

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.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom[a] you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ  
Jesus. 2 Tim 3:14-15



Sharing the treasure in our earthen vessels

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MJD joins national reforestation effort to regenerate hope

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The Church's mission toward migrants in Asia

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# See Christ in the poor



(CNS/Lola Gomez)

**VATICAN: Many Christians “need to go back and re-read the Gospel” because they have forgotten that faith and love for the poor go hand in hand, Pope Leo XIV said in his first major papal document.**

In *Dilexi Te* (“I Have Loved You”), an apostolic exhortation addressed “to all Christians on love for the poor,” the Pope urged the faithful to rediscover the heart of the Gospel by recognising in the poor “the very face of Christ.”

“Love for the poor — whatever form their poverty may take, is the evangelical hallmark of a Church faithful to the heart of God,” he wrote, reminding believers that compassion for those who suffer is not an optional act of piety but an essential expression of faith.

“I am happy to make this document my own,” Pope Leo wrote, “since I share the desire of my beloved predecessor that all Christians come to appreciate the close connection between Christ’s love and His summons to care for the poor.”

He writes that the poor are not only objects of charity but evangelists who can prompt conversion through their example of humility and reliance on God. “The poor can act as silent teachers for us, making us conscious of our presumption and instilling a rightful spirit of humility,” he said. “The elderly, for example, by their frailty, remind us of our own fragility, even as we conceal it behind apparent prosperity and outward appearance.”

Pope Leo emphasised that “love for the Lord is one with love for the poor,” calling this inseparable link “essential to holiness.” Poverty, he explained, is “a multifaceted phenomenon” encompassing material, social, moral, spiritual, and cultural deprivation — including the plight of those who “have no rights, no space, no freedom.” These forms of pov-

erty, he warned, have become “more subtle and dangerous,” even in affluent societies, as inequality deepens.

Women, in particular, continue to suffer disproportionately, he noted, citing *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), where Pope Francis spoke of the feminisation of poverty.

Pope Leo lamented a culture that “discards others without even realising it” and tolerates the suffering of millions “as if it were normal.” He cautioned against a distorted meritocracy that equates success with worth, describing such thinking as part of “structures of sin” that justify inequality. “It then becomes normal to ignore the poor and live as if they do not exist,” he said. “The poor cannot be neglected if we are to remain within the great current of the Church’s life that has its source in the Gospel.”

While systemic reform is vital, he stressed that personal acts of compassion remain indispensable. “The most important way to help the disadvantaged is to assist them in finding decent work,” he wrote, “but we cannot abandon others who lack the necessities for a dignified life. Almsgiving allows us to stop before the poor, look into their eyes, and share something of ourselves.”

Reflecting on the Church’s social teaching, Pope Leo reaffirmed that God’s “preferential option for the poor” is not about exclusion but compassion. “God has a special place in His heart for those who are discriminated against and oppressed,” he said, calling for “a decisive and radical choice in favour of the weakest.”

He cited the example of the early deacons, mendicant orders, and modern saints such as St Teresa of Kolkata, who made the poor “the sacramental presence of the Lord.” Migration, he added, remains “a key expression of the Church’s solidarity with the poor,” noting the work of Caritas Internationalis and border missions worldwide.

*Dilexi Te* situates this call within the Church’s broader social doctrine, from Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* to the



Pope Leo XIV signs his first apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi Te* (*I Have Loved You*), in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Oct 4, 2025, the feast of St Francis of Assisi, as Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, the substitute secretary for general affairs at the Vatican Secretariat of State, looks on. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

teachings of Vatican II, St John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis.

“The epochal change we are now undergoing,” the Pope said, “calls for constant dialogue between the faithful, the Magisterium, and the poor themselves — who possess unique insights indispensable to the Church and to humanity.”

In the poorest of the poor, Pope Leo wrote, “Christ continues to suffer and rise again.” It is in them, he concluded, that “the Church rediscovers her call to show her most authentic self.” **Agencies**

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Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur,  
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**EDITOR**

Patricia Pereira  
editor1@herald.com.my

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Sandra Ann Inbaraj  
sandra@herald.com.my

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

Amanda Mah  
amanda@herald.com.my

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

Kevin Francis  
kevin@herald.com.my

**BAHASA MALAYSIA**

Melania Liza Magnus  
liza@herald.com.my

**MANDARIN**

Adelina Wong  
yin4482@gmail.com

**ADMIN ASSISTANT**

Rachael Sharma  
admin@herald.com.my

**ADVERTISEMENT/SUBSCRIPTION**  
advertisement@herald.com.my

**MEMORIAM**  
memoriam@herald.com.my

**LETTERS**  
letterseditor@herald.com.my

**Social Media**

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

@heraldmalaysia

heraldmalaysia  
Herald Snapshot

@heraldsnapshot

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

# One heartbeat of the Church

On October 4 and 5, the universal Church celebrated the Jubilee for Missions and the Jubilee for Migrants. In Rome, Pope Leo XIV reminded the faithful that “welcoming migrants is an essential part of the Church’s missionary calling today.” The frontiers of mission, he said, are no longer distant lands but “the faces of those who arrive at our shores, seeking hope and home.”

For the Church in Malaysia, those words strike close to home. Once seen as largely local, our parishes have blossomed into vibrant mosaics of peoples and cultures. From East Malaysia to the Peninsula, voices of the Tamil, Kadazan, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Myanmar, Indonesian and African faithful, as well as others, rise together in worship, weaving a beautiful harmony of faith. Each Sunday, our pews tell a story — one of unity in diversity, of a Church that breathes with many tongues and hearts. Truly, it is what Pope Leo described as “a Christianity that is more open, more alive, and more dynamic.”

For generations, “mission” meant priests and religious journeying to distant lands to proclaim Christ. Today, that direction has reversed. The world’s movement of peoples has brought the mission field to our doorstep.

Migrants and refugees — whether plantation workers in the interiors, domestic helpers in our cities, or asylum seekers at the margins — are not strangers to be pitied. They are living invitations to rediscover what mission truly means.

Pope Leo, in his jubilee homily, said: “Missionary outreach, charity, and fraternity are all interrelated and part of the duty and desire within us to bring the joy and consolation

of the Gospel to everyone, especially those in difficulty.” Mission today, then, is not only about going out — it is about opening up. To welcome the migrant is to live the Gospel; to accompany the stranger is to continue the work of Christ Himself, who was born without a home and fled into exile as a child.

One of the jubilee’s key insights is that mission is no longer one-way. Migrants, too, evangelise us. They bring stories of faith, endurance, and hope that challenge our comfort and deepen our compassion. Their joy amid hardship often reveals a faith more radiant than our own.

Pope Leo reminded us that the Church must “recognise in the faces of migrants a missionary gift — a vitality that renews the faith of the communities that welcome them.” Their very presence shows that God’s Spirit is alive and moving across borders.

In Malaysia, this truth is visible in many parishes where migrants serve as catechists, choir members, lectors, and prayer leaders. Some dioceses even celebrate Sunday liturgies in their native languages, enriching our worship with new rhythms and expressions of faith. What once seemed foreign has become familiar; what was once “their” celebration has become “ours.”

Yet Pope Leo cautioned that charity alone is not enough. “We cannot reduce our mission to aid or assistance; it must be encounter, listening, and mutual conversion.” True missionary hospitality requires more than food drives or collections — it calls for relationship, presence, and solidarity.

In Malaysia, where economic disparity and cultural prejudice can distance us from those

on society’s margins, this challenge is urgent. It invites us to move beyond token gestures toward genuine accompaniment: learning their languages, celebrating their feasts, defending their dignity, and ensuring that our parishes are places of safety and welcome.

The jubilee thus becomes a mirror. How inclusive are our communities? Do we see migrants as partners in mission — or merely as people to be served from a distance?

Malaysia’s plural society offers a unique context for living this vision. Our nation is already home to many faiths, cultures, and ethnicities. Within such diversity, the Church’s mission is not to dominate but to dialogue — to witness through compassion and solidarity.

Here, migrants become both a test and a gift. They test our capacity for mercy but also gift us with new perspectives on belonging to a universal Church. Their presence calls us to be more authentically Catholic — united, not uniform; missionary, not maintenance-minded.

To live this truth in Malaysia is to let the Gospel unsettle our comfort zones — to move from closed doors to open hearts. Mission and migration are two sides of the same coin: both rooted in encounter, both demanding humility, both flowing from the same source — the love of Christ who crossed the greatest border of all, from heaven to earth, to dwell among us.

In the end, the jubilee’s message is simple yet demanding: the Church that welcomes the migrant is the Church that remains missionary. May this jubilee rekindle in us the courage to build a Church without borders — a Church on mission because it first dares to welcome.

Patricia Pereira

## When faith holds steady, mission flourishes

The readings this Sunday weave together a powerful message of perseverance, faith, and mission, inviting us to reflect deeply on our call as disciples of Christ. Coinciding with World Mission Sunday, they remind us that the mission of the Church — our mission — is sustained not only by our efforts but also by steadfast prayer and the living witness of faith.

In the first reading from Exodus (17:8-13), we encounter the dramatic scene of Israel battling the Amalekites. The success of the army depends not on sheer military might, but on the intercessory posture of Moses. As long as his hands are raised in prayer, Israel prevails. When his arms grow weary, Aaron and Hur step in, supporting him so that he can persevere. The image is striking: the victory of God’s people depends on the hidden power of prayer and the solidarity of the community.

This story mirrors our Christian journey. Life often feels like a battlefield where forces of doubt, despair, and injustice threaten to overwhelm us. Alone, our arms grow tired, our faith weakens, and we falter. But when we pray, and when others stand beside us in faith, we are strengthened. Mission is never a solo effort — it is always sustained by prayer and the support of the Christian community.

St Paul’s exhortation to Timothy (2 Timothy 3:14-4:2) further underscores this truth. Timothy is urged to remain steadfast in the Scriptures, which equip him for every good work. Paul does not merely give advice; he passes on a legacy of faith. Timothy’s vocation is nurtured by the witness of others and anchored in God’s Word. Paul challenges

him to proclaim the Gospel “whether the time is favourable or unfavourable,” persevering in teaching and guiding the community.

Is this not the heart of mission? To live and proclaim the Gospel consistently, even when it feels inconvenient, difficult, or unpopular. In our rapidly changing world, where values are contested and truth is often distorted, Paul’s words to Timothy echo for us today. We are called not to retreat, but to remain rooted in the Word of God and to bear witness with courage and love.

The Gospel (Luke 18:1-8) then brings the message to its peak with the parable of the persistent widow. She is powerless in worldly terms, yet through her relentless perseverance, she secures justice from an indifferent judge. Jesus uses her example to teach us the importance of persistence in prayer. If even a corrupt judge responds to persistence, how much more will our loving Father respond to those who cry out to Him day and night?

Here, perseverance is not about wearing God down but about cultivating a relationship of trust and faith. Prayer transforms us; it aligns our hearts with God’s will and strengthens us to live faithfully amid challenges. The closing question of the Gospel is sobering: “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” It reminds us that perseverance in prayer and mission is not automatic — it requires daily commitment, lived out in trust and action.

On this World Mission Sunday, these readings speak with renewed urgency. Mission is not only the work of those who leave their homelands to serve in distant lands, though we

### Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Ravi Alexander, OFM, Cap

#### 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Readings: Exodus 17:8-13;

2 Timothy 3:14-4:2 ;

Gospel: Luke 18:1-8

deeply honour their sacrifice and dedication. Mission belongs to every Christian. The late Pope Francis often reminded us that by baptism, each of us is a missionary disciple, sent to witness the Gospel in our daily lives.

The Church’s mission is sustained, like Moses’ raised arms, by prayer and solidarity. Missionaries in the field need our support — spiritual, moral, and material. At the same time, we too are missionaries in our families, workplaces, and societies. When we persevere in prayer, immerse ourselves in Scripture, and live out our faith with conviction, we become living witnesses to Christ.

Like Moses, we may feel our arms grow tired. Like Timothy, we may be tempted to give up in difficult times. Like the widow, we may feel powerless in the face of injustice. Yet the message is clear: do not lose heart. Persevere in prayer. Stand firm in the Word. Remain faithful in mission. For the Lord is not indifferent — He is faithful and just, and He works through the prayers and perseverance of His people.

As we celebrate World Mission Sunday, let us recommit ourselves to this mission. Let us be missionaries of prayer, missionaries of encouragement, missionaries of hope. And may the Son of Man, when He comes, find us persevering in faith, united in mission, and alive in the Spirit.



**KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow**

**October**

- 20-24 National Safeguarding Conference in Philippines
- 26 Feast Day Mass – Church of St Jude, Rawang
- 30/10-6/11 Visit to: Caritas Hong Kong



**PENANG DIOCESE**

**Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis**

**October**

- 21 Meeting – Council of Priests (COP) at 10.00am, Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 21 Mass – Bishop Emeritus Antony Selvanayagam's 90th birthday, Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 21-22 Clergy Monthly Recollection with the Religious – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 23 Lecture with Initiation Year Seminary at 8.45am – College General Major Seminary Penang
- 25 Confirmation – Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi at 6.00pm
- 26 Confirmation – Church of Sacred Heart of Jesus, Kampar at 10.00am
- 29 Meeting with Pacific Asia Capuchin Conference GACC General Councillor, Fr William Chang OFM Cap at 3.00pm



**MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul**

**October**

- 21-22 Clergy Monthly Recollection – MAJODI Centre
- 25 South Johor Vicariate Eucharistic Congress – MAJODI Centre
- 26 Combined Confirmation for Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak and Chapel of Corpus Christi Terendak Camp – Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak
- 28-31 Caritas Malaysia General Assembly – MAJODI Centre

# A call to live the Gospel without borders

Eddy Lee

PETALING JAYA: The Firm Foundation Ministry of the Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX) hosted a session of its ongoing *Journey as Pilgrims of Hope* series on September 25, aimed at helping parishioners engage more deeply with Pope Francis' messages of hope.



Fr Andrew Manickam, OFM Cap, *pic*, delivered a stirring reflection on *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*, offering a thoughtful exploration of the encyclical's call to universal kinship and compassionate solidarity.

Fr Andrew's presentation focused on the 2020 encyclical, in which Pope Francis calls for a renewed culture of universal love, solidarity, and peace. Drawing inspiration from St Francis of Assisi, the document reflects the Franciscan tradition of serving the poor, promoting justice, and caring for creation.

