder of the missionary spirit that continues to inspire generations.

In his homily, Bishop Olivier shared about the mission of the Church in Cambodia — a witness of love and charity to its people. He recounted the story of Our Lady of the Mekong. Between 2008 and 2012, fishermen salvaged two cast-iron Marian statues — thrown into the river by the Khmer Rouge during the Pol Pot regime — which were rediscovered through visions, dreams, and faith. Today, the Queen of Peace Church in Areiksart, where the statues are enshrined, is fast becoming a place of pilgrimage. Bishop Olivier has since acquired land for its development, hoping it will be a source of grace much like the Shrine of St Anne.



...celebrates ...fidelity and hope

Day Three: Hope

The final day turned to hope, the virtue that propels the Church forward. Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, president of College General, who urged participants to be visionaries and dreamers, carrying the mission of hope in the Malaysian Church.

After the Mass, rector Fr Ryan took the opportunity to express his heartfelt gratitude to the MEP Fathers, alumni, and all who had made the gathering possible.

This was followed by a panel sharing and storytelling of mission and hope by a panel of four distinguished alumni whose testimonies highlighted the diversity of paths shaped by the seminary. Their stories set the stage for the final spiritual exercise, led by Fr Simon Anand who invited participants to contemplate the unfinished painting, *The Queenship of Mary* by the late Fr Joseph Reutens, priest of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and a revered artist. Fr Simon's reflection highlighted that the mission of the Church is never truly complete, but a living, ongoing task entrusted to every generation.

Before lunch, everyone gathered at the seminary grounds to witness the blessing of the monument for departed alumni and martyrs, a poignant reminder of the sacrifices that have shaped

College General's witness through the centuries.

The three-day gathering concluded with a gala dinner and fellowship, marking not only the end of CG360 but also a renewed call to mission. As one alumnus shared, the celebration rekindled the spirit of vocation, strengthened resolve for the journey ahead, and deepened gratitude for the seminary that has formed shepherds for 360 years.

Anchored in Gratitude, Fidelity, and Hope, CG360 was both a remembrance of the past and a forward-looking inspiration—a reminder that the seed planted in Ayutthaya, Siam, in 1665 continues to bear fruit for the Church in Asia and beyond.

Sharings

The testimonies of participants revealed the depth of the experience.

Helen Rayan from Kuala Lumpur, wife of ex-collegian Simon Rayan, described the occasion as "enriching." Married for 33 years, she shared, "I now truly and fully understand what Rayan went through during his formation at CG. I will pray harder and encourage my two sons to consider offering themselves to the priesthood."



Melvin Bosco from Ipoh, currently in his third year of Theology in Kuching, felt "privileged" to be part of the celebration. "It is most helpful in my journey of preparing for the priesthood," he reflected. "It certainly paves the way forward for where we are being led."



Ex-seminarian Ben Cheriyan George — better known as Ben George — said he was deeply touched by the passion and relevance of the addresses. Having completed his theological studies in 1982, he shared, "I am humbled by the CG360 experience. Archbishop John Ha's reflection struck me especially, as he was once my Scripture professor in the 1980s."



...of the MEP Fathers

The MEP Fathers also visited the Shrine of St Anne, where their missionaries first planted roots in Bukit Mertajam. The original hilltop chapel, built in 1846 by Fr Adolphe Couellan, MEP, was later expanded in 1865 by Fr Ambrose Maistre, MEP. In 1888, Fr F.P. Sorin, MEP completed the present Shrine, where he is now buried at the entrance aisle of the church.

The delegation then made a moving pilgrimage to the historic ruins of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Pagar Tras, constructed in 1882 and once affectionately

called the "Notre Dame in the Jungle." Though abandoned during the communist insurgency in 1948, its Gothic ruins still stand, together with the cemetery that holds the tombs of Fr Marcel Selier, MEP, and Fr Barnabas Gao. At Fr Selier's grave, Bishop Olivier led prayers in French — a solemn moment that echoed through the jungle after more than five decades, evoking a deep sense of sanctity and continuity.

At 93, Fr Jean L'Hour, MEP, former Scripture professor at College General, remains a living bridge between past and present. He recalled with fondness the years spent forming priests, many of whom today serve as bishops, archbishops, and cardinals across Asia. Cardinal Sebastian Francis himself often acknowledges the profound influence of French formators in shaping his theological and pastoral outlook. In this light, the visit of the MEP Fathers to Penang was not merely a commemoration of 360 years of missionary service, but a profound act of thanksgiving to God for the men who lived, served, and even laid down their lives for the faith in Asia. Their witness continues to inspire the local Church, reminding the faithful that the mission of Christ is ever alive and never-ending. **Christopher Kushi**



At the grave of Fr Marcel Siliier
L-R: Bishop Olivier, Fr Vincent Senechel, Fr Jean L'Hour

Melaka marks 480 years since St Francis Xavier's arrival

Bernard Anthony

MELAKA: The Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX), commemorated the 480th anniversary of St Francis Xavier's first arrival in Malacca with a two-day celebration on September 24 and 25, drawing some 1,700 faithful to St Paul's Hill (now known as Bukit Melaka).

The highlight of the celebrations was a series of Masses held at the ruins of St Paul's Church, where the great missionary once prayed, preached, and ministered.

On the first day, Sept 24, three Masses were celebrated (English at 6.00pm, Tamil at 7.45pm and Mandarin at 8.45pm).

Preaching at the Mass in Tamil, Fr Devadasan Madala Muthu reflected on the missionary zeal of St Francis Xavier, urging the faithful to emulate his example by courageously proclaiming the Good News. He drew from Matthew 16:26, reminding all that no worldly gain can compare with the value of one's soul.

The Litany of St Francis Xavier was recited at all the Masses. The

faithful were also given the privilege of venerating his first-class relics.

On Sept 25, Bishop Bernard Paul presided at the 9.00am English Mass, concelebrated by Frs Moses Rayappan; Devadasan; Michael Goh; Paul Dass SJ; Adrian Francis and Alexuchelvam. More than 500 faithful attended, including 40 Catholic servicemen from Kem Terendak, Melaka.

Bishop Bernard welcomed the faithful and, at the start of Mass, spoke briefly about the relic of St Francis Xavier — a holy man of God who walked the streets of Melaka several times and was temporarily buried here for nine months. "This is holy ground," he reminded the congregation.

In his homily, delivered in English and briefly in Bahasa Malaysia, the prelate recalled St Francis Xavier's first arrival at Melaka harbour, which served as a transit point for his missionary journeys to the Far East from 1545 to 1552. He described the scene: "Arriving by boat at the exotic harbour, a weary yet determined man stepped ashore amid the smell of spices, the narrow streets, and the

bustling crowds. The people came to know him by another name — 'The Great Father'."

Bishop Bernard noted that Francis Xavier declined official offers of lodging and instead chose to live in a hospital, close to the sick and the poor. There, he ministered to the people, administered the sacraments, and offered them the hope of Christ. "He came to remove the veil of mourning, to take away shame, and to bring hope," the bishop said.

Like St Paul, Francis Xavier drew people to Christ and to the Church, proclaiming the God of hope. Through his letters from India, Melaka, and beyond, he wrote of the people's struggles, their needs, and his missionary efforts. Despite language barriers, he taught children the faith, translated the catechism into local languages, and baptised many. He also encouraged other missionaries to continue the mission, even as he prepared for his future journey to Japan.

The bishop described Francis Xavier as a "purposeful missionary," a man whose every step was guided by intention. "He walked on this very



Bishop Bernard Paul praying at the statue of St Francis Xavier while Fr Adrian Francis carries the relic of saint.

hill. This place is holy. When you walk these pathways, reflect on the past and connect with it — because you too have a mission. It is not just St Francis Xavier's mission. To accomplish greater things for God, we too must be relieved, re-energised, rekindled, and remembering."

He concluded by inviting the faithful to seek the saint's intercession, that they too may become true missionaries of the Gospel.

The faithful joined in the Prayer of the Faithful, asking for the saint's intercession so that the Church may continue to grow in missionary zeal. Before the 'Our Father,' Bishop Bernard encouraged all to become "missionaries of love and hope to others," echoing the heart of St Francis Xavier's mission.

After Mass, parish priest of SFX Melaka, Fr Moses Rayappan, announced that in commemoration of the 480th anniversary of St Francis Xavier's arrival in Melaka, souvenirs in the form of fridge magnets would be distributed to all present. He also warmly acknowledged the participation of Catholic members from Kem Terendak, who joined in the celebra-

tion of this historic occasion.

Fr Moses went on to thank the faithful for their presence — "friends and people of God" — and expressed his gratitude to all who had contributed to the preparation of the anniversary Masses over the two days. He also extended special thanks to Bishop Bernard and the priests who concelebrated. Concluding his remarks, he said, "Rejoice, as you return home with the graces of God."

St Francis Xavier, also known as "The Apostle of the East," first arrived in Melaka on September 25, 1545, at the age of 39. He made the chapel on St Paul's Hill a base for his missionary journeys to Japan and China, ministering to the sick and teaching the faith to children. After his death in 1552 in China, his incorrupt body was temporarily buried in Melaka before being transferred to Goa, India, where it rests today. He was canonised in 1622.

The celebrations in Melaka not only honoured his historical arrival but also renewed the call for Catholics to live out the missionary spirit of St Francis Xavier in today's world.



A section of the congregation at St Paul's Hill.

OLL BEC coordinators renew their spirit to serve

KLANG: Eighty-five BEC coordinators from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes came together for a one-day workshop on September 27, organised by the parish BECCOT (Basic Ecclesial Community Coordinating Team) and BECAT (BEC Animating Team).

Carrying the theme *Strengthened to Serve – Feed My Sheep* (John 21:17), the workshop aimed to renew and empower BEC coordinators to embrace their sacred call, remain steadfast in faith, share responsibility, and shepherd their communities with love, bringing Christ's light into their neighbourhoods.

The day began with praise and worship, followed by ice-breaking activities that helped participants bond as a community. Parish priest, Fr Gregory Chan, then led a session on *BEC as the Local Church*, offering valuable insights into the mission and identity of BECs.

The main facilitator, Damian Prakash from the parish formation

team, guided the workshop in a creative and engaging way. He shaped the sessions around four key dimensions of leadership: *My Role is Sacred, My Role is Steadfast, My Role is Shared, and My Role is to Shepherd*. Each session blended talks, group activities, interactive games, and personal sharing.

Damian reminded leaders that their calling is both a divine appointment and a call to holiness. "True BEC leadership is rooted in love and care," he said, stressing the importance of reaching out to those who are absent, welcoming those who hesitate, and gently guiding back those who have strayed. He emphasised that pastoral leadership is built on prayer, presence, protection, and outreach, and highlighted that "people seek belonging before belief."

Participants testified to the impact of the sessions. Rosie Tong, BECCOT chairperson, shared: "Building BECs is about sharing responsibility. Many are held back by fear or excuses, but



BEC leaders showcasing their creativity in reflecting on BECs.

when we step forward to serve, we discover our gifts and grow spiritually. At the workshop, I felt God's presence strongly in our community. Truly, BEC is our church family, united in Christ."

For some, the workshop brought

new understanding. "I have served in the catechetical ministry and my BEC for many years, but I never saw myself as a shepherd called to feed the sheep," said Mdm Maggie Entoney from BEC Central Teluk Pulai. "I always thought this role belonged

only to the Pope, bishops, or priests — until I realised it also applies to each of us."

Another participant, Bernard from Bukit Tinggi BEC, reflected: "Damian's reminder that we are called to be shepherds touched me deeply. I realised the need to stay steadfast in faith, care for the broken, and seek out the lost. The workshop was simple yet powerful, inspiring me to serve with greater love."

The day concluded with a closing address by Fr Gnana Selvam, who drew inspiration from the lives of St Vincent de Paul and St Mother Teresa. He urged the leaders to continue serving with humility, compassion, and zeal, modelling their leadership on these great witnesses of charity.

The workshop proved to be a moment of grace for the parish, renewing the spirit of leadership among BEC core team members and strengthening them to serve their communities with faith, joy, and love. **Nesa Dhevasahayam**

Church of St Michael, 135 years and beyond

IPOH: The 135th anniversary feast of the Church of St Michael was a celebration of fellowship, faith, unity, and love.

In line with the jubilee year's theme, *Faith, Hope and Charity with St Michael – 135 Years and Beyond*, the parish lived out its commitment through 150 Acts of Love, carried out by ministries, families, and individuals in service of others.