According to Fr Andrew, Pope Francis reflects on a world wounded by division, inequality, and fear. Rooted in Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching, *Fratelli Tutti* transcends beyond religious boundaries. It invites all people of goodwill to reimagine society through shared dignity, compassion, and love. The encyclical also draws on the

influence of Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb, with whom Pope Francis signed the *Declaration on Human Fraternity* — an interfaith gesture that affirms unity across traditions.

From the outset, Pope Francis urges the world to “dream together” (paras. 6 and 8), envisioning a future where individualism and nationalism give way to solidarity and mutual care. He underscores the inherent dignity of every person, citing Matthew 25:45 as a reminder that our treatment of the poor and marginalised shapes our spiritual destiny. The encyclical also condemns economic injustice, drawing on James 5:1–4, which denounces exploitation and the hoarding of wealth.

Fr Andrew further connected these themes to current realities, citing the recent execution of a Malaysian inmate in Singapore. He noted that Pope Francis firmly rejects the death penalty (para. 260), stressing that mercy — not retribution — must guide society's response even to the gravest offenses.

Throughout his talk, Fr Andrew guided the congregation through the thematic flow of the encyclical. Pope Francis, he explained, diagnoses the spiritual sickness of our age — marked by consumerism, isolation, and the loss of silence and reflection. The Holy Father calls us to rediscover the gift of encounter, to listen

deeply, and to build bridges across differences.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan serves as a central lens, challenging us to step beyond our comfort and care for the wounded. True charity, Pope Francis insists, knows no borders. It builds community through vulnerability and service, reminding us that our salvation is bound to how we treat the poor, the sick, and the excluded.

Pope Francis affirms the dignity of migrants, urging the Church to be a welcoming home for all. He rejects divisive labels such as “minority,” instead calling for recognition of our shared humanity. Politics, he stresses, must also be renewed and rooted in love, justice, and the common good.

Dialogue and encounter are central to this vision. Real change, the Pope teaches, comes not through shouting matches but through listening and bridge-building. He calls for a “culture of encounter” and a revival of kindness — a fruit of the Holy Spirit that softens hearts and restores relationships.

Fr Andrew concluded by describing *Fratelli Tutti* as a work of the Holy Spirit. He said the Church is called to be a beacon of hope and fraternity, while Pope Francis challenges all believers to live the Gospel without borders, building a world marked by mercy, justice, and love. In a time of global unrest, *Fratelli Tutti* offers a way forward — one that begins with each of us.



## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #244



**Welcome dear friends,**

The Pilgrim Cross is at the Church of St Henry, Batu Pahat until October 25.

Charis Malaysia initiated the *Prophetic Intercrossers Asia* Workshop here. The message: “Intercrossers stabilise ministries because out of this deep prayer of intercession God's grace and His power flow into all church ministries.”

YPG (Young Priests Gathering 2025) ended with 51 young priests (under five years), from Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak and Semenanjung, led by Bishop Richard Ng.

Migrant Sunday is over. This weekend is Mission Sunday.

**Local Takes.** We are ok! Malaysia has raked in over RM6bil from durian exports to China in just seven years, and now the government is eyeing new markets in Taiwan and Peru to keep the momentum growing. The Sabah legislative assembly has been dissolved, paving the way for the 17th state election.

A UITM lecturer said that younger people prefer entrepreneurship over salaried employment, citing as coming from business-oriented families, passion, desire for independence, difficulties securing jobs or a quick way to earn. Beer is a scandal, not corruption, not religious hypocrisy, not divisive politics.

FIFA stated that the banned seven heritage players of Harimau Malaya had no links to Malaysia.

Dieticians call for broader incentives and wider access to healthy food to help Malaysians make better choices, not quick fixes.

Six states (Pahang, Terengganu, Perak, Negri Sembilan, Sabah and Sarawak), have been identified with fault zones, making

them vulnerable to earthquakes and seismic activity.

**The Church speaks:** Pope Leo cancelled the Vatican bank's sole authority over investments held by the city-state on October 6, rolling back one of the financial reforms of his predecessor Francis.

On the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the Pope prayed for collaboration between different religious traditions, saying: “May religions not be used as weapons or walls, but rather, lived as bridges and prophecy. Defend and promote peace, justice and humanity. On the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, the Pope said. “Hope gave her the strength and courage to spend her life willingly for the sake of the Gospel and abandon herself entirely to God's will.”

At a Mass in St Peter's Square, Pope Leo condemned both the “immense suffering” of Gazans and the rise of “anti-semitic hatred” worldwide, and expressed his hope that an Israel-Hamas peace deal will be finalised “as soon as possible”.

**A Thought for The Week: The Wise Sheikh** ‘How can we purify the world?’ asked a disciple. Ibn al-Husayn replied: ‘There was once a sheikh in Damascus called Abu Musa al-Qumasi. Everyone respected him because of his wisdom, but no one knew for certain that he was a good man.

One evening, the house where the sheikh and his wife lived collapsed, apparently because of some fault in the construction. The neighbours began desperately digging amongst the rubble. At one point, they managed to find the sheikh's wife. She said: “Don't bother about me. Save my husband first, he was sitting more or less over there.” The neighbours shifted the rubble

in the place she had indicated and found the sheikh. He said: “Don't worry about me. Save my wife first, she was lying more or less over there.”

**A lesson from the rubble:** The other comes first. Compassion is more than love. Compassion suffers with the other who is suffering. Love and compassion purify the world because ‘love overcomes evil’, and ‘love casts out fear.’

**QnQ: Q asks: When success is not guaranteed, what do we do?**

*Exitus in dubio, audebimus ultima.* The translation is “The outcome is in doubt, we will dare to the end.” We are not called to act only when the path is clear. We are not called to love only when it is safe. We are not called to hope only when success is guaranteed. Because faith and courage do not wait for certainty.

So, when the outcome is unclear...when prayers seem unanswered...when the road bends beyond what we can see, we do not retreat into hesitation. Therefore, the phrase conveys a message of courage and determination in the face of uncertainty, urging one to see through a difficult situation until the very end, regardless of the unknown outcome.

**The Spirit @ work:** “It is not the magnitude of our actions but the amount of love that is put into them that matters.” *Xavier University*

**Something to tickle you:** You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.” *C.S. Lewis*

*Bernard Paul*  
Bishop Bernard Paul

# Pastoral focus strengthens Nilai parish's growth and outreach

Aileen Anthony

NILAI: The Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) of the Church of St Theresa, on September 28, was a deeply reflective and participatory gathering centred on the four areas of pastoral concern — **Family, Church, Ecology, and Society**. Through the open and honest sharing of parishioners, the assembly offered both thanksgiving for ongoing efforts and renewed direction for the years ahead.

On **Family**, parishioners reflected that strong family bonds form the heartbeat of parish life, best nurtured through active participation at the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) level. Participants suggested practical steps, such as better yearly planning of activities, storytelling sessions for children after rosaries, inclusion of youth in animating Masses, and BEC family days to strengthen fellowship. There was also an emphasis on reaching out to the elderly and sick, as well as better communication so that all parishioners



Parishioners gather in groups to discuss the parish pastoral concerns.

— including newcomers — feel connected and supported.

Regarding the **Church**, the youth shared their desire for greater visibility, support, and inclusion, particularly post-Confirmation. They called for regular youth gatherings, bonding sessions, and leadership opportuni-

ties within ministries. Empowering young people to take active roles in liturgy, hospitality, and catechism was seen as vital to renewing parish life.

In terms of **Ecology**, participants affirmed ongoing efforts to care for creation through recycling, reducing food and plastic waste,

and practising energy conservation. There was appreciation for inter-ministry collaboration and a shared commitment to lead by example — extending these habits into their homes and communities.

When discussing **Society**, parishioners spoke of translating faith into outreach — not just through charity, but by witnessing Christ in daily life. Activities such as community clean-ups, blood donation drives, and social assistance were encouraged. There was also reflection on societal pressures affecting family and faith life, such as work schedules and weekend priorities, and the need for families to reclaim Sunday as a sacred day.

In closing, the assembly reaffirmed that the focus moving forward will be on witnessing the faith beginning with families at the BEC level, empowering communities to live out their faith authentically and visibly. The next phase of the parish journey will thus grow outward — from family, to church, to creation, to society — one ripple of faith at a time.

## Assam Jawa chapel marks World Day of Migrants with mission effort

SELANGOR: In conjunction with the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2025, the Chapel of Our Lady of Good Health in Assam Jawa organised an outreach programme on October 5 to extend care and solidarity to 18 Indonesian migrants and four local poor.

The gathering, blessed by Fr James Gabriel, Chapel Administrator, brought together eight families from nearby Ijok and the Assam Jawa-Bukit Rotan area. They were warmly received by chapel chairperson, Veiangkanni Masilamani, his committee members, and seven Catholic volunteers from Kuala Lumpur who joined in solidarity.

The afternoon began with a community prayer session in English and Bahasa Malaysia, followed by a reflection on the theme *The Word of God is alive and active* (Hebrews 4:12). The reflection reminded everyone that Scripture is not merely words on a page, but a living and transformative force — one that penetrates the heart, renews

the spirit, and offers guidance in times of struggle.

The Catholic migrants were encouraged to draw strength from the Al-Kitab (Bible), reading and praying daily to nurture their faith, especially in the face of life's uncertainties. "Though you may sometimes lack food for the body," they were told, "never neglect the food for your soul."

To help them live this call, five Al-Kitab were presented to representatives of the migrant families — a simple yet powerful gift symbolising light, hope, and God's presence in their lives.

After the exchanging of peace, the group gathered outside the chapel for a tea fellowship. Conversations flowed easily as laughter and friendship bridged cultural and social divides. The children were especially delighted — their laughter filling the air as they took part in a colouring competition and balloon-blowing game. Small prizes and toys brought immense joy to their faces, a re-



The chapel chairperson giving the Al-Kitab to the migrant representatives.

minder that happiness often springs from the simplest gestures of love.

In addition to spiritual nourishment, the families received tangible support — 370 kilogrammes of essential food items, including rice, sardines, and milk powder, distributed among the eight families. These gifts, given with care and respect, symbolised the community's commitment to walk with the poor and marginalised, especially migrants far from home.

As the event drew to a close, Veiangkanni

led the group in a closing prayer of thanksgiving. Gratitude filled the air as each guest departed with renewed faith and hope.

It was, above all, a day of humanity in action — where faith was lived, compassion shared, and dignity restored. The chapel community, together with their friends from Kuala Lumpur, were reminded once more that to love as Christ loves means reaching out to those on the margins, carrying light into places of need, and being beacons of hope in the world. **Bernard Anthony**

## Honouring the life and legacy of St Thérèse of Lisieux

NEGERI SEMBILAN: The Church of St Theresa, Nilai (CSTN) celebrated the Feast of St Thérèse of Lisieux over five days, from October 1 to 5, drawing more than a thousand parishioners and pilgrims. The celebration, rich in prayer, reflection, and fellowship, honoured the life and legacy of a saint

whose quiet simplicity continues to inspire believers across generations. This year also marks the 100th anniversary of St Thérèse's canonisation.

Fr Nicholas Hoh, OCD, anchored the celebration on two of the saint's most beloved reflections: "I thirst" and "My vocation is

love." Presiding over the Mass on Oct 1, he urged the faithful to emulate St Thérèse's prayer for confidence and trust in faith.

In the ensuing days, Fr George Harrison delivered a call to mission, encouraging the faithful not to shy away from proclaiming the Gospel, while Fr Victor Louis reflected on St Thérèse's family, who endured suffering yet remained steadfast in their trust in God.

What made this year's celebration truly meaningful was not only its scale but also the depth of its message. Amid processions, prayers, and fellowship, a poignant reflection emerged: How did a Carmelite nun who never left her convent and died at 24 become one of the two Patron Saints of Missions? (The other being seafarer St Francis Xavier, the great missionary). Her "little way" of love and sacrifice showed that one can touch the world deeply through faith and humility.

The feast culminated in a solemn procession around the church grounds. The statue of St Thérèse was carried by six sets of bearers across six stations, preceding the Blessed

Sacrament. After several days of rain, the weather cleared beautifully, adding grace to the moment.

Each evening ended with fellowship — food lovingly prepared and served by parishioners, accompanied by music and laughter. It was a celebration not just of a saint, but of community, gratitude, and renewed faith.

As the festivities drew to a close, many parishioners brought home flowers from the altar — a touching tribute to "The Little Flower" herself. Parish priest Fr Christopher Soosaipillai, reminded all of St Thérèse's timeless words: "I understood that every flower created by Him is beautiful... if all the lowly flowers wished to be roses, nature would lose its loveliness."

Through her "little way," St Thérèse taught that every act of love — no matter how small — can ripple outward to touch the world. More than a century later, her message continues to bloom at CSTN, reminding all that to be a missionary is not to travel far, but to love deeply. **Aileen Anthony**



Children dressed up as St Thérèse of Lisieux.

## Jubilee of Consecrated Life

# Sharing the treasure in our earthen vessels

Fr Nicholas Hoh, OCD

CHERAS: In 2025, the Holy See has designated a number of Jubilee days to recognise and celebrate different groups of people and various ministries in the Church. On October 4, around 40 persons representing the various religious congregations serving in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, came together for a jubilee celebration for consecrated life. As stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) 915-930, consecrated life is the permanent state of life in which a person deepens their baptismal consecration through the profession of the three evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity and obedience.

The jubilee was held at the Church of St Francis of Assisi, coinciding with the parish feast day triduum. It was also in recognition of St Francis of Assisi, one of the most important figures that continues to inspire consecrated life in Malaysia and throughout the world. Celebrated in the context of the year-long Jubilee of Hope, the goal of this jubilee was

to remind and challenge religious to be bearers of hope in their lives, communities, and ministries.

The jubilee celebrations began with a talk by Fr Richard Anthonyamy SJ, titled *Treasure in earthen vessels*, which juxtaposed the vulnerability and fragility of each person called to consecrated life, with the treasure entrusted to each religious by Jesus Christ, namely the Gospel. Fr Richard shared that while each religious must face many struggles and challenges in his vocation, these situations can be treated as opportunities where God continues to mould and transform each religious so that they increasingly reflect the face of Christ in the world. After the talk, the religious were asked to reflect on how they can continue to look at present challenges with hope, and themselves be bearers of hope to those they encounter.

The jubilee celebrations continued in the evening with the Eucharistic celebration presided over by



The religious before the Eucharistic Celebration on October 4.

Fr David Reegon OFM, Cap, who began his homily by stating that everyone seeks joy but often do not find it. This was a question that was also addressed to St Francis, who found joy not in material riches and fame, but in a life that was surrendered totally to the Lord. St Francis represents the ideal for each person called to consecrated life, who bears witness to the spirit of renunciation and poverty of the Beatitudes. Fr David concluded by quoting St Augustine:

“our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O Lord”, as a reminder to religious that joy comes through a life lived in union with God and in giving one’s life in service of the Lord.

After Mass, the religious and parishioners were treated to a thanksgiving dinner, celebrating the Silver Jubilee of three religious, namely Fr David, Sr Elizabeth Jothee FSP and Sr Theresa Petrus FSIC. In their thanksgiving speeches, the three jubilarians expressed gratitude to

the good foundation in the faith they had received from their families. They also acknowledged the many wonderful people they had encountered along their vocation journey, who continue to challenge and inspire them towards a deeper commitment of their religious consecration. Finally, the jubilarians also acknowledged the gift of God’s grace in sustaining them throughout the past 25 years of their religious consecration.

## Redemptorists honour lifelong service of parishioners



The newly conferred Redemptorist Oblates, from left: Lorthusamy Arulandu, Adele Poi and Lionel Loi with Fr Victorino Cueto, CSSR.

IPOH: The Redemptorist community of the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help (OMPH), has conferred the title of Redemptorist Oblate on three parishioners, in recognition of their years of service and dedication to the Church’s mission.

The solemn ceremony, led by Vice-Provincial Fr Victorino (Ino) Cueto, CSSR saw the recipients receive their Diploma of Redemptorist Oblate, an honour given to lay persons who have shown deep commitment to the spirituality and mission of the Redemptorists.

The newly appointed Oblates are:

- Mrs Adele Poi, who served faithfully on the Fund-Raising Committee long before the church was built, and later with the St Anne’s Guild, helping to prepare the church weekly for worship.
- Mr Lorthusamy Arulandu, recognised for his tireless leadership of the Tamil Catholic community since the 1970s, from the days of the Kampung Simee Chapel until today, and for his ongoing service in ministries such as the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs).
- Mr Lionel Loi, honoured for

his assistance in managing the Redemptorists’ finances and for his long-standing involvement in the Caritas ministry.

Fr Ino explained that Redemptorist Oblates are usually lay partners who embody the spirit of St Alphonsus, the founder of the Congregation. “They have been with us for a long period of time and in their own way have embraced Redemptorist spirituality — a sense of service inspired by our founder. Being a Redemptorist Oblate is a recognition that they share in the mission of Christ the Redeemer,” he said.

The recommendation for the title begins at the local community level, then passes through the Malaysia-Singapore Region, before being confirmed in Rome.

“This recognition is not only for Ipoh but is shared by the Redemptorist congregation worldwide,” Fr Ino added, “thanking our Oblates for being partners in the mission of proclaiming the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The OMPH community extended its heartfelt congratulations to Mrs Poi, Mr Arulandu, and Mr Loi on their new role as Redemptorist Oblates.

## Chapel amidst plantations commemorates golden jubilee

JABI, Kedah: The Chapel of Our Lady of Good Health in Ladang Jabi, marked a radiant milestone on September 5, its Golden Jubilee of establishment, celebrated in conjunction with its feast day.

Nestled about 18km from Alor Setar and under the pastoral care of the Church of St Michael, Alor Setar, this humble chapel has stood as a sanctuary of faith and devotion for half a century. What began as a simple mission chapel amidst the plantations has grown into a cherished place of prayer, healing, and hope — true to its patroness, Our Lady of Good Health.

The Mass was presided over by Fr Michael Cheah, chapel administrator and parish priest of the Church of St Michael, with Fr Francis Xavier Selvarajoo from Kangar, Perlis concelebrating. The liturgy, celebrated primarily in Bahasa Malaysia with a reading and some hymns in Tamil, reflected the chapel’s rich cultural diversity and unity in spirit.

As prayers of gratitude rose, hearts were filled with memories of generations who had built and nurtured this faith community. For the past 15 years, Fr Francis



Fr Francis Xavier Selvarajoo administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Xavier has faithfully ministered to this mainly Tamil-speaking community, journeying with them through times of joy and challenge. His pastoral presence, together with that of Fr Michael, has strengthened the bonds of faith that unite the families of Ladang Jabi.

After Mass, the chapel feast organising chairperson addressed the congregation, expressing heartfelt appreciation to all who have contributed to sustaining the chapel’s mission. To commemorate the 50th anniversary, parishioners raised funds to design and produce a special golden jubilee mug, gifted to each family as a symbol of shared faith and fellowship. Fr Michael and Fr Francis Xavier each re-

ceived one as tokens of the community’s gratitude.

The evening continued with a fellowship dinner lovingly prepared by parishioners. The chapel grounds came alive with colourful lights, laughter, and warm camaraderie.

Some 200 faithful attended the celebration, including a good number of Hindu friends from the surrounding estate and village who joined in the joyous occasion. Though modest in scale, the golden jubilee celebration shone with deep gratitude and hope — a fitting tribute to a community that continues to grow stronger, rooted in prayer, service, and love for one another.

**Bernard Anthony**



Fr Francis Xavier presiding over the Mass with Fr Michael Cheah concelebrating.

# MJD joins national reforestation effort to regenerate hope

Matthew Paul

KLUANG: The Creation Justice Commission of the Malacca Johore Diocese (CJC MJD), together with Caritas MJD, the Malaysian Nature Society (Johor Branch), and the Johor State Forestry Department (JSFD), participated in the nationwide Seed to Tree Reforestation Programme at Hutan Lipur Gunung Belumut on September 18.

The initiative forms part of the REGENERATE Campaign Year 1, themed *Regenerate Hope for Flora and Fauna*. Its aim is simple yet profound: to care for creation, protect biodiversity, and renew the gift of nature entrusted by God.

The day began with 45 participants — including parishioners from six South Johor churches, staff from MAJODI Centre, and members of the Malaysian Nature Society — joining JSFD Ranger Azamuddin to collect “wildings” (saplings from the forest floor). In just 30 minutes, the group carefully gathered 752 saplings, ensuring their roots were preserved for fu-



The forestry ranger explaining the steps of replanting the trees to the participants.

ture transplantation.

After a meal of local favourites, participants worked together to mix soil, prepare polybags, and transfer the wildings into a nursery. Though the work was physically demanding, teamwork and encouragement turned it into a joyful effort. “I didn’t know wild trees need to be collected, replanted, and nurtured before they can grow strong,” said Joanne from MAJODI. “Now I see how much

effort and care it takes for a forest to flourish.”

The highlight of the day was the planting of 50 wild fruit trees, sponsored by Bishop Bernard Paul, parishioners from seven parishes, and the Rotary Club of Johor Bahru Sentral, Sentul, Melaka and Tampoi. Ficus, and Salam trees were among those planted — living symbols of unity, care, and hope for future generations.

For many, the experience carried deeper lessons beyond the physical activity. “It wasn’t just about holding soil or planting trees,” said Dr Maria of Rotary Club JB Sentral. “I found new friends, learned about ecology, and gained a deeper appreciation of nature’s delicate balance.”

The youngest participant, 13-year-old Louis Jong, shared his delight: “At first, I thought it would be hard, because I rarely

plant. But it was easier than I imagined — and so rewarding. This programme is a good way to save the earth. I hope more people join in.”

Volunteer photographer Angeline Kho described the day as both healing and inspiring: “In the gentle embrace of nature, I found a balm for city-weary souls. ‘Seed to Tree’ was not merely an activity, but a promise to grow together.”

By evening, the forest floor was a little greener, and participants returned home not only with tired hands but also renewed hope. Each brought back a sapling from the nursery to nurture, symbolising their ongoing commitment to creation.

This reforestation effort reminds us that caring for the earth is not reserved for scientists or activists — it is a calling for everyone. Each tree planted is a prayer, each seedling a small act of love for future generations.

As the REGENERATE (PROTEC 2.0) Campaign continues, the call remains open: to step into nature, to touch the soil, and to plant hope — one tree at a time.

## Klang BEC makes pilgrimage to Melaka and Port Dickson

KLANG: The BEC of St Michael, Bandar Botanic Klang, once again lived up to its tradition of faith and fellowship on September 20. That morning, a busload of pilgrims — joined by members from neighbouring BECs — set out on a spiritually enriching journey, visiting two pilgrimage churches in a single day.

The first stop was at the Church of St Mary in Ayer Salak, Melaka, where pilgrims prayerfully participated

in the outdoor Way of the Cross under the intense mid-morning sun. Despite the heat, the devotion was palpable. This was followed by a solemn Eucharistic celebration led by parish priest, Fr John Yoew. After a hearty lunch, pilgrims engaged in

games and activities that strengthened bonds of friendship before continuing their journey to Port Dickson.

At the Church of the Immaculate Conception, the pilgrims were greeted with warm hospitality by the ministry team and parish priest, Fr Edwin Peter. After his inspiring introduction to the church and its role in the Pilgrim Year, the faithful embarked on a deeply meaningful Rosary Walk around the church grounds. The highlight of the visit was a para-liturgy animated by the youth, marked by reverence, devotion, and a spirit of intergenerational faith sharing. The visit concluded with a delightful hi-tea, filled with laughter and fellowship.

One moment that especially

touched the pilgrims’ hearts was when Fr Edwin personally accompanied them across the busy road to their bus, ensuring everyone’s safety before making his way to a distant chapel for sunset Mass. His shepherd-like care left a lasting impression of what true pastoral leadership embodies.

As the bus made its way back to Klang, many reflected on the day’s experiences. The heat of the sun, the long hours of travel, and the physical discomforts were seen not as burdens, but as reminders of how faith binds the community together. The journey was not only about visiting holy places, but about deepening their commitment to walk together in faith, making this Pilgrim Year truly



The BEC members at the Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak.

## Legionaries mark 32 years of Fr Paul Cheong’s priesthood

CHERAS: The Regia members of the Legion of Mary held an early celebration to mark the 32nd sacerdotal anniversary of their ecclesiastical assistant, Fr Paul Cheong, OFM Cap, during their monthly meeting at the Church of St Francis of Assisi on September 28.

In his address, Fr Paul, who was ordained on Oct 4, 1993, commended the Legion for its dedicated work, highlighting the handbook as a remarkable guide that provides structure and clarity, enabling the Legion to function as an effective apostolic body. He encouraged members to

remain fervent in their service to the Lord, with particular attention to the young and the marginalised.

Newly re-elected Regia president, Ignatius Wang, shared insights from the recent Legion Congress, which brought together leaders from across the country. He stressed the impor-

tance of engaging with young people and equipping them for future leadership within the Church. Wang also announced that the next Legion Congress will take place in 2027, while the Kuala Lumpur Regia will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2028.

The Legion of Mary, founded in Dublin, Ireland, by lay Catholic leader Frank Duff over a century ago, is now present in more than 160 countries. Its structure extends from local Praesidia (basic units), to Curia (which supervises several Praesidia), followed by Regia (overseeing multiple Curiae), the Senatus, and finally the supreme governing council, the Concilium.

Legionaries dedicate themselves to works of mercy within their parish communities, embodying God’s

love through acts of compassion and service. At weekly meetings worldwide, an altar is arranged in the same manner: a statue of Our Blessed Mother, the Legion standard (Vexillum Legionis), flowers, and candles. The prayers of the Legion, together with the Rosary, form the spiritual heart of each gathering.

The Legion of Mary is often described as a spiritual family, united in fellowship and committed to serving the needy with joy and faith. Members draw strength and confidence from the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the maternal care of Our Blessed Mother. New members are always welcome, and those interested in joining are encouraged to contact their parish office for more information. **Peter Pereira**



Pedro Geronimo

PENANG: We are often given the impression that the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is at a low ebb, and that only a few are interested in praying the Rosary. But the recent attendance of as many as 200 parishioners of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit (CHS) and some from other parishes, was clear proof that Catholics' love for Mary and the Rosary is still very much alive and real.

On welcoming the parishioners to a half-day event entitled *Rediscovering Mary and the power of the Rosary*, Fr Raymond Raj, rector of CHS, expressed his elation at the "very encouraging" turnout. He, however, added his observation that there were few youths present and urged the predominantly senior crowd to make greater efforts in share their Marian devotion and the Rosary with the young.

The event, conducted by Martin Jalleh, was meant to be an invitation to the parishioners of CHS, to ponder, pray and prepare well for the October Rosary Month. Emphasis was given to rediscovering the Rosary as a powerful tool for spiritual growth, renewal and protection and how to meditate and pray the Rosary scripturally.

At the very outset, Martin challenged the participants to rediscover Mary, especially in light of the Scriptures. He said that it was important that our Marian devotion be based on a deep scriptural understanding and appreciation of Mary and not just on



## Rediscovering Mary and the power of the Rosary

sheer sentimentalism.

"It was very interesting, informative and insightful, and a very challenging one too. It opened my eyes to new perspectives of Mary. I truly enjoyed the sessions. There was never a dull moment," Ann Marie David, a very active parishioner of CHS shared her appreciation.

Another parishioner, Rebecca Tan, echoed the feedback of many participants regarding rediscovering Mary - "I thoroughly enjoyed it. I gained new insights (which I never knew) on the person of Mary. I praise God for further revealing to me the personality of His dear Mother. I will certainly share this with my BEC family. My prayers to Our Lady are now different."

In the second session, *Rediscovering the power of the Rosary*, Martin highlighted the enlightening testi-

monies of the saints who described the Rosary as "a chain linking us to heaven"; "a method filled with holy simplicity yet profound power"; a "priceless treasure inspired by God"; a "weapon against evil" and many more.

He then went on to quote the popes on the Rosary being such a great source of grace. Perhaps the quote which best captures the essence of all the papal descriptions of the Rosary is that by Pope Benedict XI: "The prayer of the Rosary is perfect because of the praises it offers, the lessons it teaches, the graces it obtains, and the victories it achieves (especially against all evil in the world)."

Martin emphasised that the Rosary is a Scripture-based prayer, or a Gospel prayer. Important elements of the Rosary are biblical. He said that Pope

Francis consistently described the Rosary as a Scripture-based prayer that leads to a deeper contemplation of Christ's life and Mary's role in salvation, emphasising its power for spiritual growth, inner peace, and petitioning God.

Martin stressed that the Rosary is not just a recitation of prayers, but a recitation borne on meditation of the life of Christ. The popes through time consistently taught that the Rosary is a powerful form of scriptural meditation, and the repetition in the Rosary is meant to lead one into restful and contemplative prayer related to each Mystery.