The Mass was on September 27 was preceded by a triduum, celebrated by Claretian missionary from India, Fr Kulanthai Selvan, CMF, who currently serves in Miri, Sarawak; R Fr Peter Chin, CSsR, a son of St Michael's parish; and Msgr Jude Miranda, Vicar General of the Diocese of Penang, who was also the main celebrant of the Feast.

The Mass was concelebrated by Msgr Stephen Liew; Fr Andrew Wong, CDD; Fr Anthony Heng, CDD; Fr Francis Andrew, and parish priest, Fr Aloysius Tan, with Deacon Charles Lazaroo assisting.

In his homily, Msgr Jude reflected that 135 years marked not just a milestone, but a living legacy of faith built by parishioners and clergy. "Pray that this legacy of faith we hold will be enhanced, and let our faith shine in our hearts," he

said.

He reminded the faithful that even amid scepticism and hedonism, there is always hope. "God knows you, even though you may try to hide from Him. You must know who Jesus is, to know yourself. This determines our destiny and clarifies the purpose of our lives, contributing to God's mission," he said.

Drawing from the story of Nathaniel's encounter with Jesus, Msgr Jude encouraged the faithful to become "disciples of hope" who share the Good News with others. "People will see the love and peace of Christ in us, and they will be drawn to join us. Are we enthusiastic and joyful, filled with the Spirit of God that leads us to the Father? Share your faith story freely, and Jesus will be alive in the eyes of others," he said.

He added that angels, especially St Michael the Archangel, are signs of God's presence, carrying messages of peace, healing, and liberation. "Pray that we never forget the beauty of our faith," he urged.

At the offertory, besides bread and wine, symbolic gifts were presented: a booklet of the 150 Acts of Love, a globe cake signifying fidelity and love, and a fruit basket representing fruitful works.



Parishioners and pilgrims walking in procession.

After Mass, the Blessed Sacrament was carried in a decorated float through the streets of Ipoh. The procession was led by the Salib, which arrived at St Michael's on Sept 15, followed by candle bearers, altar servers, the parish banner, thurifer, flower girls, choirs, priests, and parishioners. Another vehicle carried the statues of Our Lady and St Michael the Archangel.

Parishioners, holding lighted candles, prayed the Rosary throughout the procession and knelt on the streets during Benediction, which was given twice. The procession concluded back at the church with a final Benediction.

At the close, parish priest Fr Aloysius expressed gratitude to God for 135 years of blessings, for the weather, the presence of priests and people, and for the organising team who worked tirelessly to ensure the feastday's success.

The celebration ended with a fellowship dinner, uniting the parish community in thanksgiving.

SMC's 150 acts of love



Msgr Jude Miranda holding up the 150 Acts of Love booklet.

IPOH: The Church of St Michael (SMC) marked its historic 135th anniversary by offering 150 Acts of Love, a parish-wide initiative of charity and hope.

The idea was introduced by parish priest, Fr Aloysius Tan, at the start of this jubilee year of Hope. Parishioners were invited to carry out acts of kindness — both spiritual and practical — that would bring hope to others and deepen their own faith.

These 'Acts of Love' were designed to inspire and encourage those who felt "dry" in their faith, rekindling zeal for spiritual growth and allowing Jesus to become "alive" in daily life. By entrusting difficulties and challenges to Christ, many parishioners discovered new peace and joy, while extending God's mercy to others.

Though the parish initially set a target of 135 acts, the community surpassed expectations, reaching 150 by the time of the feastday celebrations. A banner listing all these acts was displayed outside the parish hall.

The acts benefited individuals, families, organisations, and causes in need. They ranged from simple daily practices — such as praying for the sick and sharing the Gospel with non-Catholics — to practical works of mercy like assisting families in

financial need, supporting the Orang Asli community, and even helping elderly parishioners with house cleaning. These 'Acts of Love', done in joyful trust in the Lord, continue to bear fruit as parishioners generously contribute monthly to help the needy.

Other initiatives included:

- Welfare aid for Orang Asli families with sick children.
- Donations to Ray of Hope for the training of children with special needs.
- Support for Caritas Malaysia.
- Contributions to Mill Hill Missionary Fr Elvost Lunchi, serving the Kachi Kholi community in Hyderabad, Pakistan.
- Sponsorship of poor children and students in Ipoh, Myanmar, and Nepal.
- Monthly donations to the National Cancer Society, UNICEF, and the World Wildlife Fund.
- Emergency food aid to Orang Asli communities in Kelantan.

Fr Aloysius expressed gratitude to God for the blessings of 135 years, not only as a church but also as a family that brings hope to others. "What counts is our faith in Jesus — trusting and depending on Him, and handing ourselves over to God," he said.

St Pio, Ulu Tiram draws over 1,000 pilgrims

ULU TIRAM, Johor: More than 1,200 pilgrims and devotees from Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia gathered at the Sanctuary of St Pio to celebrate the Solemnity of St Pio of Pietrelcina, marking a week filled with prayer, unity, and spiritual renewal.

The celebration began with a three-day Triduum, September 18-20, at the Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram. Each evening focused on an aspect of St Pio's life — as a man of prayer, hope, trust, and mercy. The reflections were led by Friar Michael Raymond, OFM Cap, whose Franciscan simplicity and spiritual depth drew the faithful into a deeper encounter with God.

On the feast day itself, Sept 21, a solemn Mass was celebrated, followed by the sharing of testimonies from pilgrims. Among the most moving was that of Jessie Khaw, who shared how she was miraculously healed of chronic asthma after assisting with the relic of St Pio earlier this year.

"I hadn't eaten cold food or been in crowded areas for 30 years due to asthma. After helping carry Padre Pio's relic, I noticed my symptoms were gone. I even had ice cream, and nothing happened! It's a miracle. I'm truly grateful to Padre Pio," said Jessie.



Capuchin friars celebrating the Mass with Deacon Steve Wong assisting during the Solemnity of St Pio.

The feast day was made possible through the collaboration of three parishes — Church of Christ the King, Kulai; Church of the Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru; and Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram — with volunteers also traveling from as far as Penang and Kuala Lumpur. This spirit of cooperation reflected the synodal call of the Church to journey together in faith and service. **Bro Pius Kallang, OFM Cap**

Visit the St Pio Spirituality Centre

For those seeking a deeper en-

counter with God throughout the year, the St Pio Spirituality Centre in Ulu Tiram is open to all. Nestled in a serene natural setting, it offers space for personal retreats, spiritual direction, and prayer, rooted in the legacy of St Pio and the Capuchin Franciscan Friars.

For more information or to arrange a visit, please contact: Fr Matthews Joe, OFM Cap. Tel: +6012-290-0547 Add: St Pio Spirituality Centre, Ulu Tiram, Johor

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Neophytes encouraged to stay rooted in community

SUBANG JAYA: On September 27, about a hundred newly baptised adults, and seventeen who had been received into full communion with the Catholic Church, gathered at Church of St Thomas More, to celebrate the Mass for the Neophytes. Family members and parish RCIA teams were also present to participate in this special occasion.

At the beginning of the Mass, the presider, Archbishop Julian Leow, expressed his joy in celebrating the Mass with the neophytes. In his homily, the archbishop expounded on the gospel of the day, where he emphasised the importance of seeking a close relationship with Jesus at all times in order to become His faithful disciple. At the same time, the archbishop pointed out that every Christian is called to be with and for the community. The archbishop gave the example of a campfire. If a piece of burning wood is removed from the fire and set aside, it would eventually grow "cold". Similarly,



if we move away or stay apart from community, our faith can become "cold" too. In this way, the archbishop encouraged the neophytes to remain close to and become involved in the community.

Before the congregation received the final blessing, a video recording of five neophytes sharing their testimonies was shown. Each neophyte testified how he or she made the decision to join the Catholic Church. All the neophytes expressed the joy they felt in knowing Jesus and in being a Catholic. After the Mass,

the newly baptised and those received into the Church were invited to pose for a group photo with the archbishop. This was followed by a fellowship meal in the parish grounds.

The Mass for the Neophytes was first held in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur in 2019. After a two-year "break" because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been held annually in different churches in the archdiocese. This provides the newly baptised a sense of the larger Catholic community beyond their own par-

ish. The warm hospitality and dedicated service shown by the parish priest and members of the Church of St Thomas More, who had come forward to serve in the choir, as altar servers, hospitality ministers and in other ways also helped to create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for the neophytes.

The neophytes and others expressed that the Mass was a meaningful occasion for them. For many, it was a special moment where they had the opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist with the archbishop, the

chief shepherd of the diocese, and to meet him personally. For some, it also enabled them to "catch up with old friends", especially those who had journeyed before in the RCIA with them.

The Mass for the Neophytes provides those who had journeyed in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and were either baptised or received into the Church at the Easter Vigil in 2023, the opportunity to celebrate the Holy Eucharist with the bishop of the diocese. It is held in line with the directive found in the 1972 RCIA document published by the Congregation for Divine Worship and approved by Pope Paul VI. The document specifies that after the Easter Vigil, the bishop should arrange to meet the neophytes and preside at a celebration of the Eucharist with them in order to show his concern for them (RCIA, 251). **KL Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry**

New statue of St Michael at Alor Setar parish

ALOR SETAR: The Church of St Michael, marked its feast on September 27, with the blessing of its newly installed statue of St Michael the Archangel, sourced from China.

The blessing was carried out by parish priest Fr Michael Cheah, who then presided over the feast day Mass. The celebration concluded with a fellowship gathering attended by parishioners and friends of the church.

The statue was made possible through the generosity of the parishes of St Michael, Ipoh; the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Butterworth; and the Immaculate Conception, Penang. Parishioners and priests from these communities were warmly thanked for their contributions, as



Fr Michael Cheah blessing the statue of St Michael the Archangel.

well as those who coordinated the arrangements for the installation.

The feast day celebration was well attended, with parishioners expressing gratitude for the meaningful addition to their church and for the spirit of unity shown across the contributing parishes.

Jubilee of Catechists celebrates service and renews mission

KUALA LUMPUR: The Church of St Joseph, Sentul, and the Church of the Risen Christ, Jalan Ipoh, jointly celebrated the Jubilee of Catechists on September 27 and 28. The two-day event brought together more than 50 catechists, together with members of the RCIA and Bible Knowledge groups, in a spirit of thanksgiving, fellowship, and renewed commitment to their mission.

Day One began with a morning pilgrimage to the Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong, setting the tone for prayer and reflection. This was followed by a formation session led by parish priest, Fr Frederick Joseph

and Bro Jayson Wang, who spoke on the theme "Being, Knowing, and Doing," while also offering practical insights into teaching methodology. The highlight of the day was the Commissioning of Catechists during the sunset Mass, where participants renewed their commitment to serve God through the ministry of teaching. The evening concluded with a lively BBQ dinner featuring team-building activities that strengthened bonds of friendship and collaboration among the catechists.

Day Two opened with Mass coordinated by the Catechetical Ministry at the Church of St Joseph. The celebration continued at the

community hall with a jubilee programme dedicated to honouring catechists and teachers. Students presented songs and dances, while others offered words of gratitude and tributes. These heartfelt gestures underscored the profound impact catechists have in shaping faith and guiding the spiritual journey of the young.

The two-day Jubilee for Catechists celebration served not only as a time of thanksgiving but also as a moment of renewal, reminding catechists of their vital role in the life of the Church and the call to continue their mission with dedication and joy.



DIocese of PENANG
PKK/BDN/2025/10/219

Notifications and Updates

To whom much is given,
from him much will be required
St Luke the Evangelist

1. CG360: Remembering with gratitude, fidelity and hope

My heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all the alumni of College General for responding to the invitation and for your presence at the CG360. I take this opportunity to also thank the College Fathers, seminarians, College staff, volunteers and the entire team of CG360 for your kind efforts in making the celebration of CG360 an eventful and memorable one for all.

College General celebrates 360 years of gratitude, fidelity and hope, surviving and transcending numerous challenges and two World Wars. From its birth in Ayutthaya, Thailand in 1665 to Pondicherry in India and finally to Penang in 1808, where it landed for 217 years to this very date, College General, in its core tradition, has faced all challenges including persecution and martyrdom in various parts of Asia. College General continued to move forward for 360 years.

This history urges us to reflect the fidelity of God and our founding fathers, the MEP missionaries from Paris, France and their successors and gathered all alumni of

College General in Penang, in this Jubilee Year of Hope 2025. Saints and Martyrs of College General, pray for us.