The last session was met with great excitement and enthusiasm as Martin demonstrated how the Mysteries of the Rosary can be meditated upon and in the course of meditating on the

life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, connected to our lives personally, whilst calling upon the intercession of Mary.

One of the participants Lucille Dass shared, "I attended Martin's session to help me gain a wider insight on the power of the Rosary. Martin showed that it was more than a ritual; said and done. He offered a holistically enlightening take to bring us closer to Jesus. It instantly brought to light for me the Fruit of the Second Luminous Mystery, *To Jesus through Mary*."

Everyone went home praising and magnifying the Lord for the new insights they gained on who Mary truly is in the light of the Scriptures and how relevant, powerful and connected the meditation of the Rosary is to our personal lives.

## Passing the flame of love for renewal and commitment



BUKIT MERTAJAM: More than 50 parishioners gathered at the Minor Basilica of St Anne recently for a three-day mini retreat focused on deepening their understanding of Mother Mary and the devotion known as *The Flame of Love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*. By the end of the retreat, many participants expressed a renewed desire to lead a more consecrated life and pledged to support others in doing the same.

Participants came from four parishes — the Minor Basilica of St Anne, the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Kulim, the Church of Divine Mercy, Sg Ara and the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

Held from October 2 to 4, the retreat was organised by the Flame of Love — Minor Basilica of St Anne Prayer Cenacle, under the guidance of Sr Mercie Lai FMDM, with the theme *Walking in Hope with Mary*.

Assistant parish priest Rev Fr Nelson Joseph talked about the obedience of Mother Mary by journeying through the Old Testament to the New and then

showed how obedience could be operationalised in our daily lives.

"Surrendering our lives to Jesus is like letting go of the steering wheel and leaving everything to Him. He will teach us. We want our way and want to put our hands back on the steering wheel, but we have to surrender. Let the Holy Spirit be the driver," he told the group, and then led them in Adoration, and heard confessions.

Sr Mercie gave the group a deeper understanding of the virtues of Mother Mary and led them in the meditation sessions. Flame of Love Malaysia leaders Devid Rajah and Vanitha Nadaraj spoke about the movement and focused on the need to encourage families to pray as a family and give them the support they need.

Some of the participants talked about how the Flame of Love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary devotion has helped them in understanding the power of prayer. Some also gave testimonies of how God had worked in their lives. Some told the group how they were bringing this devotion

to different parts of the Diocese of Penang.

The passing of the flame on the last day of the retreat further fuelled their commitment to pass the Flame of Love, who is Jesus, to those around them and beyond. The simple ceremony of lighting candles and passing the light to the next person and then reciting a prayer of commitment served as commissioning for the 50-odd people.

The Flame of Love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a movement that promotes devotion to Mary, and the need for a consecrated life through prayer and reparation so as to be more effective in spiritual warfare.

On June 2 this year, Bishop of Penang Cardinal Sebastian Francis officially approved the establishment of the Flame of Love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary movement in the Diocese of Penang, making it the first diocese in Malaysia to recognise this international Marian movement, which is currently active in over 50 countries. **Vanitha Nadaraj**

## A fun lesson in rosary-making at Mantin parish

MANTIN: On a recent Sunday morning, the Church of St Aloysius came alive as pupils took part in a rosary-making session during the fourth-quarter catechism assembly. What began as a simple craft became a meaningful lesson in faith, family, and patience.

From the very start, the atmosphere was filled with contagious excitement. Little hands eagerly reached for beads and threads, determined to create something beautiful for the Lord. Yet, just like in life, challenges arose — beads tumbled to the floor, threads refused to cooperate, and giggles echoed through the hall as children scrambled to pick them up. Through it all, the joy of trying, failing, and trying again became part of the lesson. In every corner, little voices could be heard calling out, "Teacher! Teacher, help me!" whenever a thread refused to pass through the bead.

Parents sat side by side with their

children, guiding small fingers and offering gentle encouragement. Mothers patiently re-threaded strings, while fathers showed steady hands and patient hearts. Together, families discovered that rosary-making was more than a classroom task — it was a living picture of faith nurtured within the family, bead by bead, prayer by prayer.

By the end of the morning, the hall was filled with proud smiles, half-finished rosaries, and stories of runaway beads. But the real treasure was the memory etched into the hearts of the children: that building faith takes time, patience, laughter, and above all, love.

The rosary-making activity at St Aloysius will be remembered not only as a day of giggles and teamwork, but as a celebration of family, community, and the joy of growing closer to God together. **Selva Manogary**



Children trying their hands at rosary-making.

# ArchKL volunteers join nationwide 'Hari Cuci Malaysia' cleanup

PORT DICKSON: A total of 190 volunteers from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur took part in *Hari Cuci Malaysia*, a nationwide clean-up initiative organised by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (KPKT), together with several partners. The event at Pantai Cahaya Negeri, Port Dickson, was held in conjunction with the Season of Creation, and saw enthusiastic participation from people of all ages and backgrounds.

The Archdiocesan Creation Justice Ministry (CJM) collaborated with the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) to coordinate the group, which travelled to the beach in three buses. Among the volunteers were parishioners from different churches, individuals from other faiths, and 40 students from Montfort School accompanied by their teachers.

*Hari Cuci Malaysia* was part of a national effort that mobilised thousands of Malaysians to clean up parks, housing areas, beaches, and public spaces. At Pantai Cahaya Negeri, the atmosphere was vibrant and festive — with music, dance, banners, and educational booths set up by organisations such as AOHD, Up-cycle, Tzu Chi, Nestlé, and ReConnect. Each booth highlighted ongoing efforts to promote environmental sustainability and community responsibility.

Following a short briefing, volunteers donned gloves and armed themselves with pickers, forming small teams to collect waste along the beach. The rhythmic sounds of the waves and rustling trees accompanied their efforts as they gathered plastic bottles, candy wrappers, batteries, cigarette butts, bottle caps,



Volunteers picking up trash along the beach.



Volunteers displaying the placards.

## KL archdiocesan staff empowered through CPR and AED training

KUALA LUMPUR: Knowing how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and use an automated external defibrillator (AED) can make a crucial difference in life-threatening emergencies such as cardiac arrest. It is equally important for individuals to be familiar with the essential steps of providing immediate aid before professional help arrives.

St John Ambulance of Malaysia (SJAM) recently conducted a CPR and AED awareness session for the ministry staff and personnel of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre (APC Community), attended by 17 participants. The session was led by Kevin Peter and Nalliah Vellasamy from SJAM, who began by sharing the organisation's motto, values, and history.

Kevin Peter highlighted the importance of mastering five key components:

1. The importance of oxygen and the urgency of resuscitation
2. The Chain of Survival
3. Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) for adults
4. Automated External Defibrillator (AED)
5. Special considerations

He emphasised that it is advisable to practise CPR annually, as resuscitation protocols are reviewed and updated every five years. Kevin also introduced participants to the DRSABCD action plan, which stands for Danger, Response, Shout for Help, Airway, Breathing, Compression, and Defibrillation.

Participants were divided into pairs to practise CPR and AED procedures on training manikins, allowing them to gain hands-on experience and a deeper understanding of the life-saving process.

One of the participants, Anglin Anthony,



Learning how to perform CPR.

shared, "Being equipped with the skill to save a life, especially when I'm not from the medical field, is a precious gift. The AED training today has strengthened my confidence that I can help resuscitate someone while waiting for medical professionals to arrive. The DRSABCD code — look out for danger, get a response, shout for help, open airway, check breathing, perform CPR, and connect the AED — is something I will treasure. Although I hope never to face such a situation, I am now willing and ready to offer help and share my knowledge. I'm grateful to the archdiocese for providing this valuable training opportunity."

and other litter, sorting them into labelled bags for recycling or disposal. The experience fostered camaraderie, joy, and a renewed sense of stewardship for God's creation.

After the clean-up, some participants enjoyed a brief water play before lunch, while others took photographs to commemorate the event. Media representatives were also present, and several young volunteers proudly shared their reflections in interviews with TV3's *Malaysia Hari Ini*, marking a memorable moment of faith-driven action for the environment.

The event achieved two new records in the Malaysia Book of Records (MBOR): Record 1: Largest *Gotong-Royong* with 100,817 participants across 181 locations na-

tionwide.

Record 2: Most Used Cooking Oil Collected — 27,679.31 kg from 10 states, valued at RM79,684.56.

Overall, 6,452 metric tonnes of waste — including plastic, paper, and textiles — were collected across the country. This year's participation far exceeded that of 2024, which recorded 58,007 volunteers.

The Archdiocese extends its heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to this meaningful effort. As we continue our journey through the Season of Creation themed *Peace with Creation*, may our shared actions inspire others to care for our common home and live in harmony with all of God's creation.

## Mozart's masterpieces lift hearts in honour of Our Lady

KLANG: A beautiful evening of music and prayer took place at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL), during the concert *Ave Gloriosa: Mozart for the Queen of Heaven*. The event, held in honour of Mother Mary during the month of the Rosary, was organised by Broadway Academy together with OLL parish.

The concert began with a warm welcome to all who attended. The celebration was graced by several distinguished guests: His Excellency Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski, Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia and H.E. Ambassador Noriyuki Shikata, Ambassador of Japan.

Fr Gregory Chan, parish priest of OLL, led the opening prayer and blessing, invoking God's presence throughout the evening.

The first performance, *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*, by Mozart, was beautifully presented by the BAVE Chamber Choir, accompanied by the Catholic Chamber Orchestra of Kuala Lumpur under the direction of Dr Casey Broadway. The sacred music lifted every heart, inspiring prayer

through the beauty of sound.

The second part of the evening featured Mozart's *Missa Brevis in C Major*, performed by the Mass Choir and four talented soloists: Diana Klycheva (soprano, Turkmenistan), Ranko Kurano (mezzo-soprano, Japan), Junweng Wong (tenor, Malaysia), and Greg Abelardo De Leon (baritone, Philippines). Their harmonious voices and deep devotion reminded everyone that faith unites people from many nations and languages.

As the concert drew to a close, the audience joined in singing the beloved Marian hymn *Salve Regina*. It was a touching moment of unity and love for Our Lady.

A souvenir presentation ceremony followed, expressing gratitude to the conductor, soloists, and honoured guests for their contributions and support.

The evening concluded with thanksgiving and joy. The faithful left the church with peaceful hearts, giving glory to God and honour to Our Blessed Mother. **Isaac Raj Philip**



# New *motu proprio* updates Vatican financial policy



VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV has issued a new Apostolic Letter *motu proprio* titled *Coniuncta cura*, confirming recommendations approved by the Council for the Economy regarding the financial investment activities of the Holy See.

The new document underscores the principle of “co-responsibility in communio,” calling for the consolidation of various financial provisions that have developed over time and for a clear definition of

the “roles and responsibilities” of Vatican institutions. This, the Pope said, will allow all entities to “converge in a dynamic of mutual collaboration.”

Issued after careful consideration of the Council’s recommendations and consultation with experts, *Coniuncta cura* repeals an earlier rescript dated August 23, 2022, which concerned the administration and management of the Holy See’s financial activities and liquidity.

That rescript had granted the Institute for the Works of Religion (IOR), commonly known as the Vatican Bank, exclusive authority over asset management and made it the custodian of all movable assets of the Holy See and its related institutions. It further required that all Holy See entities with financial holdings outside the IOR transfer them to the Vatican Bank.

The new *motu proprio* introduces revised regulations for investment

management. It states that “financial investment activities of the Holy See, which are dedicated to its own use and carried out in accordance with Article 219 of the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicare Evangelium*, must adhere to the provisions established by the Investment Committee, in compliance with the approved Investment Policy.”

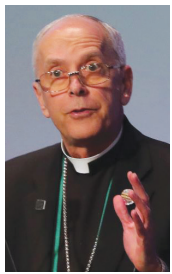
It also specifies that such activities are generally carried out by the

Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (APSA) through the IOR, “unless the competent bodies, as established by the statutes of the Investment Committee, deem it more efficient or convenient to use financial intermediaries established in other countries.”

*Coniuncta cura* took effect immediately upon its promulgation on October 6 through publication in *L’Osservatore Romano*. **Vatican News**

## Immigration is a ‘Gospel issue’ before a ‘political issue’

VATICAN: Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, *pic*, Texas, said immigration is a “Gospel issue” before it is a “political issue” in the United States.



In an exclusive interview with *EWTN News*, Seitz said the Church has a responsibility to reaffirm Catholic social teaching regarding the preferential option for the poor.

“It’s always the role of the bishop to speak the Gospel, to reflect on that Gospel and its implications for our daily lives,” the prelate said.

“We have a task to form people based on that teaching of love and mercy and compassion that applies not just in exceptional cases, not just to certain people, but in a special way to the poor and the vulnerable, and that includes immigrants,” he said.

Speaking about the “inalienable rights” every person is endowed with

by God, the bishop said the rights of immigrants should not only be a concern of the Church but should also be “respected in law.”

“While we are not politicians — it’s not our task to develop rules and laws — we are responsible to help form consciences and bring people back to the basic underlying principles, which, by the way, are principles upon which our country was built,” he said.

According to the bishop, US asylum law is not being respected “right now,” as several migrant families living in the El Paso Diocese, located near the US-Mexico border, no longer feel protected and fear deportation.

“We should practice that [respect for] human dignity when we are dealing with a person who simply fled here because they had no other option,” he told *EWTN News*.

Having ministered to families who have felt threatened by criminal drug gangs, Seitz said it is unjust to deny asylum or security for those seeking protection outside of their countries of origin, especially when the gangs’ activities are “supported by our drug addiction in the United States.”

Pope Leo XIV met with Seitz, El Paso Auxiliary Bishop Anthony Celino, and Dylan Corbett of Hope Border Institute in a private October 8 meeting at the Vatican.

During the meeting, the bishop shared a four-minute video and handwritten letters from migrant families expressing their faith as well as their fears about the future.

“I said, ‘Holy Father, we’re so happy to stand with you,’” Seitz said, recalling the encounter. “Later on in the meeting [the pope] came back to that and he said, ‘In matters of injustice, the Church has to speak and, in that, I stand with you.’” **CNA**

## Indonesia launches book commemorating Pope Francis’ historic visit



Pope Francis (right), Grand Imam Prof. Dr. KH Nasaruddin Umar (center), and Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo of Jakarta (left) during the pontiff’s visit at the Istiqlal Mosque, Jakarta, September 5, 2024. (LiCASNews/Mark Saludes)

JAKARTA: Church and government leaders on October 3 launched *Faith, Fraternity, and Compassion*, a commemorative book marking the first anniversary of Pope Francis’ 2024 visit to Indonesia — his first journey to the world’s largest Muslim-majority nation.

Published by Kompas Books, the volume highlights the pontiff’s message of unity, interfaith understanding, and care for creation. The September 2024 visit drew nationwide attention as a milestone of interreligious solidarity and a living expression of Indonesia’s national values of *Pancasila* and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).

Minister of Religious Affairs Prof Dr Nasaruddin Umar, who also serves as Grand Imam of Istiqlal Mosque, described the book as “a moral reflection and a source of inspiration.”

“This is not merely a travel record, but a bridge of fraternity that can ignite the flame of love for all humanity,” he said at the launch in Jakarta. He added that the papal visit ushered in “new momentum for deepening interfaith literacy and strengthening national solidarity.”

A key moment of the 2024 trip was the signing of the Istiqlal Declaration on Sept 5 — a joint commitment by Indonesia’s religious leaders to confront dehumanisation, reject violence in the name of religion, and respond to the global ecological crisis. Prof Umar, a co-author of the declaration, said both the document and the new

book affirm religion as “a force for solidarity, reconciliation, and ecological care.”

Deputy Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Fajar Riza Ul-haq said Pope Francis’ visit showed “the Vatican’s respect for Indonesia’s vibrant religious life,” noting that major Islamic organisations Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama warmly welcomed the pontiff.

He compared the visit to the pope’s earlier trips to the United Arab Emirates in 2019 and Iraq in 2021.

“While those visits focused on post-conflict recovery, the Indonesia visit highlighted faith, fraternity, and compassion — signaling the maturity of our interreligious dialogue tradition,” he said.

He added that papal visits in 1970, 1989, and 2024 collectively reflect Indonesia’s progress as “a living laboratory of *Fratelli Tutti*.”

Bishop Antonius Subianto, president of the Bishops’ Conference of Indonesia described the visit as “a moment of immense spiritual grace and compassion.”

“The pope came bearing rosaries for Catholics, medals for non-Catholics, candies for children, and donations for the poor and the sick through ten charitable foundations,” he said. “Meeting him is not to make us proud, but to inspire us to live our faith through service.”

The bishops’ conference has ordered 2,000 copies of the book for distribution to dioceses and parishes nationwide. **LiCAS News**

## Marian feast draws people from different faiths

ODISHA, India: On October 7, hundreds of people, regardless of religion or denomination, gathered to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary at Kalumaha, a Catholic village under Our Lady of Charity Parish, Raikia, in the Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, in the eastern Indian state of Odisha.

“Mother Mary is the true intercessor through whom I receive God’s blessings in my physical, social, and spiritual needs,” said Anita Pradhan, a widow of Rajesh Pradhan, one of the Kandhamal martyrs.

“Through the Holy Rosary, I am able to connect with God and find courage, strength, and hope, even after losing my husband during the 2007–2008 anti-Christian violence,” she added.

Fr Pradosh Chandra Nayak, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar and the main celebrant of the day, said, “Catholics are proud of Mother Mary, who fully and wholeheartedly cooperated with God in the history of human salvation.”

About 1,000 people, including



Hundreds gathered on October 7, 2025 at Kalumaha village in Odisha to celebrate the feast of the Holy Rosary.

seven priests, one deacon, and ten nuns, joined the celebration at the Kalumaha Grotto. A 12-foot cross was installed by Prafulla Pradhan, Catholic Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for the Udaygiri constituency. He also pledged five lakh rupees from the MLA Local Area Development Fund (MLALAD Fund) for the development of the grotto.

“The Catholic Church has a Mother who intercedes for us on our journey. God listens to her prayers for every need we present to Him through the Holy Rosary,” the MLA said.

“The Feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary has drawn people from

different faiths, Hindu, Muslim, and various Christian denominations,” said Jayananda Nayak, president of the Kalumaha Grotto Committee. “This celebration has become an opportunity to foster unity, fraternity, integrity, peace, harmony, and solidarity among all.”

He added, “The feast has revealed to us the power of the Holy Rosary. It grants grace to resist sin, cultivate virtue, and deepen our relationship with Christ, empowering us to live a holy and virtuous life. We honor our Blessed Mother with love and devotion, and may her guidance and intercession strengthen our relationship with her Son, Jesus Christ.” **RVA News**

## A jubilee of listening hearts...

# The Church's mission towards migrants in Asia

Pohleen Tan-Nathan

The journey of a migrant is marked by courage and sacrifice, often in the face of immense uncertainty. Over four days at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre in Kuala Lumpur, 63 participants, representing six Catholic bodies from 20 countries — including Malaysia, India, the Philippines, and Indonesia — came together to reflect deeply on this reality and to explore how the Church can accompany those on the move with compassion and faith. Jointly organised by Catholic networks dedicated to migration and social justice, the workshop combined exposure visits, testimonies, panel presentations, and moments of prayerful discernment through the Conversations in the Spirit method — a synodal process rooted in silence, attentive listening, and shared reflection.

From the outset, participants were confronted with sobering realities. Presentations mapping migration flows across Asia revealed how migrant workers endure exploitation, wage theft, and trafficking. Many women migrants face added gender-specific vulnerabilities — from workplace abuse to domestic servitude. Yet amid these harsh truths, the workshop became a space of hope — one where participants rediscovered the Gospel's call to solidarity.

Sr Dr Rekha M. Chennattu, *pic*, offered a biblical lens on migration, drawing parallels from the Scriptures — from Abraham's journey of faith to the Exodus of the Israelites. "Migration," she said, "is part of salvation history. God journeys with those on the move." She reminded participants that the ultimate goal

is a world where no one is forced to leave home merely to seek a dignified life. Bishop Allwyn D'Silva's reflection on papal messages for the World Day of Migrants underscored this same call, urging the Church to be "a tent wide enough to welcome all who seek refuge."

Encounters with Resilience

The second day brought the workshop's message to life as participants ventured into migrant communities in Malaysia. Divided into groups, they visited one of three grassroots organisations — the Myanmar Ethnic Organisation (MEO), Tenaganita, and North South Initiatives (NSI).

### Encounters with Resilience

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Participants at the Tenaganita office.

As the Church celebrated the Jubilee for Migrants on October 4-5, a moment of gratitude and renewal for all who journey far from home — reflections from the regional workshop on "The Situation of Migrants in Asia and Our Response" held in Kuala Lumpur from August 31 to September 3 took on renewed meaning. The gathering, which united pastoral workers, Church leaders, and the faithful from across Asia, became a living expression of this Jubilee spirit — listening with the heart, discerning together, and committing to walking in solidarity with migrants and refugees.

At MEO, refugees shared how they organise and sustain their communities despite limited resources — a living testament to dignity and self-determination. Tenaganita, a long-time advocate for migrant rights, highlighted its work protecting survivors of trafficking and combating systemic exploitation. Meanwhile, NSI showcased the power of migrant-led advocacy, where migrants themselves mobilise to challenge injustices and demand fair treatment.

Returning from these encounters, participants were visibly moved. "Their persistence is a source of hope for the Church's mission," one participant reflected. The resilience and self-agency of migrants became not just a theme but a witness — a living Gospel of perseverance.

The afternoon session featured Catholic-inspired organisations working directly with migrants in Malaysia. Global Shepherds Berhad (GSB) shared about providing safe spaces for women survivors of trafficking and violence. A Call to Serve (ACTS) spoke of its medical outreach to vulnerable refugees, while the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) described its work responding to gender-based violence and delivering humanitarian support to refugee communities. The Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) highlighted parish-level migrant ministry initiatives — from pastoral care to community outreach — that embody the Church's mission of accompaniment.

### Stories of Faith and Fortitude

Beyond institutional efforts, the personal testimonies of migrants brought human depth to the discussions. Two such stories — those of Miss Doris Ciego and Mr Desiderius Dhare — resonated deeply with participants.

Miss Doris, a Filipino migrant worker who has spent 19 years in Malaysia, shared her journey of single-handedly raising seven children back home. To overcome loneliness, she channelled her longing for home into service — teaching caregiver courses for the Filipino community at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Kuala Lumpur and continuously learning new skills to empower herself and others.



Sharings by the NGOs and local migrants.

Mr Desiderius, *pic*, an Indonesian worker and active member of the Church of St Anthony, Pudu, spoke of the precarity faced by undocumented workers. He described the exploitation of his fellow countrymen by unscrupulous agents who profit from their vulnerability. Despite these challenges, he volunteers in outreach visits to migrant workers at construction sites, ministering to their spiritual needs. Their testimonies of faith, courage, and self-giving embodied what the workshop sought to affirm — that migrants are not merely recipients of aid but bearers of grace who enrich the Church with their witness.

### Listening in the Spirit

While the visits and panels revealed the social dimensions of migration, the most powerful moments emerged in the quiet circles of Conversations in the Spirit. In these small groups, participants listened deeply — to the Spirit, to one another, and to the stories they had witnessed. This process of prayerful listening and shared discernment allowed pastoral workers, religious, and lay leaders from across Asia to name what they had encountered: compassion, courage, hope, and synergy.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, participants realised that accompaniment must begin with a "listening heart." They discerned not only the external needs of migrants — legal protection, safe housing, fair wages — but also their inner struggles, including loneliness, trauma, and mental health pressures. Out of this discernment came concrete proposals: establishing migrant resource desks at diocesan and parish levels, creating safe spaces for migrants to gather, and offering psychosocial support to help them heal and thrive.

### A Shared Commitment

The final day of the workshop turned reflection into action. Representatives from global and regional Catholic organisations shared best practices. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)

proposed forming a solidarity network to unite Churches across Asia in advocacy and pastoral outreach. The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) movement connected migration to broader issues of ecology and economic justice. The Talitha Kum network showcased youth-led, survivor-centred initiatives against human trafficking, while Caritas Asia highlighted its regional task force addressing trafficking. The ICMC called for stronger global Catholic advocacy and cooperation.

By the end of the workshop, a collective vision had emerged — to advocate with one voice, share resources, and strengthen networks at parish, diocesan, regional, and global levels. Participants recognised that the Church's mission is not to stand above migrants but alongside them, journeying together in faith and solidarity.

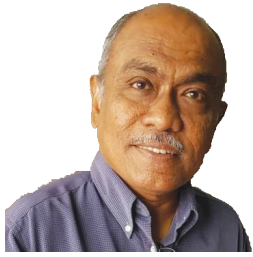
### Migration as a Spiritual Call

The closing reflection of the workshop captured its essence: migration is not only a social challenge but a spiritual call. The synodal journey — listening, discerning, and acting together — mirrors the very movement of the Spirit within the Church today.

In the words of one participant, "Discernment is not merely about ideas but about building a shared spiritual commitment." The workshop itself became a living sign of synodality — a Church that listens before speaking, that walks before teaching, and that loves before judging.

As participants departed Kuala Lumpur, they carried with them not just reports or resolutions, but renewed hearts — hearts awakened to the reality that migrants are not strangers to be pitied, but brothers and sisters in whom Christ Himself is found. The call that echoed most clearly through those days was simple yet profound: to listen with the heart, to discern in hope, and to act with courage.

For the Church in Asia, this means continuing to build bridges of compassion, breaking down walls of prejudice, and becoming — in the words of Pope Francis — "a home with doors always open." Only then will the Church truly be the Body of Christ that walks, suffers, and hopes together with all who journey in search of life and dignity.



## Echoing the Faith

DR STEVEN SELVARAJU

# Decline and restoration of the catechumenate

So far, I have traced briefly the historical development of the ancient catechumenate from the second to the fifth centuries. It clearly shows that there is no doubt that the catechumenate played an essential role in the growth, survival and mission of the early Church. According to Thomas Finn, an expert on the history of the catechumenate, "Perhaps more than any other possession of the Church, they account for the early Christian Church's survival and spread". However, from the fifth century onwards, the seriousness and fervour with which adult initiation was carried out began to decline.

### Some reasons for the decline

According to Michael Dujarier, another expert in the catechumenate, there are two reasons for this. Firstly, there were people who had "defective motives". They wanted to become Christians to obtain social prestige or political advantages. Secondly, there were those who sought the title "Christian" but did not have a true desire for baptism. When they found the demands of the catechumenate taxing, they absented themselves from religious instruction altogether. Others participated in the catechumenate but postponed baptism indefinitely.



*The development of the doctrine of grace and original sin made popular by Augustine of Hippo (354AD -430AD) resulted in infant baptism becoming the norm by the end of the fifth century.*

Another reason for the catechumenate's decline was that with the increasing development of the doctrine of grace and original sin made popular by Augustine of Hippo, the practice of infant baptism had become a norm by the end of the fifth century. As such, the catechumenate fell into disuse since there were no requirements for an intense adult catechumenal preparation.

To remedy this situation, the bishops of the Church organised what was known as the "Lenten" catechumenate. It was an intensive formation that lasted over a few weeks during Lent. However, this did not improve the situation. Dujarier states that the custom of postponing baptisms, as well as the solution proposed by the bishops revealed "the depths to which the catechumenate had fallen. The title of catechumen had lost its significance, since it no longer corresponded to a true conversion, so the catechumenate itself declined." By the sixth century the catechumenate had faded from the face of the Church.

### Restoration of the Catechumenate

Although efforts to continue some forms of the catechumenate occurred during certain periods in history, Church history records that it was from the sixteenth century onwards that serious efforts were made to re-vitalise the catechumenate. It happened through the efforts of a number of individuals both in the mission lands and in Europe.

#### South America (*The New World*)

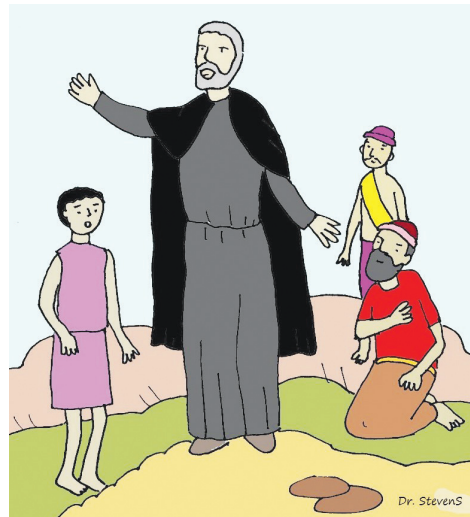
The Spanish missionaries who came to the New World attempted to prepare and baptise adults (and children) without much instruction. With large numbers of people seeking baptism, the missionaries were forced (and even instructed by their superiors in Spain) to baptise people as quickly as possible. It was the Franciscans who first provided an extended form of catechumenate by preparing adults for baptism by stages. Attempts were also made by the Augustinians and Dominicans.