2. World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life

The Diocese of Penang will be celebrating the Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life at the Church of the Risen Christ, Air Itam on October 11 at 9.00am. I invite you to pray more intensely on this day for all those who have made commitments in the consecrated life. Let us thank God for the gift of them and their vocation as we remember to thank them on their special day.

3. Jubilee of Synod, Rome (October 24 - 27)

Representing the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei (CBCMSB) for the Jubilee of Synod held in Rome from October 24 - 27, will be Msgr Jude Miranda, Sr Margarete Sta Maria, FdCC, and Mr Gregory Pravin. Let us remember them and all present at this Jubilee in Rome, in our prayers.

Sebastian Francis

Cardinal Sebastian Francis

Pope Leo urges global action at climate justice conference

CASTEL GANDOLFO: Pope Leo XIV called for urgent ecological conversion and decisive global action on climate justice as he addressed more than 1,000 participants at the Raising Hope for Climate Justice conference on Oct. 1, marking the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

Speaking at the former papal summer residence near Rome, the pope warned that the challenges highlighted in *Laudato Si'* "are even more relevant today than they were ten years ago," stressing that the climate crisis is not only political and social, but "first and foremost, spiritual," requiring a "conversion of heart."

"God will ask us if we have cultivated and cared for the world He created, and if we have taken care of our brothers and sisters," he said. "What will be our answer?"

The Pope thanked the *Laudato Si'* Movement and its partners for linking "the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor," while lamenting that some continue to deny or ridicule climate science. "There is no room for indifference or resignation," he declared.

The three-day conference gathered more than 400 faith leaders, scientists, policymakers, and environmental advocates in person, with an additional 600 joining online. It featured workshops, roundtables, and prayer services exploring ecological action and spirituality in light of *Laudato Si'*.

High-profile participants included Brazil's Environment Minister Marina



Pope Leo XIV and actor and former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger address the opening day of the "Raising Hope for Climate Justice" conference held at a centre near the papal villa of Castel Gandolfo on October 1, 2025. (CNA photo)

Silva, *Laudato Si'* Movement chair Yeb Sano, and actor-turned-environmentalist Arnold Schwarzenegger. When Schwarzenegger praised the Pope as an "action hero," Pope Leo redirected the compliment: "You are the action heroes."

A symbolic ritual saw victims of environmental disasters pour water from their homelands into a shared "vessel of tears," alongside a melting block of ice from Greenland. Pope Leo blessed the waters, praying they would "awake our hearts and cleanse our indifference."

He emphasised that ecological conversion must move "from collecting data to caring; from environmental discourse to lifestyles inspired by faith and love of God." He urged citizens to press governments for stronger environmental protections and called for bold com-

mitments at upcoming global summits, including COP30 in Brazil and the 2026 UN Water Conference.

Quoting Pope Francis, Pope Leo reminded participants that ecology, social justice, and peace are inseparable. "We inhabit the same planet and must care for it together," he said.

Reflecting on the decade since *Laudato Si'*, the Pope noted its influence on theology, politics, interreligious dialogue, and grassroots activism, with initiatives such as the Vatican's *Laudato Si'* Action Platform and local projects in Assisi and Castel Gandolfo.

Looking ahead, he reaffirmed the Church's mission to inspire hope and foster global solidarity. "The future of our common home depends on our willingness to act today," he said.

Agencies

Protection Commission meets in Krakow: 'May the Church be a safe home'

KRAKOW: The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors opened its plenary assembly on September 30 at the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Krakow, with its new president, Archbishop Thibault Verny, reaffirming the Church's mission to listen to victims and prevent abuse.

"Welcome and listen to victims, heed the truth, and prevent abuse, to ensure that the Church becomes more and more a safe home," Archbishop Verny said at the opening Mass, celebrated by Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski.

The assembly, which runs until Oct

3, marks the first time the Commission has met outside Rome since its establishment by Pope Francis in 2014. Its choice of Krakow recalls the late Pope St. John Paul II, who once shepherded the archdiocese and prayed that God's mercy would heal "a world full of violence and uncertainty."

Archbishop Verny, appointed president earlier this year, emphasised that the Commission's mission is "to protect children and vulnerable persons and, in doing so, to proclaim the Gospel through our actions and our way of being with them." He noted that the task

requires walking with local Churches, supporting them with training, and ensuring accountability.

Thanks to its Memorare Initiative, which equips dioceses worldwide with safeguarding resources, the Commission chose Krakow as a sign of its closeness to local communities. Archbishop Verny announced that the body's second annual safeguarding report will soon be published, following its presentation to Pope Leo XIV earlier in September.

The plenary assembly gathers all Commission members, including Commission survivors of abuse, alongside experts from various fields. Meetings are being held behind closed doors, though several public events and encounters with Polish bishops are scheduled. A final statement on the assembly's work will be released at the end of the week.

Concluding his opening remarks, Archbishop Verny invoked the prayer of St. John Paul II at the Divine Mercy Shrine: "Eternal God... look kindly upon us and increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we may not despair or grow discouraged, but with great confidence may submit ourselves to Your holy will." **Vatican News**



Plenary assembly of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, on September 30, 2025. (Vatican Media)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Vatican warns that inequality is fuelling global division

UNITED NATIONS: The Holy See has warned world leaders that deepening inequality is undermining peace and stability, urging urgent action to correct global injustices.

Delivering the Vatican's address to the 80th UN General Assembly, Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, said that "working for peace requires acting justly" and called for a reset that puts human dignity at the center.

Gallagher highlighted hunger as a "scandal in a world of abundance," quoting Pope Leo XIV's call to end malnutrition through sharing rather than hoarding. He pressed for sustainable food systems, debt relief for poor nations, and a redirection of military spend-

ing toward development, denouncing nuclear weapons as illegal.

The Vatican linked justice to multiple issues, from fair wages and family life to the protection of life "from conception to natural end." Gallagher condemned surrogate motherhood, raised alarm over the climate crisis' disproportionate impact on the poor and Indigenous peoples, and urged humane policies on migration and refugees.

On technology, he cautioned against artificial intelligence replacing human moral judgment. He also called for reform of the United Nations itself, saying its credibility depends on recommitment to its founding mission of peace and justice. **LiCAS News**

China's religious freedom abuses worsening

BANGKOK: The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has again recommended that China be redesignated a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) in its 2025 Annual Report, citing systematic and egregious violations of religious freedom throughout 2024.

The report accused the Chinese Communist Party, under President Xi Jinping, of intensifying its "sinicisation of religion" campaign, forcing all faiths to align with state ideology. Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, and members of the Church of Almighty God were among the groups targeted.

USCIRF highlighted cases of deaths in custody, including 96-year-old Imam Abidin Damollam, and long prison terms for religious leaders such as Pastor Kan Xiaoyong. It noted restrictions on Tibetan

monasteries, the suppression of underground Catholic clergy, and the branding of certain groups as "illegal cults."

Hong Kong's new Article 23 security law also raised alarms, with reports of activists being denied religious materials in prison. The commission warned of Beijing's use of technology and transnational repression to silence critics abroad.

International concern persisted, with UN bodies calling on China to repeal discriminatory policies, while Washington imposed sanctions, visa restrictions, and passed new laws addressing Uyghur forced labour and Tibetan rights.

USCIRF urged the US to maintain China's CPC status, expand sanctions on responsible officials, restrict technology transfers, and strengthen congressional oversight. **LiCAS News**

Pope Leo urges 'healthy secularism' in European institutions

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV on Monday received members of the Working Group on Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue, an initiative of the European Parliament, encouraging them to foster a "healthy secularism" that recognises the value of religion while respecting the distinction from politics.

The Pope thanked the group for their work and said promoting dialogue between cultures and religions is central for Christian politicians, noting that many have given good witness in this field. He emphasised that genuine dialogue requires both deep roots in the Gospel and openness to others,

always placing human dignity and relationships at the centre.

Highlighting the original meaning of "religion" as connection, the Pope said a well-nurtured religious dimension can enrich personal and social life. He underscored the need for European leaders who affirm the role of religion in society without confusing it with the political sphere, citing statesmen Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, and Alcide De Gasperi as examples.

Pope Leo concluded by expressing gratitude for the group's commitment to dialogue and respect, and imparted his blessing on their mission. **ICN**

Synodality is not a passing fad

THAILAND: Bishop Mylo Hubert Vergara of Pasig, Philippines, has called on Church leaders across Asia to remain faithful to the synodal journey, reminding them that synodality must not be reduced to a mere slogan or short-lived programme.

Bishop Vergara also serves as the vice president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

Delivering the homily at the closing Mass of the Asian bishops' seminar on synodality held at the Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Training Centre in Sampran, September 22 to 26, Bishop Vergara appealed for a deeper commitment to the synodal way of life.

"We must not waste this gift and process of being a synodal Church, received from Pope Francis. We do not want synodality to become a passing fad," said Vergara, who also serves as vice president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

The four-day gathering, organised

by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), brought together bishops, cardinals, and Church leaders from across Asia to reflect on synodality as a constitutive dimension of the Church.

From Process to Implementation

The synodal journey, launched in 2021 under the late Pope Francis, passed through diocesan, national, continental, and universal stages, culminating in the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 2024. Its final document affirmed synodality as essential to the Church's life and mission.

The Church is now in the implementation stage, with a roadmap extending until 2028, when a Vatican Ecclesial Assembly will evaluate progress. Bishop Vergara stressed that bishops and local Churches are now challenged to translate the synod's vision into concrete reforms and pastoral initiatives.

Citing the Philippine Church's



Bishop Mylo Hubert Vergara of Pasig, CBCP vice president, delivers his homily at the closing Mass of the FABC Bishops' Seminar on Synodality.

National Synodal Implementation Framework, he emphasised four movements to sustain the synodal journey:

- **Tinig-Tawag** – listening to the Spirit and the marginalised.
- **Tawid-Tanaw** – moving from selfishness to communal conversion.
- **Tapak-Tindig** – standing for truth and accountability.

- **Tipan** – renewing the covenant with God and one another.

A Fourfold "Multilogue"

Bishop Vergara also reminded Asian bishops that stewardship of synodality involves a "fourfold multilogue": dialogue with culture, with other religions, with the poor, and with creation. This approach, he said, reflects Asia's diverse and pluralistic context,

where Christians are often a minority called to build bridges of solidarity.

Quoting Pope Leo XIV, who affirmed synodality as a "style and attitude" fostering communion and participation, he contrasted this openness with King Herod's fearful anxiety in the Gospel. Instead, he invited the Church in Asia to embrace a "holy anxiety", an openness to encounter Christ in mission and service.

Inspired by the Magi

"Asian bishops must walk the synodal path with fidelity, inspired by the Magi, who chose the way of Jesus Christ in service and mission," Bishop Vergara said.

The seminar, part of FABC's ongoing accompaniment of the universal Church's synodal process, included workshops, reflections, and testimonies from different countries. Organisers expressed hope that participants would return to their dioceses equipped with practical strategies to strengthen listening, participation, and shared mission. **RVA News**

Patience needed in achieving synodality

Preaching at Mass on September 24 during the Bishops' Seminar on Synodality, Cardinal Stephen Chow of Hong Kong, *pic*, highlighted synodality as a journey that requires humility, patience, and deep trust in God.

The cardinal urged the bishops and the faithful to walk humbly with one another as God's people. While acknowledging frustrations in some quarters, he reminded participants that "cultural changes don't happen overnight."



"Our emphasis on being 'good Catholics' has sometimes stopped us from asking questions," he said, noting that in today's troubled world, many seek rigid, black-and-white certainties. Yet discernment, he insisted, remains central to the synodal path. Reflecting on Jesus' command to His disciples to "go," Cardinal

Chow emphasised reliance not on material securities but on God's providence. "We are loved, and this is the synodal experience too. Because of this love, we can also have hope," he affirmed.

The cardinal cautioned against impatience and superficial change, reminding the Church that building trust takes time. "It is not about accomplishment and moving on, but about staying and building relationships. Slow down. Trust requires time and respect," he said.

Acknowledging the pain and suffering present in today's world, Cardinal Chow underlined that the call to a synodal Church must be rooted in solidarity with those who suffer. "A new way of being Church should affect the pain of those who suffer," he concluded.

The gathering, held under the theme of fostering "conversion of relations, processes, and bonds," seeks to deepen the Church's understanding and practice of synodality across the continent. **RVA News**



During the conversion of the spirit at the FABC Bishops' Seminar on Synodality.

Synodality in Asia calls for new bonds of communion

Addressing the Asian bishops on the theme *The Conversion of Bonds for a Synodal Church in Asia: The Crucial Role of the Local Churches*, Fr Vimal Tirimanna, CSsR, *pic*, emphasised the Asian Church's mission to live authentic synodality. He explained that the term "bonds" does not refer to rigid structures but to a dynamic network of relationships within and beyond the Church.

"These bonds are grounded in communion and synodality, calling local Churches to move away from a static, hierarchical model towards



a more inclusive vision of the People of God," noted the Sri Lankan Redemptorist priest, whose presentation took place on the third day of the seminar.

He underlined the essential role of local Churches in fostering synodal conversion, especially amid globalisation, migration, and digital transformation. Participants were reminded that synodality requires concrete pathways of consultation, discernment, and collaboration at every level, from parishes and dioceses to consecrated communities, movements, and Episcopal Conferences.

Fr Tirimanna also stressed the importance

of nurturing both ad intra bonds (within the Church, including with the poor, the marginalised, and lay movements) and ad extra bonds (relations with other Churches, ecumenical partners, interreligious communities, and secular society).

He drew attention to challenges facing synodality in Asia, including clericalism, exclusion, the marginalisation of women and youth, and the tendency of some dioceses or parishes to remain self-sufficient and closed off.

"The fundamentals of a synodal culture may take time to take root in our local Churches," Fr Tirimanna concluded, "but this should not be an excuse to postpone what we must do here and now. We need to begin planting the seeds of synodality in Asia today." **RVA News**

Philippines cardinal reflects on the convergence of synod documents

In a paper presented at the seminar, Cardinal Pablo S. David, *pic*, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), highlighted the deep resonance between two landmark Church documents: the Final Document of the Synod on Synodality (2024) and the Bangkok Document of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), released in 2022.

Cardinal David described this convergence as "providential," noting how Asia's ecclesial journey and the universal Church's synodal process are intertwined. "The Bangkok Document was not only influenced by, but deeply embedded within, the Spirit of Synodality," he said, recalling how the Asian bishops' gathering in Bangkok coincided with the launch of Pope Francis' synodal journey.

Both documents, he explained, are rooted in Scripture: the Bangkok Document draws inspiration from the journey of the Magi (Mt 2:1-12), while the Synod's Final Document is guided by the resurrection encounters in John 20-21. Together, they emphasise synodality as a path of surprise, encounter, and transformation under the guidance of the Spirit.

Cardinal David outlined four key pathways of synodality that emerge



strongly in the Asian context:

- **With Cultures** – moving from inculturation to interculturality, affirming diversity as a gift rather than as a threat.
- **With Religions** – shifting language from "other" to "neighbour" faiths, fostering deeper dialogue and fraternity.
- **With the Poor** – redefining mission from being a Church "for" the poor to a Church "with" the poor, where the marginalised are agents of evangelisation.
- **With Creation** – embracing ecological conversion as an essential part of Christian mission.

He emphasised that Asia's contemplative spirit of discernment, marked by silence, listening, and consensus, resonates with the synodal method of Conversations in the Spirit now adopted at the global level.

"The Bangkok Document does not compete with the Synod's Final Document," Cardinal David concluded. "It prefigures, enriches, and confirms Asia's contribution to the universal pilgrim Church. May we continue walking together: with cultures, with religions, with the poor, and with creation, by another way." **RVA News**



When care hurts

During a recent workshop on diffusing challenging situations in dementia care, a participant asked, “Can people with dementia still feel?”

The question didn’t shock me, but it did make me dig deeper. I asked her why she was asking this question. After a long silence, she shared a painful story. “My mom, who has dementia, was tied up in the hospital. When I asked them to untie her because she was suffering, a healthcare professional told me not to worry—that people with dementia can’t feel anything at all.”

This response hit me hard, especially coming from a care professional. If we, as caregivers and providers, hold the notion that people with dementia are incapable of feeling, what kind of care will we give them? It’s no surprise, then, that physical restraints are an accepted practice in facilities, hospitals, and even homes. It’s no wonder we fear dementia, because we know we could one day be on the receiving end.

We once worked with a man who had been rejected by five nursing homes for being “aggressive.” He was labeled as stubborn and dangerous. When we first met him, he was loud, repetitive, and seemed confused and upset. But something shifted when we simply gave him the space to be

himself and focused on connecting with him. He transformed into a warm, caring, and sociable companion. He was a delight to be with, and his care became easy.

Was it a magic bullet? A miracle cure? No. We simply saw the person behind the dementia. He was lonely and desperate for a genuine connection. He was tired of being treated as if he didn’t exist, of being stopped when he wanted to explore, told to sit when he wanted to walk, or ignored when he was asking for his deceased wife. Would any of us be okay with that?

Now, let’s consider the culture of touch in dementia care. In most facilities, touch is transactional and task-oriented — used for hygiene needs or medical

procedures like taking blood pressure. How would you feel if the only time you were touched was during a chore or a medical task? You would likely feel more like an object than a person. You would feel disempowered, controlled, and disconnected.

For people with dementia, who often rely more on touch to make sense of their relationships, this kind of impersonal contact can be especially damaging. It’s easier to



Dancing with Dementia

DR CECILIA CHAN

understand why someone might respond with protest or withdrawal. When care is routine-bound and task-oriented, people with dementia may be moved around like a piece of furniture.

To someone with cognitive impairment, who can’t grasp the logic of a medical procedure, a care task like bathing can feel hostile, invasive, and even abusive. Kicking, screaming, or shouting are natural fight-or-flight responses to this experience. How would you feel if a stranger tried to strip you naked and touch you? What if you had a past traumatic experience, and this action triggered a painful memory?

It’s extremely difficult for anyone to suppress these behaviours when under extreme stress, let alone someone with severe cognitive impairment. Yet, we often label these natural responses as “resistance to care” or “aggression.” When we rely on logic and reasoning to get consent, we are asking a person to use the very capacity that has been impaired. It’s not rocket science: people need to feel safe to be touched. And safety can only be built through a caring relationship. We can be that safety net.

Like the late Pope Francis often reminded us, “Let us build bridges, not walls.”

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

When transparency fails

What the Becciu scandal teaches the whole Church

When Vatican prosecutors recently asked that Cardinal Angelo Becciu be sentenced to seven years and three months in prison, it was not only because of money. True, the figures were staggering: the Secretariat of State paid £350 million (RM1.9 billion) for a London property worth less than half that; €575,000 (RM2.8 million) was transferred to a woman presenting herself as an expert in international relations; €125,000 (RM 616,612.50) went from Vatican coffers to Caritas Sardinia, which happened to be run by the cardinal’s brother.

But what shocked observers even more was the culture that the trial revealed. Testimonies pointed to mafia-like practices — threats, backroom deals, secret recordings, and circles of loyalty that protected some while silencing others.

This is not only a Vatican story. It is also a mirror of our backyard. For the same dynamics — subtle, quiet, and cloaked in piety — can be found in the dioceses or at the local parish level. And when they take root, they undermine both the Gospel and the credibility of the Church.

The culture behind the scandal

What it uncovered is a style of governance. In the words of the prosecutors, there were “mafia-like practices” at play.

What does that mean? Not necessarily criminality in the classic sense, but a culture that breeds secrecy and fear: decisions quietly made and then imposed as inevitable; loyalty prized above truth while critics are sidelined.

There is also silence maintained under the weight of possible reprisals; and the mission of the Church dimmed by the pursuit of personal prestige and influence.

I once witnessed a ministry chairman



Seeking truth in all things

DEACON ANTHONY CHUA

who, acting entirely on his own, handed over a significant sum of money collected under a ministry to a poor family. Supporting the family was not in question, after all charity is at the core of the Church’s mission. What was disturbing was the manner in which it was carried out. No meeting was called, no consultation was sought, and no proper approval was given. The decision, made unilaterally yet carried out under the banner of the ministry, soon revealed

another layer: it was not only about helping the family, but also about consolidating power, gaining recognition, and enjoying the prestige that such an act would confer. This kind of behaviour, I fear, is not unique to one parish but can be found in others as well — a pattern of authority exercised without accountability.

On the surface, this may look small compared to a £350 million (RM1.9 billion) property deal. But the underlying dynamic is the same: one person amassing too much influence, making decisions unilaterally, and sidelining the consultative bodies of the Church.

The subtle “mafia style” of the Church life

The phrase “mafia style” is so unsettling and rarely involves blatant corruption. More often, it is subtle, hidden in the inner workings of Church governance. Factions are built as leaders surround themselves with loyal allies who shield them from criticism. Decisions are taken in private, bypassing established procedures, and later announced as final.

There is a fear of reprisal that discourages open questions, with critics branded as “troublemakers” or quietly excluded from ministry. Meanwhile, rewards and punishments reinforce control: allies

are given positions and influence, while dissenting voices are sidelined. Even acts of charity, though noble in intent, are sometimes carried out in ways that elevate the leader’s prestige rather than the Church’s mission.

The Church already practises consultation

To be fair: the Church does, in fact, have systems of consultation. Parishes are meant to have pastoral and finance councils. Canon law provides for shared responsibility and watchful responsible care. Bishops regularly stress this and the importance of the need for collaboration.

But the problem arises when these structures are bypassed or hollowed out. A parish council may exist on paper but be treated as a formality. A finance committee may meet, but be kept in the dark about major decisions or if members are afraid to speak, the meeting is meaningless. Leaders — whether ordained or lay — may run things as though they are accountable to no one. It is here that the “mafia style” thrives: in the shadows between official structures and actual practice.

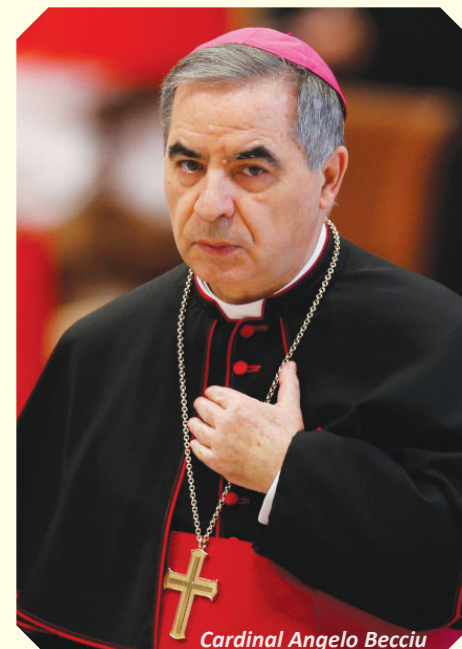
Beyond procedures: A systemic problem

It is tempting to think the solution is simply to enforce better standard operating procedures: keep minutes, require signatures, follow the rules. These are indeed necessary. But the Becciu scandal, and our parish experiences, reveal something deeper.

The issue is not just a lack of transparency or procedures. It is a systemic problem that the late Pope Francis had repeatedly warned against: the spiritual sickness of clericalism, which infects lay leaders as much as clergy. As long as this culture endures, procedures alone will not be enough.

Conversion and not just compliance

The Becciu case should not only lead us



Cardinal Angelo Becciu

to demand better transparency in Rome or in our parishes. It should also call us to conversion.

The Gospel reminds us that leadership is not about power but service. Jesus said: “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35).

The way forward is twofold. Yes, we need stronger procedures, greater accountability, and better governance. But even more, we need a change of heart: to reject the subtle “mafia style” that thrives in secrecy and fear, and to embrace once again the transparent, humble, servant leadership of Christ where genuine consultation, shared responsibility, and openness are allowed to take root.

Renewal in the Church is not simply about structures and procedures; it is about cultivating trust and communion within the Body of Christ. When truth is sought and cherished, when transparency and accountability is practised and upheld it nurtures trust and safeguards human and institutional dignity, then the faithful can walk together in hope and find their home in the Church.

A legal practitioner by profession, Deacon Anthony Chua is a permanent deacon of the Diocese of Malacca Johore.

When wounds become a mission

A journey from pain to healing

As a child, Dr June Joseph carried a quiet, invisible ache in her heart — an ache she could not fully name.

"I think, as a baby seeking security at my mother's breast, I felt neglected," she recalls. "Even though it was eventually revealed to me that my mother had no intent to neglect me, that sense of loss was something I carried for years."

What could have remained a source of lifelong pain became the very place where God began His deepest work of healing. Today, June is one of the region's leading infant feeding researchers and a passionate advocate for maternal and child health. Through her postpartum consultancies across South East Asia and Australia, she has helped countless mothers find peace and restoration in their own early parenting journeys. But June is quick to admit that this work is more than science.