However, since there was no uniformity in the way they carried out the catechumenate, it often gave rise to misunderstandings among the missionaries themselves. To resolve this problem, in 1538, a Latin American bishops' synod required that adult converts undergo, prior to baptism, a forty-day catechumenate that included fasting, instruction, the scrutiny and exorcism of candidates. Although this was accepted in theory, in practice, this directive was not carried out seriously.

#### Asia

In Asia, efforts at restoring a form of the ancient catechumenate were underway in China around the seventeenth century. Among those who contributed to this was Bishop Louis-Simon Faurie, the apostolic vicar of the province of Kuei-chou. He instructed his priests to prepare those wishing to be baptised through a form of catechumenate. There were also efforts by the priests of the Paris Foreign Missions (MEP) to prepare adults for baptism after five to six months of catechetical preparation. In Japan, Portuguese missionaries also carried out a form of catechumenate during this time.

In India, it was a common practice for Portuguese missionaries to baptise large numbers of people after quick instructions. This prompted Ignatius of Loyola, founder and head of the Jesuits, to urge the Council of Goa to establish houses where candidates for baptism could gather for three months preparation prior to baptism. Such houses were set up in Goa, Cochin and in other



*In India, Portuguese missionaries baptised large numbers of people after quick instructions.*

towns. On the whole, however, there was no uniformity in the manner the catechumenal process was carried out by the missionaries in Asia.

#### Africa

The restoration of the catechumenate was most successfully done in Africa. Among those responsible for this was Cardinal Charles Lavigerie (1825-1892), the apostolic delegate of West Sahara and Sudan. In 1868, he founded the Society of Missionaries of Africa, popularly known as the "White Fathers". When he sent his missionaries to Africa, he drew up a structured catechumenate for them to follow. The structure was largely based on the catechumenate of the early Church.



*Cardinal Charles Lavigerie (1825-1892) was instrumental in introducing a form of the adult catechumenate in Africa.*

In practice, the catechumenate carried out by the White Fathers had three groups: postulants, catechumens and the faithful. Postulants were those who expressed a desire for the Christian life. Catechumens were those making intense preparations for baptism, and the faithful were taught the meaning of the sacraments. Each of the first two groups underwent two years of preparation. When the missionaries judged them ready, their names were published and they made a retreat three days before their baptism. They were baptised in the morning of a feast day before a large number of the faithful and later, they attended Mass and received communion.

This proved so successful that within fifty years, missionaries in almost every part of Africa were preparing adults and children for baptism by means of this structure of the catechumenate, although the time of preparation, the content and the duration between stages varied. As such, through the efforts of the White Fathers, the idea of the catechumenate developed in Africa and eventually in other parts of the world.

#### Europe

In Europe, a laywoman, P. Gouzi, experimented with a form of the catechumenate in Paris in the years following the Second World War. She prepared groups of young people for baptism through instructions, spiritual and moral development, accompanied by ceremonies that suited the needs of the unbaptised. From the 1950s, the French bishops appealed to their priests for a pre-baptismal preparation of at least three years.

In spite of the growing momentum in restoring the catechumenate, it was observed

that an important element was still missing. The catechumenate lacked a proper liturgical dimension. According to Dujarier, "the giving of medals, rosaries or crucifixes was an attempt to signify the progress of the catechumens. Therefore, there were no liturgical stages signifying the progressive gift of divine grace."

### The liturgical dimension

A solution to this "problem" was provided by Bishop Joseph Blomjous, who was serving as the bishop of Mwanza in Tanganyika. Impressed by the effectiveness of the catechumenate used in Africa, he sensed that these could be enhanced with liturgical rites. He came up with the idea for the Order of Baptism in the Roman Ritual to be partitioned for separate occasions. He also envisioned seven steps: inscription, three scrutinies, the combined ceremonies of presenting the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, exorcisms on Holy Saturday morning and baptism at the Easter Vigil. After a long period of preparation and writing, in 1959, he submitted his plan to the Apostolic See.



*Bishop Joseph Blomjous (1908-1992) enhanced the catechumenal process by including the liturgical rites.*

### The decree of 1962

Partly due to his efforts, and the response to the numerous requests made by bishops from the mission countries, the Sacred Congregation published a decree for the initiation of adults in April 1962. Through this decree, the Church restored the ritual stages of preparation for adult initiation. Unfortunately, the new order of adult baptism was hardly given attention by the majority of bishops since it appeared only a few months before the Second Vatican Council began. Most bishops felt it was better to wait until the end of the Council in case further changes had to be made before implementing it.

### Conclusion

In the next article, I will examine the role the Second Vatican Council played in the restoration of the catechumenate in the Church, as well as look at the events that led to the preparation and promulgation of the Rite of Christian of Adults (RCIA) as we have it today.

*Dr Steven Selvaraju, STD, STL, holds a Doctorate in Theology with Specialisation in Catechetics and Youth Ministry from Pontifical Salesian University, Rome. He serves as Director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre, Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.*

*The illustrations are by Dr Steven Selvaraju*



# When God rewrites the script

Tianne Pereira

Sitting across from Fr Francis Teo felt like I was inside a documentary — one of those soul-stirring scenes that pull you in and hold you there. His voice, his stories, his presence were raw, real and utterly captivating. Somewhere along the interview, I wanted to drop my pen and just listen to every word, every memory, every twist in his journey toward priesthood.

This is merely a glimpse into a story so rich in purpose, adventure, and calling — one that I hope will awaken a spark in you too.

Fr Francis Teo, the only Malaysian and first Asian in the Missionary Community of St Paul the Apostle (MCSPA), had a childhood steeped in movement and meaning. Born into a family of five, he grew up constantly on the move due to his father's job in the Survey Department. "It prepared me for mission life," he said with a grin. "Packing up, adjusting, starting over — that's the life I live now."

At fourteen, he left for Singapore on a scholarship, a curious young man already asking big questions. After Junior College, he chose law over medicine, but when holidays came, while others went home, Francis went soul-searching — backpacking through Europe and later rugged North Pakistan, running on little money but overflowing with curiosity. "God's creation became real in the diversity of peoples and cultures," he said. Back in Singapore, in his small room, surrounded by four blank walls, the bigger questions came: Why am I here? Am I happy?

By his second year of law school, while his classmates were buried in law books, Francis was devouring books on Africa; its history, geography, people. He failed his exams "impressively," as he put it. His father was furious. "So, I quit," Francis said, "and told him I wanted to go to Africa." His father's reply was short: "Then, at your own expense."

And he did. He worked, saved, and bought a one-way ticket.

At that point, the priesthood hadn't crossed his mind. He wasn't running toward religion, just difference. Before leaving, a friend connected him to an Irish Carmelite priest, who gave him a list of 23 African missions. Francis wrote to everyone. None replied. "My ego was bruised!" he laughed. Until one letter arrived from Bishop John C. Mahon of Lodwar, Kenya. That single invitation changed everything!

Francis gave away all his belongings, keeping only a few essentials. "For a young person, giving up everything isn't easy," he said. "But it was necessary. That experience, learning to let go, was the beginning of the mission."

Hitchhiking 1,000 kilometres across Kenya, he landed in Turkana, where he worked with

two Spanish lay missionaries of the MCSPA, running mobile clinics and nutrition centres for mothers and children. "That's when I saw the impact one missionary could make," he recalled. When they asked if he'd ever considered the priesthood, he laughed, "No way! Not in the plan." But God, as always, had a plot twist.

He met Fr Francisco "Paco" Andreo, founder of the MCSPA, a man with magnetic conviction and a gift for seeing potential in people. Francis was drawn in. When Fr Paco later invited him to Spain, Francis said yes — reluctantly. Spain wasn't in the plan; journalism school in Europe was. But he went anyway, not knowing that the detour was divine.



In Spain, something shifted. Priesthood stopped feeling theoretical — it felt right. "That's when I first desired to be a member of the MCSPA and a missionary priest," he said. "It wasn't overnight, but something began to grow."

In 1989, Fr Paco accompanied Francis home to Malaysia to break the news to his family. "I want to be a priest," he told them. His father was livid. "A priest?" And worse, a missionary priest in Kenya. Disbelief and anger collided. Sensing the storm, Fr Paco quietly stepped out, leaving father and son to face the moment. It was painful, heavy with disappointment and confusion. His father accused Fr Paco of "stealing" his son.

Francis loved his family deeply, but he couldn't un-hear the call that had gripped his heart. He found strength in St Teresa of Avila's words: Though I loved my father dearly, I knew I had to do God's will. And if it meant stepping over his body to enter the convent, I would do so. "It wasn't defiance," he said softly. "It was obedience."

The hardest part of saying yes wasn't fear, it was letting go of his plan: the journalist, the traveller, the free spirit with a world map in his hands. But the MCSPA became his anchor.

In 1992, together with two other young

men, Francis began his philosophy studies in London, then theology in Kenya under the Jesuits. On August 15 1997, he was ordained a priest. "I've never once doubted my decision," he said. "Challenges, yes. Regrets, none."

Years later, when his father was terminally ill with bone cancer, the now Fr Francis came home to care for him. One morning, his father slowly got out of bed, looked at his frail reflection in the mirror, then whispered, "If I could start life over, I'd want to be a priest like you. At the end, I see that everything else is pointless. Only the good done matters." A lifetime of resistance melted in that moment. "Even the hardest of hearts can be softened," Fr Francis said quietly.

and baptisms. Fr Francis recalled a moment straight out of a war film, building a chapel near the Ethiopian border, gunfire echoing in the distance. One day, a young Czech man turned up, determined to cross into Ethiopia. Days later came a call from the embassy, they needed Fr Francis to retrieve a body. Heart pounding, he crossed the border and found the young man miraculously still alive. After draining nearly a litre of blood from his lungs, they saved him.

Not every story ended in rescue. Fr Francis spoke of Raphael, a young seminarian he had argued with. They never reconciled. Days later, Raphael was killed when a 12-wheeler crushed the car carrying four seminarians. "Every April 24, I remember that I refused God's grace," he said. "Never leave misunderstandings unresolved. Grace is the chance to reconcile. Don't waste it."

With conviction, Fr Francis insists that mission isn't reserved for priests or nuns. "The Church is missionary by nature. We've forgotten that." Parents, he says, must see vocations as blessings. His mother eventually did. "She always says, I gave one son, but now I have many," referring to the seminarians and priests who've become her family.

"To be on mission is an act of gratitude," he said, eyes shining. "If you're grateful, you must tell people. And faith, it's not just religion. It's relationship."

From law school dropout to desert mission builder, Fr Francis is proof that vocation isn't about giving up adventure, it's about stepping into the greatest one.

Today, he's preparing for a new mission in the Larantuka Diocese in eastern Indonesia, where the MCSPA will begin work on the remote island of Pulau Solor, building a formation house and developing social and human projects that plant seeds of faith, hope, and love.

After everything, his message remains simple: "To be on mission is to live in gratitude. If I'm truly grateful, I must tell people about it and I do that with my life."

Watching him speak — the joy, the ache, the conviction, it was impossible not to be moved. His life is still unfolding, with new chapters that continue to call others to say yes.

Because, in the end, vocation isn't just about leaving. It's about loving. It's about letting go of your plans so God can surprise you with something far greater. And if you're lucky, like Fr Francis, you'll find yourself not just living your faith but setting the world on fire with it.

If you'd like to learn more about Fr Francis or the Missionary Community of St Paul the Apostle (MCSPA), visit [MCSPA.org](http://MCSPA.org) or email [manila@mcspa.org](mailto:manila@mcspa.org)

In just a few more Sundays, we will be entering a New Liturgical Year. For us Catholics, this is more than just turning the page on a calendar.

It is a sacred invitation — a time to repent, reset, recalibrate, and ready our hearts as we await, both the hopeful anticipation of His second coming and the joyful celebration of Jesus' birth.

The Church, in her wisdom, gives us these sacred seasons to pause and reflect. Before we rush into Advent, perhaps it's good to take stock of our lives and ask ourselves:

What have I done well this past year?

What can be improved?

And what blind spots might I still not see?

These questions are not meant to weigh us down, but to help us live with greater clarity, purpose, and faithfulness.

As we look back, let's also reflect on how we've used the gifts that God has entrusted to us — our time, talent, and treasure.

Have we spent them mostly on worldly ambitions, or have we used them to draw closer to the journey that leads to eternity?

How have we lived as stewards of God's money and possessions?

Have we seen them as truly ours, or as blessings to be shared and used for His glory?

As we will soon begin a new year — liturgically speaking — it's also a good time to set new goals financially.

But as Catholics, let us do so with an eternal viewpoint.

Our financial goals shouldn't just be about providing for our needs or building security, but also about reflecting our faith,



## Faith and Finance

HAZEL ONG-ARCHIBALD

# New beginnings once again

generosity, and trust in God's providence.

The coming Liturgical Year invites us to return to what really matters — to simplicity, to faithfulness, and to a renewed sense of purpose.

May we begin it not with mere resolutions, but with hearts ready to be transformed.

This past year has been a very full one for me, personally.

There were many goals to achieve, and one of the biggest milestones was reaching my first anniversary as a Licensed Financial Planner in my new firm this June.

It has been such an enriching experience.

I truly feel that this is where God has stationed me to serve in this season of my life — to journey with individuals and couples, to be a confidant and safe space where they can share their wins and worries about their financial journeys.

Many of the conversations I have with clients go beyond money.

They touch on dreams, family, fear, and faith. I've come to realise that my work isn't just about figures and plans — it's about people and their stories.

It's about helping them find clarity and peace of mind in areas that often cause stress or confusion.

At the same time, I'm still growing in my other vocations — as a spouse and mother. One, being my husband's "perpetual secretary," and two, motivator to our daughter, who is sitting for her IGCSE exams as I write this piece.

Balancing all these roles isn't always easy.

Some days feel like a juggling act, trying to keep everything moving while still staying centred.

What I constantly need to work on is my multi-tasking and time management — to be more present where it truly matters most.

In His goodness, God has provided anchors along the way. He pulled me into communities of prayer — one in my workplace and another with my girlfriends from CHOICE. These faith communities have been such a blessing this year.

They remind me that I'm not alone, that there's strength in praying and growing together.

Through these experiences, I also felt a stirring desire to revisit the Bible again, daily.

Well, to be accurate, I listen (and read whenever possible) to the *Bible In A Year* podcast.

This has been life-giving.

The Word of God fuels me on days when I feel like I'm running on empty — when hormones, deadlines, or daily stresses threaten to overwhelm me.