"This has been a journey of grace," she says with quiet conviction. "God used my research to heal my own maternal wounds."

A childhood marked by loss

June's early years were shaped by realities she did not understand until much later. Her mother was a victim of family abuse, caught within the rigid expectations of a caste system that dictated much of her life. Although her mother longed to breastfeed her baby, she was not allowed to. "Members of my father's family instructed her to bind her breasts instead," June explains.

When June was just sixteen, her mother passed away. Only years later did June learn the truth about her mother's postpartum struggles.



A childhood photograph of baby June in her mother's arms.

"As a child, I grew up with that sense of rejection," she admits. "I often minimised my mum's contributions in my life. It was only as I got older that I realised she had been a victim of circumstances beyond her control. That knowledge was painful — but it was also the first step towards understanding and healing."

A brilliant mind, a restless heart

Academically gifted, June poured herself into her studies and excelled in science. She found her way into the world of medical biotechnology, conducting lab research on medicines for peptic ulcers. Her future seemed secure — until she began to feel a stirring in her heart that she could not ignore.

"I was in the lab, deep in research, when I began to

sense that God was calling me to something more," June says. The turning point came when her supervisor went on maternity leave and confided in June about her own struggles to nurse her baby while managing the pressures of work.

That conversation planted a seed. June began researching infant feeding practices, surveying mothers, and eventually writing her undergraduate dissertation on the subject. The work was so exceptional that it was assessed as "far above the level of a bachelor's dissertation, closer to a PhD."

Encouraged by the response and fuelled by a growing passion for maternal health, June dreamed of moving into public health research. Everyone around her — including her university mentors — told her it was impossible to switch fields. But then, a door opened.

In 2014, June was awarded the Australian Government's prestigious Endeavour Scholarship, a merit-based award that allowed her to pursue public health research at the University of Queensland.

Discovering her own story through others

June's doctoral research focused on breastfeeding, health systems, and societal integration among refugee mothers from Vietnam and Myanmar living in Brisbane. What she discovered among these women changed her life.

"The refugees are amazing in their motherhood," she says. "Despite precarity, despite displacement, despite experiences of violence, they nurtured so well — and they all breastfed their babies because they had a very deep spirituality."

In their stories, June began to hear echoes of her own mother's struggles.

"It was very confronting," she admits. "I had a moment with Jesus, telling Him, 'If You had told me this at the start, I wouldn't have done the doctorate, because it was so painful to process.'"

A call within a call

During this time, June also found herself drawn to religious life. She began discerning a Carmelite vocation at Ormiston.

"I felt it was the perfect remedy to leave my doctorate," she shares. "To go into Carmel and live a life of silence and seclusion, where I didn't need to deal with my doctorate, and I didn't need to deal with the mission God had for me."

"God was more powerful than that," she says. "He invited me to go back to the places of pain and walk through them with Him."

Her time discerning with the Carmelites introduced her to the lives of Carmelite saints, particularly St Thérèse of Lisieux, *pic*, who also lost her mother at a young age. St Thérèse's mother, St Zélie, was unable to breastfeed after her third child because of breast cancer, and some of the children were sent to wet nurses. St Thérèse later



Dr June Joseph

wrote about the toll this separation took on her young heart in *Story of a Soul*.

"This resonated with me deeply," June reflects. "What I was learning through my doctorate and in Carmel showed me that when Jesus gives us His Body, mothers are partaking in that mystery every day — not only in breastfeeding but every time they sacrifice themselves to nurture their families."

A wider mission

In 2020, June shifted to global health projects, working with the World Health Organisation and Monash University on pandemic preparedness before moving to London in 2022 to study innovative prostate cancer screening methods. But even there, her heart was restless.

"My team lead asked me if I was ready to give up all my work on motherhood and infant feeding," she recalls. "But I knew that wasn't where my true meaning lay. I realised I was not resting in God's plan and will for my life."

She reconnected with the University of Queensland and returned to the field that had captured her heart — maternal and child health. Today, June's postpartum work takes her to Vietnam and Kuala Lumpur, where she collaborates with refugee mothers from Myanmar.

Her approach is rooted in Catholic social teaching and focuses on strengthening maternal and child healthcare from conception through the first 1,000 to 2,000 days of life. She also works to raise awareness of the systemic challenges mothers face, from lack of maternity leave to harmful societal attitudes that devalue motherhood.

"Across the world, breastfeeding rates have plummeted," she notes. "Mothers often have to return to work too soon. Power and privilege have disembodied mothers from that very humble, relational act of infant feeding."



Turning pain into advocacy

June's vision goes beyond research papers and statistics. She wants policy makers to act.

"I don't want future mothers and children to experience the neglect and insecurity I felt," she says firmly. "We need policies that provide better maternity leave, adequate funding, and tax systems that truly support families in those critical first five to ten years of life."

Her hope is that if Australia can lead the way in creating family-centred policies, other countries will follow — improving the lives of mothers and babies everywhere.

June's work is a testament to the power of grace — grace that turns wounds into wisdom, pain into purpose.

"God was more powerful than my pain," she reflects. "He turned my story into a mission, allowing me to walk with other mothers so they can nurture their children with dignity and hope." *Adapted from The Catholic Leader*

The otherworldliness of priests

I teach public speaking at my teen's public school for free. For three hours each Friday, I am given the use of the school library and I am met by my cohort of six. An assortment of Form 4 and 5 teens, they are a truly diverse group, with distinctly different personalities, drives and interests. Together we discuss the English language, form and content as I help them prepare for competitions such as the Oxford and Cambridge Society Malaysia Public Speaking Competition.

A big part of public speaking is content — knowing what points to present and structuring them in a cohesive, convincing way. A better than average grasp of English is also necessary to put the points across, and so my sessions cover grammar, comprehension, syntax and context.

One discussion saw us debating the merits of idiom usage, and led one of the cohorts to comment that some popular sayings were actually bad summaries of the original. She offered the phrase 'blood is thicker than water' as an example, pointing out that the true form of this was 'the blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb.' Traced back to medieval times, this quote underscored the significance of bonds created through shared experiences, commitments, and mutual agreements, over those based solely on familial ties. Meaning that brother could (and did) fight brother even if they came from the same root and stock.

This caused me to reflect on how we sometimes see our priests. Because we share the same covenant as Catholics, we tend to see our priests as elevated forms of

us regular folk. Although there is respect and deference, there is also some familiarity that can build between people and a priest they are close to. I myself am guilty of that. Because I knew a priest when he was in his final years of pastoral work and had not been ordained yet, I referred to him by his given name. To this day, he is still M to me.

Priests, by their vocation and fiat are *alter Christus* — other Christs. They answered God's call, and by God's grace were consecrated to serve the Church, intercede for souls, and administer the sacraments that bring eternal life. They may look like ordinary men, but they are not. They have been called, set apart. They have been taught and have learnt to commune with God. They are men marked forever by God to serve as His representative on earth.

I have a group of Catholic friends who serve in different capacities at both parish and archdiocese levels, and we have dubbed a subset of Catholics 'priest chasers'. These are (mostly, but not confined to) women who take particular pleasure in being known to as many men of the cloth as possible, either by overzealous works of charity, or sheer doggedness.

While it would be hypocritical for me to discount the wonderful gift of being friendly enough with a priest to be able to call him up and ask for absolute unction to be given to a terminal family member, these women take it to a whole other level. They have weekly breakfast dates with priests, spam



Word in Progress

KAREN-MICHAELA TAN

them with good morning messages and memes, insist on the priest's presence at family events, and are always driver designate should Father need to go somewhere. I have experienced it myself, being the grandniece of a priest, and having someone insinuate themselves at a meal in the family home despite being absolutely unknown to the family.

Thankfully with discernment and through constant and consistent examinations of

conscience, most priests are aware of some individuals' proclivity towards adding them into an imagined trophy case of clerics, and learn to sidestep them.

I too have learnt to give priests space. While they pastor their congregations, they are made over to God. Priests are our shepherds, not our buddies. True, there can be an especial closeness between a consecrated man and a parishioner, but the laity must never forget that our duty to our priests is to pray for them, receive the sacraments with reverence, and uphold the dignity of their priestly office. They are not our personal religious on call or counselling hotline.

Another thing I used to be guilty of was to judge priests by my own yardstick. I'd grumble about priests who could not speak well, roll my eyes at mispronunciations, until I asked myself if I could do what they do. Could I leave the hearth of my comfortable home to be Father to hundreds? Could I

wear the stacked hats of parish administrator, treasurer, confessor, minister and arbitrator every single day for the rest of my life? You bet I couldn't!

Exhorted by Luke 10:16: "He that hears you, hears Me; and he that despises you, despises Me," I have learnt to accept the humanity of each man of God, while at the same time never detracting from the sacredness of his priesthood. That is why, as my teen comes of the age for Confirmation, I have made it a point to teach her the correct way to address the clergy. And I have come outright to tell her that I have made the error of valuing a priest only inasmuch as his homilies speak to me.

In this age of hyper-buddy-ism where teens go about calling everyone 'bruh', I, as a parent and linguist, need to lay down the law when it comes to respect of the clergy and the office they hold. It will always be Father Gerard, Father Andrew or Monsignor Daniel. And it doesn't matter if a priest's homilies are too long, too convoluted or peppered with wrong idioms. Because that same mouth speaks the blessing over paten and chalice, those wildly gesturing hands close the eyes of the dead, and those feet take him to places ordered by the Master we both share. The same Master who has called and set these men apart, in full knowledge of their weaknesses, pouring down on them a sacramental grace that we, as laity, taste in a very different way.

Karen-Michaela Tan is a poet, writer and editor who seeks out God's presence in the human condition and looks for ways to put the Word of God into real action.

We have reached the final quarter of the year, with 2025 coming to an end in less than three months'. And just like that, we will be busy with our Christmas prep, making sure we throw unforgettable parties, picking out our finest outfits to celebrate the birth of the King, and digging through our storage to take out our prized Christmas tree, nativity sets and coordinating theme colours of our baubles. As the ancient saying goes, time and tide wait for no man, and we feel it now more than ever. Many reels and videos made as memes all over social media these days talk about the speed at which the years are changing post MCO, with some poking fun at how the progression of years stopped at 2020 — the year that halted the world and confined people in their homes for two years.

What we know for certain is that the world has changed. It kept turning on its axis, time moved forward, and life pressed on — whether or not we were ready for it or not. My nephews grew up, my parents grew older, some friends passed away, others welcomed children. I drifted away from some friendships and discovered new circles that resonate with the person I am today.

At work, we watch the younger generation step confidently into roles once held by their seniors. In church, the youth movement is now led by the very children we once saw running around with milk bottles and school bags in hand. That is progress.

As the world spins on, we are carried along — sometimes willingly, sometimes reluctantly — yet always moving forward,



To be honest

MARTIN ARUL

From stern glares to gentle parenting

shaped by the times we live in.

Yet, as we reflect on the time that has quietly slipped through our fingers, we must ask ourselves: has the progress of the years truly prepared us to hand over the reins to the younger generation — to the very roles we once held with confidence?

Generations have always been defined and, at times, caricatured. Our parents' era is remembered as the Baby Boomers, we are known

as Millennials, followed by Gen Z and now Gen Alpha. Much has been said about these younger generations — sometimes unfairly. They are often described as overly dependent on technology and artificial intelligence, or dismissed as "snowflakes," too easily offended and resistant to correction. At their harshest, they are painted as disengaged from reality, shying away from hard work, and more interested in becoming famous internet celebrities than building something lasting.

Recently, I came across a post by a friend on social media that struck me. It pointed out how quick we are to blame the younger generation for being disengaged — for avoiding dialogue or seeming uninterested in church activities — without first examining our own role. Have we, as the older generation, created spaces where they feel truly seen and heard? Have we led by example, inviting them into meaningful conversations where they can express themselves freely?

Naturally, this sparked mixed reactions — many agreed with the post's sentiments, while others insisted that the younger generation really is the problem. As I sat with my own thoughts, turning over the who,

what, when, and why of it all, I found myself agreeing with the larger point: we often fail to give our young people the space to grow, to explore, and to discover their own sense of belonging.

In corporate settings, we are quick to judge the young, holding them up against the "seasoned" employees we consider superior. And while there is value in experience, we cannot move forward or embrace change if we are unwilling to take chances on the very generation that will succeed us.

Still, a question lingers: why do they so often seem uninterested in formation sessions, camps, and talks? Without denying that many young people today are less inclined toward "obligatory" tasks — and yes, may prefer an afternoon of doomscrolling on TikTok over sitting through a Confirmation camp talk — the bigger question remains: Have we truly allowed them to be heard? Have we given them the freedom to express themselves, listened without judgment, and created safe spaces for them to share their rawest thoughts and feelings without fear of criticism or the side-eye?

If we are honest, the answer is likely no.

The truth is, every generation struggles to keep pace with the one that follows. Think of our parents and their parents — they grew up in vastly different circumstances, yet most of our parents raised us using the same stringent "handbook." Today, however, many in our generation are striving to break cycles of generational trauma and raise children with more love, empathy, and understanding — keeping in step with the times, where children respond better to gentle parenting.

As facilitators, formation leaders, and ministers, we must also evolve with the times. Children today are shaped by a

different parenting era, and the methods that worked for us — stern glares, hangers, belts — simply don't resonate with them. Parenting is already one of the toughest vocations, and our friends who are parents juggle this alongside work and the demands of life with incredible dedication.

Most new-age parents genuinely want to give their children what we may have lacked — a safe environment to express themselves, unconditional love, meaningful gifts, and words of affirmation.

We need to bring that same spirit of love and care into the way we engage with children and youth in our parishes, creating spaces that nurture them to grow, thrive, and eventually become the next generation of leaders within our communities. After all, at some point in our own lives, someone gave us an opportunity — someone trusted us enough to serve in our parishes and communities. Now it is our turn to extend that same trust to the next generation and not guard our roles as if they were ours to keep forever.

There is room for everyone. The doors of our parishes must remain open to all — regardless of age, education, or social standing. When we intentionally look at our young people, identify opportunities to guide them, and keep them meaningfully involved, we will inspire them to rise to the occasion and strive to do better — not just for themselves, but for the Church and the world around them.

Martin Arul is a believer who questions everything that is wrong, believing that everyone is equal in the eyes of God, and one must live as a Christian more in deeds than in words, outside the conformities of the building of the church.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

A tradition of the heart — Roman Catholic devotions

Growing up in a Roman Catholic home, devotions were always a vital part of our religious diet. While our family saw the Eucharist as more important than devotions, we nourished our spiritual lives a lot on devotions, as did many Roman Catholics back then.

Among other things, we prayed the Rosary every day, prayed the Angelus daily, prayed special litanies (St Joseph in March, Mary in May and October, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus in June), prayed the Stations of the Cross each Friday in Lent, were anxious to attend Eucharist on First Fridays and First Saturdays to obtain special promises from God, and said special prayers to obtain indulgences.

As well, there were pilgrimages to Marian shrines for those who could afford them and most everyone wore medals from Lourdes or Fatima and had a special devotion to those shrines (with a special devotion in my own family and parish to Our Lady of the Cape, at Cap De Madeleine, Quebec). Devotions were a big part of our spiritual lives.

What's to be said about devotions from a theological view and from the view of a culture that mostly distrusts them?

We might begin with the reaction of Martin Luther and the great Protestant reformers. They were fearful of two things in devotions. First, at that time, some devotions were too unbridled and were simply bad theology

(famously, selling indulgences). Second, they saw devotions, not as necessarily bad in themselves, but as often displacing Jesus and God's Word as our centre and main focus. And so, they distanced themselves from basically all Roman Catholic devotions, the unbridled as well as the healthy.

For the most part, that Protestant and Evangelical distrust of Roman Catholic devotions have come down right to our own day. While that distrust is breaking down in some non-Roman churches today, it is still the prevalent attitude inside most Protestant and Evangelical circles. In brief, they distrust most devotions because they are seen not just as deflecting our focus from the centrality of Jesus and the Word, but also as potentially unhealthy contaminants, as junk food in our spiritual diet.

What's to be said about that?

It's a fair and needed warning to Roman Catholics (and others) who nourish their spiritual lives with devotions. Bottom line, devotions can easily ground themselves on shaky theology and can be a junk food contaminating our spiritual diet: where devotions replace Scripture, where Mary replaces Jesus as centre, and certain ritual practices that make God seem like a puppet on a string.

However, that being admitted, as Goethe once said, *the dangers of life are many and safety is one of those dangers*. Yes, devo-

tions can be a danger, but they can also be a rich healthy supplement in our essential diet of Word and Eucharist.

Here's how Eric Mascall (the renowned Anglican theologian at Oxford with C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Dorothy Sayers, and Austin Farrar) spells out both the danger of devotions and the danger of not having devotions as part of your spiritual life: *The protestant reformers (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli) were so afraid of contamination by Roman Catholic devotions, that they put us on a diet of antiseptics. When you're on a diet of antiseptics, you won't suffer from food poisoning, but you can suffer from malnutrition.*

That's an equal challenge to both those who practice devotions and those who fear them. The theology undergirding certain devotions admittedly can be sloppy (for example, Mary is not a co-redeemer with Jesus). However, inside many devotions (to Mary, to the saints, to Eucharist adoration, to the Sacred Heart) there can be a rich nutrition which helps nourish the centre, namely, God's Word and the Eucharist.

The late Wendy Wright, in her book *Sacred Heart: Gateway to God* makes a wonderful apologia for Catholic devotional practices, particularly devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For her, Catholic devotional practices are a *tradition of the heart*. While Jesus remains central and His

resurrection remains the real anchor for our faith, devotions can give us something beyond just this raw essential.

Using devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as an example, she writes: "In this devotion, we, and Jesus and the saints, exist in some essential way outside the chronology of historical time. The tradition of the heart makes this vividly, even grotesquely, clear. The divine – human correspondence is intimate. It is discovered in the flesh. Our fleshy hearts are fitted for all that is beyond flesh by conforming to the heart of Jesus. That divine – human heart is the passageway between earth and heaven. That heart is the tactile tracings of divine love on the created order. That heart is the widest, wildest longing of humankind's own love." *The dangers of life are many and safety is one of those dangers*. Devotions can deflect us from what's more central and can take their root in some questionable theology, but they can also, in Wendy Wright's words, be a blessed passageway for the heart between heaven and earth.

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

SOCIAL JUSTICE



Making a Difference

Tony Magliano

Two young saints who defended life, justice, and the poor

The Catholic Church's newest saints, Sts Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati had a deep commitment to protecting human life, promoting social justice and peace, and celebrating creation!

St Carlo Acutis was only 15-years-old when he passed on. His love for the Eucharist gave him the courage to speak out in defence of human dignity – especially in regard to the poor and vulnerable.

For example, during a high school classroom debate on abortion, Carlo's classmates remember him passionately defending the right to life of tiny human beings – from the moment of conception.

He was also known for standing up for kids who got bullied at school, especially disabled kids. And he regularly brought food from his home to homeless persons.

With so many young people today experiencing loneliness, meaninglessness, and depression, St Carlo Acutis' young Eucharistic-centred life of courageous, selfless action on behalf of the unborn, the physically disabled, and the poor can serve as a powerful example and elixir to much of what troubles youth – and older adults as well (see: <http://bit.ly/31ojPQS> and <https://www.wordonfire.org/articles/carlo-acutis-the-first-millennial-saint/>).

St Pier Giorgio Frassati, only



St Carlo Acutis

24-years-old when he passed on, was affectionately called the "Man of the Beatitudes" by St Pope John Paul II because of his love and commitment to those who were poor, hungry, thirsty, meek, and in need of mercy – a love and commitment nourished by his dedication to the Eucharist (daily Mass), and devotion to the Blessed Mother.

At 17, he joined the St Vincent de Paul Society and dedicated much of his time to the sick and the needy, taking care of orphans, and helping wounded soldiers returning from World War I.

While in college he joined Catholic Action, and the People's Party, an organisation that was engaged in



St Pier Giorgio Frassati

political activism based on Catholic Social Teaching – the groundbreaking evolving doctrine launched by Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum (On Capital and Labour)* (<http://bit.ly/3Khy1Ma>) dedicated to promoting the dignity of workers who were, and still are, often denied basic labour rights such as safe working conditions, a living wage, reasonable working hours, and the right to form trade unions.

St Frassati was also actively involved in the Catholic student international union Pax Romana, whose purpose is dedicated to promoting social justice, integrity of creation, and world peace (see: <https://www.imcs-miec.org/>).

At the website dedicated to St Frassati (see: <https://frassatiusa.org/>), it is noted that his selfless love for those in need was consistent, even right up to his death – a death caused by polio believed to have been contracted from his regular visits to the poor and the sick.

On the eve before he passed on, barely able to write with a partially paralysed hand, he scribbled a note to a friend asking him to deliver medicine he had planned to give to a poor sick man he had been visiting named Converso.

When another friend asked St Frassati how he could stand the smells and filth of the slums he frequently visited, he answered, "Don't ever forget that even though the house is sordid, you are approaching Christ. Around the sick, the poor, and the unfortunate, I see a particular light, a light that we do not have."

Surely, the Christ-centred, humble Frassati and Acutis had the light of Christ! May we be inspired by their heavenly light to follow Christ as wonderfully as they did!

Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist. He is available to speak at diocesan or parish gatherings and can be reached at tmag6@comcast.net.

Little Catholics' Corner

Dear children,

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus cured ten lepers. Leprosy is a horrible disease that eats away at a person's body until they die.

It was pretty amazing for those people when Jesus just told them to go and show themselves to the priests and they realised that they were cured!

But then something interesting happened.

Only one of the ten who had been cured came back to say 'Thank you' to Jesus.

Do you think that the other nine were not happy that they were better? Why do you think they didn't come back to thank Jesus?

Now think about your life.

You've probably never had a disease like leprosy, but God has still done amazing things for you. He made you and gave you everything you need to live.

He gave you your friends and family, and most especially, He gives Himself to us in the Mass and at Holy Communion.

Do you remember to say 'Thank you' to God?

Love
Aunty Eliz

The story in Luke 11-19 was about the ten lepers.
Read the story and complete the blanks below by choosing the correct answer.

A. On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between and
Jerikho, Galilee
Samaria, Galilee
Galilee, Lyon

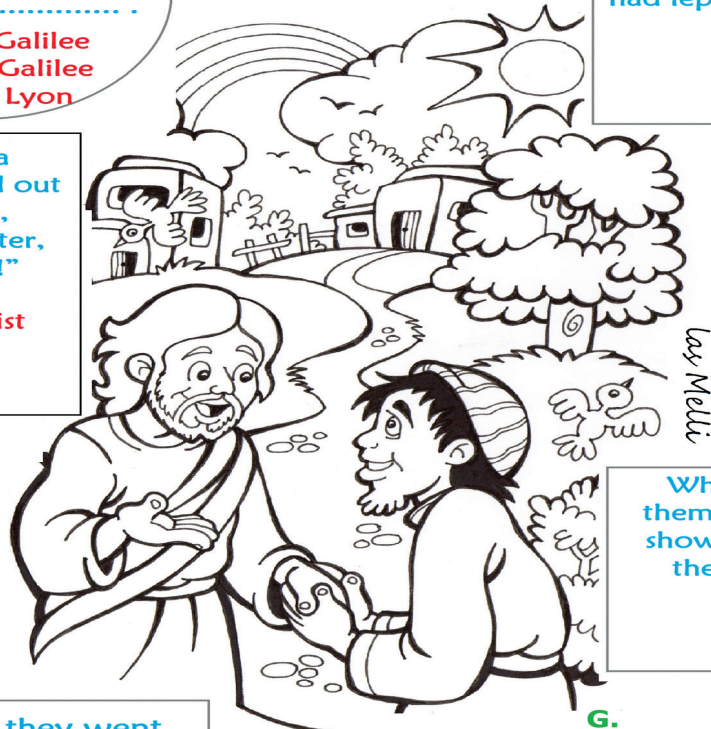
B. As he was going into a village, men who had leprosy met him.
five
eleven
ten

C. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "....., Master, have pity on us!"
John the Baptist
Abraham
Jesus

D. When Jesus saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the
priests
doctor
healer

F. And as they went, they were
crying
cleansed
jumping

G. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, God in a loud voice.
singing
dancing
praising



True or False? Jesus Cures the Ten Lepers

How well do you know the story of Jesus and the Lepers?

- When Jesus was walking to Jerusalem, he met ten lepers. True or false?
- The lepers came right up to Jesus and touched Him. True or false?
- Jesus didn't touch them; all He said was, "Go show yourselves to the priests." True or false?
- Half of the lepers were healed and half weren't. True or false?
- All of them came back to thank Jesus. True or false?
- Only one man came back to thank Jesus, and he was a foreigner. True or false?
- Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you." True or false?