Somehow, just listening and reading God's Word, calms and realigns my heart to His.

As I sit and write this reflection, I feel inspired to set new goals for the coming year — goals not just for work, but also for my faith and finances.

I plan to set goals for stewardship, giving, saving, investing, debt reduction, business improvement and prayer.

More than that, I want these goals to honour God.

When we manage our money wisely, give generously, and plan with eternity in mind, we are living out our faith in very real ways.

As we prepare to enter this new Liturgical Year, perhaps this is something we can all pray about — not only to improve our finances, but to renew our sense of mission as stewards.

Everything we have — our money, our time, our skills, even our opportunities — are gifts from God.

And when used rightly, they can bring joy, peace, and purpose, not just to us but to others too.

Let us remember that all we have comes from Him and, ultimately, returns to Him.

May we live this truth daily — not in fear of not having enough, but in the joyful confidence that God always provides. I know it is not always easy to trust this deeply, but trust Him anyway.

So as this new Church year will soon begin, let us reset, recalibrate, and ready our hearts once again.

May we walk into it with gratitude for the past, hope for the future, and a deep desire to let every part of our lives — including our finances — reflect our faith and trust in God.

**Hazel Ong-Archibald** is a Licensed Financial Planner with over two decades of experience in investment, insurance, and estate planning. Since year 2000, she has been guiding individuals and families towards financial stability. Hazel is passionate about integrating Catholic values into personal finance, helping others achieve their financial goals while living a life of generosity and trust in God's providence.

### BE OUR GUEST

# Why do we really serve?

## Unpacking ego, intention, and the call to ministry

Why do people offer to serve in Church ministries? And what do we really mean when we say, "I want to help"?

These questions deserve more than a cursory glance or a signature on a volunteer sign-up sheet. They invite us into an honest examination of our hearts — to interrogate not just what we do in church, but why we do it.

Across parishes, many of us teach catechism, sing in the choir, serve at the altar, manage events, or sit on parish councils. Our involvement might seem generous, even admirable. But left unexamined, our motives can drift from healthy zeal into something more self-serving.

Let's be honest: ego loves a place in ministry. And if we don't keep checking in with our reasons for serving, it's easy for our offerings to become entangled with pride, insecurity, or a desire for recognition — often without us even realising it.

### The pull of belonging vs the call to mercy

One of the most basic human needs is belonging — to be part of a group, to feel needed, to be seen. Church communities are, at their best, places where people find belonging and purpose. But when belonging becomes the primary motive for serving, it can quietly shift into a kind of spiritual transaction: "If I serve, I'll be accepted. If I show up, I'll be seen as a good Catholic."

Belonging isn't wrong. But it can blur into status-seeking, especially in church cultures where certain ministries (like music, liturgy

or leadership roles) carry more visibility. The risk is subtle: we may start confusing visibility with virtue. We might mistake proximity to leadership or the sanctuary as a sign of holiness, rather than recognising that true greatness is found in service, often the quiet, hidden kind.

### Ego checks: Power, praise and prestige

Ministry offers many opportunities to feed the ego. The thrill of being asked to lead, the affirmation of a job well done, the public gratitude after a successful event — these can feel good, even addictive.

But when praise becomes the fuel, we risk turning service into performance. The goal becomes approval rather than transformation — for the people we serve, and for ourselves. In these moments, we must ask: Am I serving to glorify God, or to spotlight myself?

The truth is, Church service can carry a kind of soft power. Titles like "choir director," "youth coordinator," or "ministry head" can become ego identifiers, not just functional roles. Without spiritual maturity, they become badges we wear, not crosses we carry.

### The seam between gift and grudge

Genuine service often looks like ordinary, even unappreciated, labour: setting up chairs, cleaning up messes, staying late when others leave early. It's in these small, thankless tasks that our motivations are most clearly revealed.

There's a telling difference between someone who says, "Whatever's needed, I'm here," and someone who says, "I'll do

it, but only if I can call the shots." When a person insists on control, or only steps up when there's praise to be had, it can expose the fine line between offering a gift and nursing a grudge when recognition is absent.

Ministry is not a stage for control or ego. It's a crucible where self-interest is tested and slowly refined — if we let it.

### Accountability: A path to maturity

One of the most overlooked aspects of healthy Church service is accountability — not in the punitive sense, but as a spiritual safeguard. It's easy to drift in our motivations when no one is asking us why we serve, or how we're growing through it.

We all need spiritual companions — mentors, leaders, friends — who help us reflect on our service with honesty. Are we still listening to the Holy Spirit? Are we open to feedback? Are we aware of the impact we're having on others?

A culture of reflection and mutual accountability helps service move from self-advancement to faithful obedience. It shifts the question from "How am I doing?" to "How is God working through me — and in spite of me?"

### Service as a crucible for humility

Service reveals. It shows us our limits — our time, energy, patience, and biases. It forces us to encounter people we wouldn't normally choose, to work under imperfect leaders, and to adjust our plans to others' needs.

This is not failure. It's formation.

True service forms us, not by inflating our

## ...The Church Mouse

sense of importance, but by exposing our blind spots and softening our hearts. When the "why" behind our service remains open to scrutiny, it becomes a pathway to humility, not a pedestal of self-worth.

### Returning to love

Ultimately, the question is not whether we began serving with perfect motives — few of us ever do. The more important question is whether our conduct and attitude in service consistently return us to love: love for God, love for neighbour, and love that doesn't count the cost to our ego.

The true test of ministry isn't how visible it is, or how much applause it draws. It's whether it leads us deeper into compassion, patience, mercy, and joy — whether it makes us more Christlike in the way we serve and live.

When love becomes our motive, even the smallest task becomes sacred. Even the least visible ministry becomes a grace.

So, the next time we say, "I want to help," let's pause. Let's examine what we mean. Let's allow the Spirit to purify that desire — until what's left is not performance or prestige, but a quiet, steady longing to love and serve, just as Christ did.

That, perhaps, is the beginning of real ministry.





Fr Ron Rolheiser

# The world will be saved by beauty



which beset us?

Here's Dostoevsky's algebra: In the face of brutality, what's needed is tenderness; in the face of hype and ideology, what's needed is truth; in the face of bitterness and curses, what's needed are graciousness and blessing; in the face of hatred and murder, what's needed are love and forgiveness; in the face of the kind of familiarity that breeds contempt, what's needed are awe and wonder; and in the face the ugliness and vulgarity that pervades our world and our evening news, what's needed is beauty.

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

In the movie *The English Patient*, there's a very heartwarming scene.

A number of people from various countries are thrown together by circumstance in an abandoned villa in post-war Italy. Among them are a young nurse, attending to an English pilot who's been badly burned in an air crash, and a young Asian man whose job is to find and defuse landmines. The young man and the nurse become friends and, one day, he announces he has a special surprise for her.

He takes her to an abandoned church in which he has set up a series of ropes and pulleys that will lift her to the ceiling where, hidden in darkness, are beautiful mosaics and wonderful works of art that cannot be seen from the floor. He gives her a torch as a light and pulls her up through a series of ropes so that she swings like an angel with wings, high above the floor and is able, with the help of her torch, to see beautiful masterpieces hidden in the dark.

For her, the experience is one of exhilaration; she has the sensation of flying and of seeing wonderful beauty all at the same time. When she's finally lowered back to the floor she's flushed with excitement and gratitude and covers the young man's face with kisses, saying over and over again: "Thank you, thank you, thank you for showing this to me!"

And from her expression, you see too, that she is expressing a double thanks:

"Thank you for showing me something that I could never have come to on my own and thank you for trusting me enough to think that I would understand this, for trusting that I would get it!"

There's a lesson here.

The Church needs to do for the world exactly what this young man did for his nurse friend; it needs to show the world where to look for a beauty it would not find on its own, a beauty that is hidden in darkness. And it needs to trust that people will "get it," will appreciate the richness of what they are being shown.

Where might the Church find such hidden beauty? In the deep rich wells of its own history, and in nature, in art, in science, in children, in the energy of the young, and in the wisdom of the old. There are treasures of beauty hidden everywhere. The Church's task is to point these out to the world. Why?

Because beauty has the power to touch and transform the soul, to instil wonder and gratitude in a way that few things have. Confucius understood this. That's why he suggested that beauty is the greatest of all teachers and why he based his philosophy of education on beauty. People can doubt almost anything, except beauty.

Why can't beauty be doubted? Because beauty is an attribute of God. Classical Christian philosophy and theology tell us that God has four transcendental prop-

erties, namely, God is "One, True, Good, and Beautiful." If this is true, then to be touched by beauty is to be touched by God; to admire beauty is to admire God; to be shown beauty in hidden places is to be shown God in hidden places; to be in awe of beauty is to be in awe of God; and to feel that awe is to feel a homesickness for heaven.

The renowned theologian Hans Urs Von Baltasar highlighted how beauty is a key component in how God speaks to us and how that should colour how we speak about God to the world.

However, we shouldn't be naïve in our understanding of this. Beauty isn't always pretty in the way that popular culture perceives it. Granted, beauty can be seen in the spectacular colours of a sunset, or in the smile and innocence of a child, or in the perfection of a Michelangelo sculpture, but it can also be seen in the wrinkles of an old woman and in the toothless smile of an old man.

God speaks through beauty and so must we. Moreover, we must believe enough in people's sensitivity and intelligence to trust that they, like the nurse in *The English Patient*, will appreciate what they are being shown.

In a famous line (often quoted by Dorothy Day) Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky writes: *The world will be saved by beauty*. What's the logic here? How might beauty cure the many ills

Promoting dialogue in polarised societies is complicated. You can't talk to others if you first deny them the right to listen. One of the most serious problems we face today is precisely this inability to hear different points of view and, from there, build a common understanding. We have grown accustomed to conversing only with those who think alike, to taking refuge in bubbles of shared affirmations that reaffirm our position and gradually transform the other into an adversary or enemy.

Community requires a conscious effort: analysing other perspectives, understanding other circumstances, recognising that the world isn't limited to our own eyes. That's what's been shattered. And rebuilding it requires determination and willpower; a desire to truly understand, not only from one's own perspective, but from a collective perspective. The richness of community doesn't exclude individual problems or differences; the good and the bad coexist within it, and there is ongoing work to develop ourselves as people. The difference is that individually, each person polishes their own rough edges, but no one is saved alone: in the community, this polishing is done together, through exchange, listening, and mutual learning. The wisdom of the collective will always be richer than that of the individual, because it combines experiences and nuances that improve judgment.

The synodal method fits into this logic. Traditionally used, it was revitalised with the Second Vatican Council, when Pope Francis convened a Synod on Synodality to journey together, to sit down and think together. It presupposes closeness,



## When listening becomes hope

communion, and participation. And it is a useful model not only for the Catholic Church, but for any space that requires dialogue, participation, and collaborative decisions. It involves listening first, participating and then dialoguing, discerning and assuming co-responsibility for agreements. This dynamic allows for building bridges, breaking down hierarchies, speaking horizontally between different social groups, empathetically understanding the circumstances of others, and forging ties between religious denominations or between the Church and society (which is all of us) on the basis of shared respect. By eliminating verticality, the real possibility of consensus opens up where everyone feels represented.

We communicate differently. Today, everything is shorter, more immediate:

short messages, images, seconds-long videos. We express ourselves differently: music, art, and the language of social media have captured these expressions, and they are no less beautiful or profound than the classics. They are different because we are different. The new unsettles us, it frightens us. But no one loves what they don't know. To love, you must first listen, observe, and draw closer. That is the attitude we need in the face of new ways of thinking and living: not that of someone who judges from afar, but that of someone who sits at the table, converses, asks questions, and learns.

The so-called "culture war" is perhaps the most ferocious expression of our polarisation: it turns differences into trenches and transfers everyday resentments into the realm of politics. Yet,

amidst all that noise, there are still Sunday dinner tables where a granddaughter, with blue dye, tattoos, and earrings, converses with her grandmother with wrinkled hands and a rosary on her fingers. They speak differently, they think differently, but they recognise and love each other.

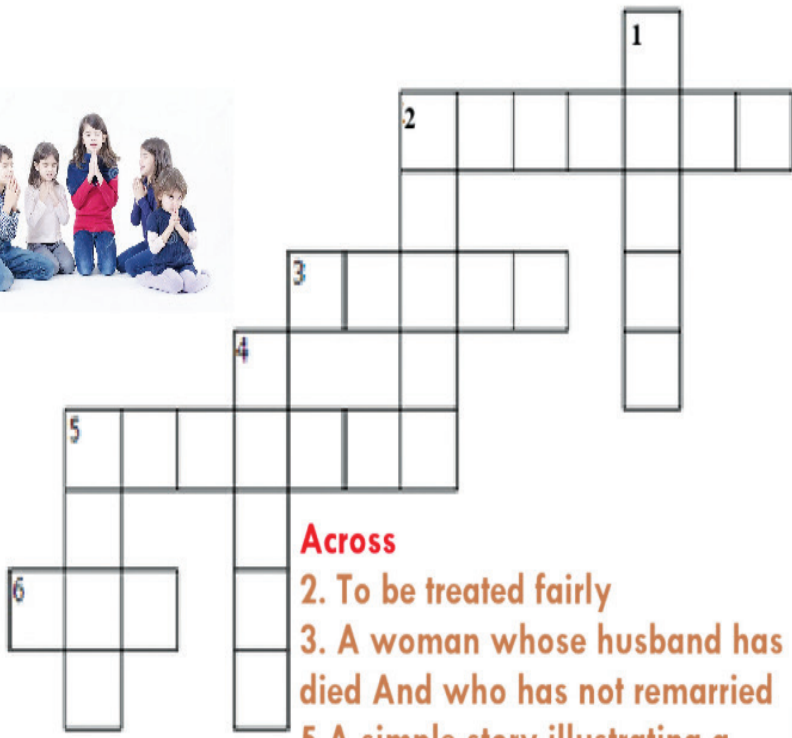
That small act of listening to each other, even if it hurts, is already a seed of peace. It reminds us that listening can become hope.

The current situation demands that we all strive more to listen than to be heard. In this effort, common ground can emerge to change a reality that is becoming increasingly evident: the fear of others because they think differently. Instead of inviting each other to reflect on whether we might be wrong, at least in part, we expel this difference from the public sphere, and in its extreme forms, even from physical existence. Reversing this process demands recognising that community life requires understanding others in their entirety. This can be the path to rebuilding dialogue, consensus, respect, listening, and integral development, both in individual and collective life. And it requires humility, because we too can be wrong.