Rise and go; your faith has made you well
(Luke 17: 19)

A. Samaria, Galilee B. Ten C. Jesus D. priests F. cleansed G. praising



YOUTH

A voyage of hope sets sail

in Malacca Johore



Joyce Ng Wei Yuan

MELAKA: On September 19, 2025, a long-awaited “vessel” officially set sail from the diocesan centre of Malacca Johore. For three days and two nights, 118 young people from across the diocese journeyed together in the first in-person Mandarin-speaking youth camp since the pandemic.

The voyage was steered by Fr Michael Goh, the “Steersman of Holy Light,” in collaboration with the Malacca Johore Diocese Young People Network (MJDYPN) and 27 young organisers who formed the “crew.” Together, they charted a course of discovery — of self, of others, and most importantly, of God.

Day 1: Casting Off

The camp began with the opening Mass, filling hearts with God’s blessing as the “ship” set out to sea. Workshops encouraged participants to look inward, discovering more about themselves and their gifts. Group activities then brought laughter and teamwork — especially the hopscotch challenge, which became a living lesson in solidarity: *when everyone is in the same boat, each person must support the other to keep the vessel afloat.*

As night fell, the outdoor Stations of the Cross created a powerful moment of prayer. In silence, under the stars, participants carried the cross through each station, reflecting on Jesus’ sacrifice and feeling a stronger bond with God. The atmosphere was serene yet deeply moving, as if Christ Himself was walking alongside them.

Day 2: Deep Waters of Grace

The second day was dedicated to healing. Fr Andrew Wong CDD led an examination of conscience, preparing the youth to meet Christ’s mercy. Priests from across the diocese — Fr Lawrence Ng, Fr Martinian Lee, Fr Simon Yong, and Friar Clarence Motoyou OFM — came to administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Many spoke of how liberating it was to lay down their burdens and find peace again in God’s love.

That evening, talents and creativity came alive in the

“Sail of Hope: Theatre of Life.”

Through drama, song, and performance, participants portrayed Christian virtues — faith, forgiveness, humility, love, mercy, and hope — showing how these values can be lived out in daily life. The night ended in praise and worship, voices lifted in thanksgiving, turning the hall into a sea of joy and gratitude.

Day 3: Anchored in Community

The final day focused on building stronger ties among the diocesan youth. Each parish group introduced themselves, highlighting their activities, hopes, and dreams for the future. This exchange planted seeds for new friendships and future collaboration across parishes.

The closing Mass was filled with thanksgiving, with participants taking on active roles in the liturgy. Many shared heartfelt testimonies during the final session — stories of healing, courage, newfound friendships, and deeper faith. Tears mingled with laughter as youth spoke of how God had touched them during the camp. Even the thunderstorm outside seemed to carry a message: “Do not be afraid. I am with you.”

Sailing Forward

Though the camp has come to an end, its spirit continues. Each youth returned to their parish communities carrying the fire of this encounter, ready to spread the joy and hope they had received. The camp was not an end, but a new beginning — a reminder that with Christ as our captain, no storm is too great and no sea too wide.

As one participant shared, “This journey didn’t stop when we left the camp. It’s only docked for a while. Together, we’ll keep sailing forward, trusting Jesus to calm every storm.”

The Voyage of Hope has begun. See you on the next journey!



MCYMC: Strengthening youth ministry across Malaysia

Roney A. Eming

MELAKA: The Malaysia Catholic Youth Ministers' Committee (MCYMC) gathered from September 22 to 26, for its annual retreat and general meeting, held this year at Good Shepherd Seminary (GSS). Twenty-eight youth ministers from across the country — bishops, priests, religious, and lay leaders — came together for five days of prayer, discernment, and fellowship.

The assembly was graced by the presence of Archbishop Simon Poh of the Archdiocese of Kuching, president of the Episcopal Commission for Youth in Malaysia, and Bishop Bernard Paul of the Diocese of Malacca Johore. Both bishops accompanied participants through the retreat, meetings, and pilgrimage, offering pastoral guidance and encouragement.

The gathering opened with Holy Mass celebrated by Bishop Bernard Paul, followed by a simple dinner, ice-breaking, and programme briefing.

The retreat sessions, led primarily by Bishop Bernard, invited participants to reflect on the four pillars — *Encountered, Enlightened, Empowered, and Evangelising* (4Es). Through group sharing and personal reflection, youth ministers considered how these dimensions could shape their service and renew their

personal faith.

In a session entitled *What Makes Us Happy?*, Bishop Bernard spoke about four levels of joy: joy within oneself, joy with others, joy in God, and joy in creation. He later explored the theme of “understanding humanity, diocese, and Church,” inviting ministers to ground their work in compassion and community.

Archbishop Simon Poh offered a formation talk on *Listening and Discerning as Young Disciples of the Lord*, highlighting the synodal path as a way for youth ministers to walk together with the Church in mission. Each day concluded with Mass and fellowship with young people from local parishes in the Malacca Johore Diocese.

The third day focused on the annual general meeting, where participants discerned the way forward for Catholic youth ministry in Malaysia. Discussions centred on national and international youth programmes, opportunities for collaboration, and the realities young Catholics face in today's world.

One major decision was the dissolution of the National Coordinating Office (NCO) for 2022–2025, followed by the election of a new National Youth Coordinating Office (NYCO) for 2025–2027. This transition marks a fresh chapter in strengthening structures that support youth ministry nationwide.



National Youth Coordinating Office handover.

Later that day, participants joined the local community for a special Mass at St Paul's Hill, commemorating the 480th anniversary of St Francis Xavier's arrival in Malacca and the 180th anniversary of the Church of St Francis Xavier. St Paul's Hill was a place of prayer and meditation for the great missionary, and his body was interred there for six months before being transferred to Goa. The historical setting offered participants a profound link with the missionary zeal that continues to inspire the Church today.

Following the Mass, delegates visited the Portuguese Settlement for dinner and fellowship with the local community, experiencing firsthand the rich cultural and Catholic heritage of Malacca.

On the fourth day, the youth ministers embarked on a pilgrimage to several historic Catholic sites around Melaka. Their first stop was the Church of St Mary in Ayer Salak, where Archbishop Simon Poh presided over Mass.

The group then visited the Montfort Youth Centre, where Brother Joseph briefed them on the Centre's programmes of formation and outreach to young people in need.

Next, they journeyed to the Chapel of Santa Cruz at Malim Hill, built in 1880 after a resident dreamed of a cross at the site, which was later discovered. The cross remains preserved

and venerated there to this day.

The pilgrimage concluded at St Peter's Church, Malaysia's oldest functioning Catholic church, founded in 1710 and now 315 years old. Parish priest, Fr Lionel Thomas welcomed the group and shared the history and life of the parish community. Of particular interest was the unique statue of Jesus in the state of the “Last Rites,” known locally as “Datuk Mati.”

The gathering closed on the fifth day with a Mass of commissioning celebrated by Archbishop Simon. In his homily, he reminded the youth ministers of their shared mission: to be renewed in hope, strengthened in joy, and united in service as the Church journeys together in a synodal way.

Though the MCYMC meets only once a year, participants expressed how the retreat, meeting, and pilgrimage renewed their spirits and deepened their sense of communion. The experience also strengthened bonds among ministers from different dioceses, affirming their common mission to accompany young people in faith and life.

Next year, the annual meeting will be hosted by the Archdiocese of Kuching, Sarawak, where youth ministers will once again gather to pray, reflect, and plan together for the future of Catholic youth ministry in Malaysia.



Ice-breaking session.

Alpha Youth Series inspires young adults at Risen Christ parish

PENANG: The parish formation team of Risen Christ Catholic Church, Ayer Itam, recently organised the Alpha Youth Series for young adults in the parish. Held every Sunday at 12 noon, each session began with lunch, followed by a video presentation, small-group discussions, and concluded with a time of praise and worship.

A total of 38 youth, eager for a deeper encounter with God, took part in this eight-week journey at the parish hall. Here are some of their testimonies:

Does God Heal Today? — this topic led me to reflect deeply on the power of prayer, especially the prayer of others. I never truly realised how powerful prayer could be until I looked back on an experience from my childhood.

When I was 10 years old, I was diagnosed with dengue fever and admitted to the hospital. I was so weak that I could barely stand, and my gums began to bleed. Through it all, my mother remained faithfully by my side, praying without ceasing.

At one point, she played the song *Lord, I Need You* by Chris Tomlin. As the lyrics filled the room — “Lord, I need You, oh, I need You; every hour I need You...” — I realised just how much I needed God at that moment. Slowly, I began to regain strength and recover.

Looking back now, I can see how God's grace worked through the love and faith



of my mother. Session 9 of the Alpha Youth Series helped me reconnect with that memory and reminded me of the many ways God has touched and healed my life. **Zachariah**

A true highlight for me was the Weekend Away — a two-day, one-night camp that was both fun and spiritually enriching. The camp featured lively water games that brought laughter, unity, and unforgettable memories.

But beyond the fun, the most powerful moment was the ministering session, where many of us, myself included, encountered the presence of the Holy Spirit in a profound way.

It was transformative — lifting burdens, deepening faith, and leaving an indelible mark on my heart.

I remember asking myself, “Does God judge me, or does He love me for who I am?” In that sacred moment, I finally received my answer. I knew I had been renewed and changed into a different person.]



The fellowship extended beyond prayer and worship. Sharing meals together brought warmth, friendship, and a true sense of community. Through the Alpha Youth Series, I not only formed new friendships but also

reconnected with old ones. It was a journey of faith, joy, and renewal — one that I would gladly experience again. **Navina**

When I first joined the Alpha Youth Series, I wasn't sure what to expect. Honestly, I didn't know if I would even open up. But week by week, I found myself learning, sharing, and actually looking forward to each session. I was fascinated by everyone's ideas and perspectives, and I realised how much we can grow simply by listening to one another.

One of the most moving experiences was during the Weekend Away, when we were invited to write a letter to God. At first, I didn't know what to write. But as I settled into the moment, the words just flowed, and before I knew it, I had filled an entire page with my worries, hopes, and gratitude.

Later, when we burned those letters, it didn't feel like just an activity. It felt like I was truly surrendering everything into God's hands. That moment left a deep impact on me.

I came to understand more of His love, His patience, and His longing for a relationship with each of us. No matter how sinful or neglectful we may be, when we turn to Him — even just a little — He welcomes us with open arms.

This journey has left a lasting impression on my heart, and I look forward to joining the Alpha Youth Series again in the future. **Juwita**

Church in Seoul opens beatification cause for Fr Leo Bang Yu-ryong

SEOUL: The Archdiocese of Seoul has received the “Nihil obstat” (no objections) from the Holy See for the beatification process of Fr Leo Bang Yu-ryong (1900–1986).

The priest is remembered as an “ancestor of the faith” and the founder of Korean monastic life, rooted in the witness of the martyrs.

According to a report by the Vatican’s *Fides News Agency*, Bishop Job Koo Yoo-bi, Auxiliary Bishop of Seoul and President of the Diocesan Commission for Beatification and Canonization, announced that the archdiocese is preparing to open the diocesan phase of the cause.

The process will collect data and testimonies to demonstrate the “heroic virtues and the reputation for holiness” of Father Bang, who will be declared a “Servant of God.”



Pioneer of Indigenous religious life

Born on March 6, 1900, in an undivided Korea, Fr Bang grew up amid waves of persecution against Christians under both the Joseon Dynasty and Japanese imperial rule.

His time at the Minor Seminary in Yongsan nurtured in him “a personal attraction and vision of the necessity of monastic life for the local Church.”

Ordained in 1930, he served in Chuncheon and Jangyeon parishes before becoming parish priest in Hwanghae Province.

There, he “abolished the custom of separating boys and girls in church

from the age of seven, installed the first organ, and established a youth choir,” revitalising parish life.

Fr Bang recognised the absence of indigenous congregations in Korea and believed that “the most effective way to spread the Catholic faith in Korea was through the Korean language and worldview.”

Founding congregations rooted in martyrdom

On April 21, 1946 — shortly after Korea’s liberation and on the centenary of St Andrew Kim Dae-geon’s martyrdom — he founded the Sisters of the Blessed Korean Martyrs in Kaesong.

The co-foundresses, Sister Yun Byeong-Hyeon and Sister Hong Eun-Sun, began religious life in “the simplest traditional Korean garments: a white jeogori and a black skirt.”

The new congregation drew its spirit directly from the Korean martyrs. Its charism was defined as: “to spread the Gospel of Christ in a spirit of fraternal love and martyrdom, for the glory of God and the sanctification of each member.”

The Sisters later established schools in Seoul. In 1951, the Holy See approved the Society of the Blessed Korean Martyrs, and in 1953, Father Bang founded the Male Congregation of the Blessed Korean Martyrs — the first indigenous male religious order in Korea. Additional branches followed, including a Third Order for lay members in 1957 and the Sisters of the Palm of the Korean Martyrs in 1962.

Spiritual legacy

On May 6, 1957, Fr Bang professed perpetual vows in the society he had founded, fulfilling his desire for consecrated life. He devoted the rest of his life to prayer, asceticism, and spiritual guidance.

The spirituality of the Society, he explained, was centred on “dedicating one’s life to Christ through meditation, silence, and transcendence in daily activities, offering oneself without reserve to others.”

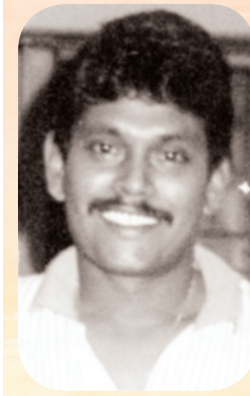
Fr Bang died on January 24, 1986.

LiCAS News

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you, we know you are
always with us in spirit
Our hearts will
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*God is our
refuge and
strength,
a very
present help
in trouble.*

Psalm 46:1

Why St Thérèse continues to inspire believers today — especially those who suffer

WARSAW, Poland: As her relics start to tour the US and more than 125 years after her death in a cloistered convent in Normandy, St Thérèse of Lisieux continues to inspire the church. Her “little way” of trust and love has made her one of the most popular saints in modern Catholicism — and a prophetic voice for a world often focused on success.

St Thérèse is often seen as a “sweet saint of roses,” a childlike figure whose holiness seemed effortless. Yet behind this image was a young Carmelite who embraced the demands of cloistered life, endured spiritual darkness, and suffered from tuberculosis, dying at just 24.

“She is not a saint of sugary devotion,” Carmelite Fr Jan Maria Malicki said. “She shows that true faith matures in darkness, in surrender without consolation.”

Fr Malicki — papal commissary for the Neapolitan semi-province of the Discalced Carmelites and former missionary in Africa and the order’s provincial in Poland — spoke to *OSV News* on how the “Little Flower” continues to challenge and inspire believers today. She “embraced darkness and suffering, and hidden love,” the Carmelite said.

The famed French saint, affectionately known by devotees as “The Little Flower,” born Thérèse Martin, died of tuberculosis in 1897 at age 24, after nine years of religious life at the Carmelite convent in Lisieux. She quickly became the object of astonishing devotion, far beyond the borders of France. Beatified in 1923, she was canonised in Rome on May 17, 1925, by Pope Pius XI, who proclaimed her patroness of missions

in 1927.

One hundred years after her death, in 1997, Pope John Paul II declared her a doctor of the Church.

St Thérèse’s “little way” is often misunderstood as childish or naive, but as Fr Malicki explained — “At the end of her life she entered what she called the ‘night of nothingness.’”

“This was not mere desolation. She shared in Christ’s redemptive night, carrying the doubts and unbelief of sinners on her own shoulders,” he said, explaining that St Thérèse identified with Christ in Gethsemane and on the cross, echoing his cry of abandonment: “My God ... why have you abandoned me?”

“Her darkness,” Fr Malicki said, “was solidarity with unbelievers. Faith can be most heroic precisely when it is stripped of every support and yet still says ‘yes’ to God.”

Her example challenges modern expectations that faith is always comforting. “Today many expect religion to soothe,” Fr Malicki noted. “Thérèse teaches us something deeper: faith is trust even without feelings, even in emptiness.”

Fr Malicki emphasises that St Thérèse’s holiness was cultivated in the ordinary and often unnoticed moments of life. “Her faith was tested not in grand gestures but in the daily rhythm of convent life. It was in obedience, in small acts of patience with others, in silent endurance of suffering that she became a model for all Christians.”

He noted that her closeness to God was intertwined with her sensitivity to those around her: “Even in her illness, she thought

of others, offering her pain for priests, missionaries and souls far from God. Her love was not abstract — it was practical, concrete and deeply sacrificial.”

“Today, many expect faith to provide constant consolation,” said Fr Malicki.

“Thérèse teaches something deeper: faith matures in darkness, in surrender without comfort. She embraced the ordinary moments — the small duties, the daily frictions, the hidden sufferings — with radical fidelity and love. These are the moments where holiness is truly formed.”

He emphasised that her “little way” is not minimalising, but maximising love.

“It is a demanding path, not spectacular, but radically evangelical,” he said. “Even without leaving her convent, she lived as a missionary, offering prayers, sacrifices, and her suffering for the church. Holiness is not measured by extraordinary deeds, but by love and trust in God, even in what seems insignificant or hidden.”

This perspective, he explained, makes St Thérèse accessible to all believers. “Parents, workers, students, the sick, the elderly — everyone can follow her path. Her genius was showing that everyday life is the place of sanctity, and that faith grows strongest not in ease, but in quiet fidelity.”

St Thérèse’s message also speaks to a culture obsessed with success. “She reversed the world’s logic,” Fr Malicki said. “Holiness is not in extraordinary feats, but in ordinary love. A small gesture done with love has eternal value. You don’t need to be exceptional to be close to God. You need fidelity and love, even in hiddenness.”



Though she never left her convent, St Thérèse longed to evangelize across continents. From her cloister, she corresponded with missionaries, offered prayers and suffering for them, and dreamt of being sent to Saigon. Pope Pius XI recognised this hidden universality, declaring her patroness of missions in 1927. In 2025, a cloistered nun who never left Lisieux travels the globe, still inspires renewed faith.

“Thérèse’s theology was not studied in lecture halls but lived in prayer,” Fr Malicki said. “She shows us that true wisdom is not academic brilliance, but the fruit of intimacy with God.”

For Carmelites, too, her teaching remains a guide. “In our life together,” Fr Malicki explained, “the greatest struggles are not heroic acts but daily frictions — small tensions, patience, forgiveness, fidelity. Thérèse shows that holiness is built in these little things.” The power of St Thérèse lies in her ordinariness. “She made holiness possible for everyone,” said Fr Malicki. “Her genius was to show that everyday life is the place of sanctity.” **Katarzyna Szalajko, OSV News**

Church's mission is to share the joy of God's love

VATICAN: The mission of the Catholic Church is not about exercising power but about sharing the joy of God's unconditional love, Pope Leo XIV said during his October 1 weekly general audience in St Peter's Square.

"This is the heart of the mission of the Church: not to administer power over others, but to communicate the joy of those who are loved precisely when they did not deserve it," the Pope told thousands of pilgrims.

Continuing his catechesis on the Jubilee theme, *Jesus Christ our Hope*, Pope Leo reflected on the resurrection as the foundation of Christian faith. Christ's rising from the dead, he said, was not a show of triumph or revenge, but a testimony that "love is capable of rising again after a great defeat in order to continue its unstoppable journey."

The Pope highlighted how the Risen Christ appeared to the disciples who had abandoned Him, greeting them with peace rather than reproach. Showing them His

wounds, Jesus offered forgiveness instead of condemnation. "The wounds serve not to reproach, but to confirm a love stronger than any infidelity," he said.

Pope Leo urged the faithful not to hide their own wounds but to see them as signs of healing and mercy. "Do not be afraid to show your wounds healed by mercy. Do not be afraid to draw close to those who are trapped in fear or guilt," he said.

He stressed that Christians, like the Apostles, are entrusted with the responsibility of being instruments of reconciliation in the world. "May the breath of the Spirit make us, too, witnesses of this peace and this love that is stronger than any defeat," he said.

Marking October as the month of the Rosary, the Pope invited Catholics to pray it daily, particularly for peace. Greeting pilgrims from Lebanon and the Holy Land, he said every Christian is called to bear witness that "love and forgiveness are greater than every wound and stronger than every injustice." OSV News

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Church of St. Jude Rawang
Feast Day Celebration 16 - 28 Oct 2025

16 Oct (Thur) 7:30pm - Flag Raising Ceremony (ML)
கொடியேற்றும் விழா 升旗仪式 Upacara Menaikkan Bendera

DAY 1 - 17 Oct (Fri) 7:00pm: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament & Novena 7:30pm: Mass (ML)
Celebrating God's Mercy இறை இரக்கத்தைக் கொண்டாடுதல் 庆祝天主的仁慈 Merayakan Kerahiman Tuhan

DAY 2 - 18 Oct (Sat) 5:30pm: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament & Novena 6:00pm: Mass (ML)
Celebrating the Church's Journey and Obedience திருஅவையின் திருப்பயணத்தையும் கீழ்ப்படிதலையும் கொண்டாடுதல் 庆祝教会的旅程与顺服 Merayakan Perjalanan dan Ketaatan Gereja

DAY 3 - 19 Oct (Sun) 7:00am: Rosary & Novena 7:30am: Mass (T) 1:00pm: Rosary & Novena 1:30pm: Mass (BM)
9:00am: Rosary & Novena 9:30am: Mass (E) 5:30pm: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament & Novena 6:00pm: Mass (ML)
Celebrating our Journey Through Persistent Prayer with Mother Mary
அன்னை மரியாவின் நிலையான இறைவேண்டலின் வழியான நமது திருப் பயணத்தைக் கொண்டாடுதல் 庆祝我们与圣母玛利亚持守祈祷的信仰之旅 Merayakan Perjalanan Kita Melalui Doa Berterusan Bersama Bunda Maria

DAY 4 - 20 Oct (Mon) 7:00pm: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament & Novena 7:30pm: Mass (ML)
Listening to the Holy Spirit தாய் ஆவியாரின் குரலுக்குச் செவியுத்தல் 聆听圣神的声音 Mendengarkan Roh Kudus

DAY 5 - 21 Oct (Tue) 7:00pm: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament & Novena 7:30pm: Mass (ML)
Listening with Anticipation to God's Call இறை அழைத்தலுக்கு எதிர்பார்க்குடன் செவியுத்தல் 聆听并期待地聆听天主的召叫 Mendengar Dengan Penuh Harapan Akan Panggilan Tuhan

DAY 6 - 22 Oct (Wed) 7:00pm: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament & Novena 7:30pm: Mass (ML)
Listening to Each Other with Hope நம்பிக்கையுடன் ஒருவருக்கொருவர் செவியுத்தல் 怀着希望彼此聆听 Mendengar Satu Sama Lain Dengan Harapan

DAY 7 - 23 Oct (Thurs) 7:00pm: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament & Novena 7:30pm: Mass (ML)
Walking with Courage Amidst Diversity பன்முகத்தன்மையில் மனவலியுடன் பயணித்தல் 在多元中勇敢同行 Berjalan Dengan Keberanian di tengah-tengah Kepelbagaian

DAY 8 - 24 Oct (Fri) 10:00am: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament & Novena 10:30am: Mass (E) & Anointing of the Sick 7:00pm: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament & Novena 7:30pm: Mass (ML)
Walking With Christ கிறிஸ்துவுடன் பயணித்தல் 与基督同行 Berjalan Dengan Kristus

DAY 9 - 25 Oct (Sat) 10:00am: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament & Novena 10:30am: Mass (E) 5:30pm: Exposition of Blessed Sacrament & Novena 6:00pm: Mass (ML) & Procession
Celebrating, Listening and Walking As Pilgrims Of Hope எதிர்பார்க்கின் திருப்பயணிகளாக கொண்டாடுதல், மற்றும் செவியுத்தல் 庆祝、聆听、同行成为满怀希望的朝圣者 Merayakan, Mendengar Dan Berjalan Bersama Sebagai Penziarah Harapan

26 Oct (Sun) 7:00am: Rosary 7:30am: Mass (T) 9:00am: Rosary 9:30am: Mass (E) 11:00am: Rosary 11:30am: Mass (M) 1:00pm: Rosary 1:30pm: Mass (BM) 5:30pm: Rosary 6:00pm: Thanksgiving Mass (ML)

28 Oct (Tues) 10:00am - Rosary (Eng) 10:30am - Mass (Eng) 7:00pm - Rosary 7:30pm - Mass (ML)
Feast of St. Simon & St. Jude

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