In the midst of a divided world, Jesus surprised with phrases that dismantled the trenches. He once said: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:9). It is not just an invitation to listen with our ears, but with our hearts. Perhaps therein lies hope: daring to truly listen to others to discover together what we do not yet see. When listening becomes hope, polarisation ceases to be a destination and becomes the starting point of something new. **Marisol Pérez Tello, Exaudi**

# Little Catholics' corner

## Keep On Praying Crossword



**Across**

- 2. To be treated fairly
- 3. A woman whose husband has died And who has not remarried
- 5. A simple story illustrating a moral or religious lesson
- 6. The period from sunrise to sunset (light)

**Down**

- 1. The period between sunset and sunrise (darknes)
- 2. An official who hears and decides cases brought before a court of law
- 4. A belief that does not require proof
- 5. To speak to or make a request to God

Justice night pray widow  
Faith day judge parable

Dear children,

The Bible teaches us that, just as our parents want what is best for us and will give us what we ask for, God, our heavenly Father, also hears and answers our requests.

Sometimes we ask God for something one time and never mention it again.

Maybe that is our impatience showing. When we ask for something, we want God to say "yes," and we want Him to say it right now! Jesus said that we should always pray and not give up. Perhaps God just wants us to show that we are really serious about what we are asking of Him. Does this mean that if we keep asking for something over and over again that God will always give it to us?

No, but He loves us and wants what is best for us, and He will answer, "yes" if He can.

Let us pray to Jesus, to teach us to pray, to teach us to be patient and persistent in prayer.

If we desire good things, may the Holy Spirit remind us that we need to pray and pray again!

Love  
Aunty Eliz

## Word Search

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

UNJUST SHOW WIDOW JUSTICE LISTEN  
LORD FEAR JESUS REFUSED NIGHT TOWN  
CHOSEN DISCIPLES PARABLE BOTHER DAY  
JUDGE PERSISTENT PRAY

## Let's Colour



Keep on praying and never give up. (Luke 18:1-8)



# Go beyond your comfort zones and build peace



**VATICAN:** In his message for the 40th World Youth Day, Pope Leo XIV encouraged young people not to “follow those who use the words of faith to divide” but to work for reconciliation, “becoming active artisans of peace.”

The annual World Youth Day, celebrated by churches at the diocesan level, takes place on 23 November in preparation for the global gathering in Seoul in 2027.

Remarking on the theme of this observance - “You also are my witnesses, because you have been with me”, the Pope said as pilgrims of hope and by power of the Holy

Spirit we prepare ourselves to become courageous witnesses of Christ, and he focused on two aspects of witness: “our friendship with Jesus, which we receive from God as a gift, and our commitment to be builders of peace in society.”

#### Friends, therefore witnesses

Explaining that Christian witness arises from friendship with the Lord, who was crucified and rose for the salvation of all, the Pope said, “This witness is not to be confused with ideological propaganda, for it is an authentic principle of interior transformation and social awareness.”

Jesus, he continued, fully knows who we are, our hearts and our indignation in the

face of discrimination and injustice.

“He does not want us to be servants, nor ‘activists’ of a political party; he calls us to be with him as friends, so that our lives may be renewed.”

He added that “His example reminds us that true witnesses do not seek to occupy the centre stage, nor to bind their followers to themselves. True witnesses are humble and inwardly free, above all from themselves, that is, from the pretence of being the centre of attention. Therefore, they are free to listen, to understand, and also to speak the truth to everyone, even in the presence of those who are powerful.”

Thus, he added, true Christian witness is recognising and pointing to Jesus when he appears, as he is the only one who saves us.

To that end, Pope Leo said, “Pope Francis insisted so often that if we do not go beyond ourselves and our comfort zones, if we do not go to the poor and those who feel excluded from the Kingdom of God, we cannot encounter Christ and bear witness to him.”

#### Witnesses, therefore missionaries

The Holy Father then reminded young people to never forget that many of their peers “are exposed to violence, forced to use weapons, separated from their loved ones, and compelled to migrate or flee. Many lack education and other essential goods.”

But all of them, he said, “share with you the search for meaning and the insecurity that accompanies it, the discomfort of growing social and work pressures, the

difficulty of dealing with family crises, the painful feeling of a lack of opportunities, as well as the remorse for mistakes they have made.”

“You can stand alongside other young people, walk with them and show that God, in Jesus, has drawn close to each person,” he affirmed.

And he invited young Christians to continue to seek out Jesus’ friends and witnesses in the Bible who show us how they discovered the true meaning of life through their living relationship with Christ.

“Indeed, our deepest questions are not heard or answered by endlessly scrolling on our cell phones, which captures our attention but leaves us with tired minds and empty hearts,” he said, adding that “The fulfilment of our authentic desires always comes through going beyond ourselves.”

#### Fraternity as a bond of peace

Pope Leo urged young people to overcome indifference and spiritual laziness and make efforts to nurture bonds of friendship and fraternity, working together to build new living conditions for all.

“Do not follow those who use the words of faith to divide; instead, make plans to remove inequalities and reconcile divided and oppressed communities,” he said.

Dear young people, dear friends, the Pope concluded, “Let us listen to the voice of God within us and overcome our selfishness, becoming active artisans of peace.”

Linda Bordoni, Vatican News



Pilgrims from South Korea hold banners and flags promoting World Youth Day 2027 in Seoul after the closing Mass of the Jubilee of Youth in Rome’s Tor Vergata neighborhood, Aug 3, 2025. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

## Diocese youth celebrate Jubilee with faith, culture, and care for creation

INDONESIA: More than 170 young Catholics from across the Diocese of Ketapang gathered at St Peter and Paul Parish in Sungai Daka from Oct 3 to 5 for the Central Region Youth Jubilee, an event that blended faith formation, cultural tradition, and environmental action.

The celebration opened Friday with the sound of traditional gongs, the *pancung bambu muda* (young bamboo cutting) ritual, and the *topung tawar* blessing in Dayak tradition—symbols of welcome and thanksgiving that set a distinctly local tone for the gathering.

The three-day Jubilee, themed “Young People Walking with God, Proclaiming a Hope That Never Disappoints,” drew participants from five parishes: St Gabriel Sandai, Holy Cross Menyumbang, Sacred Heart of Jesus Randau, Holy Family Sepotong, and host parish St Peter and Paul Sungai Daka.

At the opening Mass, Fr Petrus Riyant, chair

of the diocesan Youth Commission (KOMKEP), urged participants to embody the spirit of “3B”—“Walking together, Praying together, and Serving together.”

“Be holy in life, smart in thought, and joyful in service,” he said, echoing the message of Ketapang Bishop Pius Riana Prapdi, who envisions “OMK JOSSS”—young Catholics who are Holy, Smart, and Joyful.

The following day was devoted to formation sessions and group activities led by Fr Riyant and the KOMKEP team.

In his presentation, Fr Riyant reminded participants that their contribution to the Church is immediate and indispensable. “Challenges and struggles will always exist, but those who rely on God will find strength in every step,” he said.

The day’s activities included team-building games designed to strengthen trust and coop-



Youth participants take part in a tree-planting activity during the Central Region Youth Jubilee in Sungai Daka, West Kalimantan. (Maria Rosa/Ketapang Diocese’s Youth Commission)

eration. Participants also received updates on upcoming national and international Catholic youth events, including Identity Identified, Pre-IYD 4, IYD 4 in Sorong, World Youth Day Korea, and KYD 4.

On Sunday, October 5, the Jubilee closed with a thanksgiving Mass and a Laudato Si’ environmental action. Participants planted trees

around the church grounds as a concrete expression of their faith and ecological commitment.

“Planting a tree means planting hope,” said one youth from St. Gabriel Parish, Sandai. “We want to leave a small mark of love for our Earth and our Church.” Maria Rosa, LiCAS News

# YOUNG PEOPLE RESPOND TO 'COME AND SEE'



## Youth Encounter programme

MELAKA: Forty-two youths from the Church of St Theresa and other parishes attended the Youth Encounter (YE) programme at Good Shepherd Seminary from September 13-16.

The four-day, three-night live-in programme invited participants to “come and see” (John 1:38-39) and to search for deeper meaning in life through the Christian vision. First introduced in the Malacca Johore diocese by the late Fr Ignatius Huan more than 30 years ago, the YE continues to form and renew young people today.

The YE was organised by the parish youth group, led by spiritual director, Fr Martinian Lee, together with a team of facilitators and outreach team. The weekend was filled with Scripture reflections, small-group sharing, community-centred activities, music, prayer, and abundant affirmation and love.

Through this encounter, participants learned to meet God in a personal way, to face the truth about themselves without fear, and to recognise the people around them as gifts. Many described the YE as a life-giving opportunity to grow in freedom and faith and to return to their parishes ready to serve.

### Testimonies from the participants:

The Youth Encounter has left me in awe with the Bible and how just a single story can imply so much. I have learned how deep Jesus' love really is as He forgives the Simon in me and embraces my Peter. **Ethan**

My favourite part of the camp was the talent night. I really enjoyed practising skits with my group mates, and the performances from other groups were both hilarious and creative. The whole night was filled with laughter and unforgettable memories. **Cindy**

The Youth Encounter was more than just a camp, it was a rebirth where I really felt God's presence. I came here feeling lost and depersonalised, not expecting much. But I left feeling forgiven, refreshed and with a new sense of hope and purpose in my life. **Jayden**



YE helped me make many new friends, and it gave me the experience of being part of a community. It brought me closer to God in ways I never expected. **Mark**

I really enjoyed the Paschal meal during YE Camp because I felt the most healing in that moment. I also really loved the Circle of Love, my group was affirming me and it felt so special. The skits were really meaningful too, and the testimony by the team was so touching. And of course, I loved the sports. That part was so fun! Overall, it was such a meaningful

experience, and I'm really grateful for it. **Melinda**

For me, my favourite part was definitely the Agape meal and desert experience. To have my feet washed and kissed and to do the same for others, it was such a beautiful experience and I have never ever cried that much in my life. Jesus was truly walking with me as I encountered Him at this camp. **Prashant**

The Youth Encounter Camp was a very touching and interesting experience. I

learned a lot of things about God, such as God has always a plan for us and that God will always welcome those who come to him even if they are sinners. The most memorable experience from the YE programme was the Talent Night which was very fun and the Agape Meal which was very unforgettable. **David**

For me, the YE camp was an eye-opening experience. I learned to be a more affirming person and learned more about God's love. I also gained more friends, more confidence and got encouraged to be more active in the church. **Alessandra**

Throughout this YE, I had a great fellowship with my friends and created amazing memories in this YE camp. From this camp, I have learned the importance of affirmation and being open during conversations. **Ivan**

This was a very meaningful camp and I learned more about God's love for me. I learned how to be a humbler and affirming person to the people around me. The camp was a wonderful. **Cassandra**

## From Awareness to Action:

# Long Lama Parish responds to Laudato Si'

LONG LAMA, Miri: Blessed Sacrament Church recently organised a *Laudato Si'* workshop. Invited by the parish rector, Fr Sylvester Ngau, four members of the Creation Justice Commission of Miri Diocese made the over two-hour road trip from Miri to Long Lama to run the workshop. The workshop brought together approximately 60 participants comprising secondary school students and teachers from the nearby SMK Long Lama and other parishioners.

The aim of the workshop was to create awareness of our current Climate Crisis and of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which calls all people to care for our Common Home. The event featured a series of talks and group activities to cultivate an understanding of the current climate crisis. A summary of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, followed by topics such as the Church's response, the deadly impact of plastic pollution and the 7R's solutions towards decarbonisa-

tion were shared. Participants then had the opportunity to present their response in the form of practical action plans which they can implement to transform their parish into an ecological parish to Fr Sylvester Ngau.

Evening sessions included a Reconciliation with Creation Prayer ritual, during which many participants shared their personal reflections. Some shared how they came to realise that they were, in various ways, also responsible for the destruction of our Common Home and the suffering of God's creatures on an exploited earth. This proved to be a powerful moment of awareness and spiritual ecological conversion. A participant also shared that, among all the prayer sessions he has ever attended, this was the first time he had felt a real connection to the sufferings of God's creation caused by humankind's failure to protect our Common Home.

The workshop concluded on Sunday with a home composting, offering participants prac-



Students brainstorming their Action Plan to decarbonise.

tical skills on how to repurpose their food scraps and kitchen wastes into organic fertiliser for the garden.

Through the engaging talks, reflective prayers and hands-on activities, this workshop helped instil a stronger sense of ecological responsibility rooted in our Christian faith. Such *Laudato Si'* workshops conducted

by Miri Creation Justice Commission are one of the ecological education avenues for the diocese. This supports the journey of the Diocese of Miri towards becoming an Ecological Diocese in perpetuity. We look forward to the next *Laudato Si'* workshops in Bintulu, Limbang and Lapok parishes before the year ends. **Roselyn Rigit**



(LiCAS News photo/Thailand Development Research Institute)

# Thailand mourns Dr Ammar Siamwalla, an economist of rare integrity

He later earned a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of London and a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

A pioneer of Thai economic thought, Ammar joined TDRI at its founding in the early 1980s, later serving as president from 1990 to 1995. His groundbreaking work on agricultural economics, poverty, and rural development shaped decades of policy — always with a critical eye on how decisions affected the most vulnerable.

His professional life was defined by intellectual rigor, moral integrity, and fearless independence — qualities that made him both a trusted public voice and a relentless critic of political and corporate corruption. This commitment to truth and justice is precisely why his passing is being noted by the Catholic community.

### An example of integrity in public life

Tributes poured in from across sectors, including one from the Church. Archbishop Francis Xavier Vira Arpondratana of Bangkok told LiCAS News that while he had not known Ammar personally, he deeply admired his intellectual honesty and openness.

“What he had been doing all his life was in line with the synodality of the Catholic Church,” Archbishop Vira said. “He always listened to differing views and was never hesitant to revise his own beliefs when presented with sound arguments. His life offers a powerful example of integrity that is so rare in our society today.”

TDRI researchers echoed this sentiment, highlighting his moral clarity. Dr Somchai Jitsuchon, TDRI’s research director for inclusive development, recalled that Ammar once described another revered economist, Dr Puey Ungphakorn, as “a straight man in a

crooked country.” Somchai said the same words now fittingly describe Ammar himself.

“He was fearless and free-spirited, never afraid to question anything,” Dr Somchai said. “He was also one of Thailand’s earliest inclusive economists, deeply concerned about the lives of ordinary people.”

His colleagues noted that his vast knowledge was never used for personal gain.

“Ammar was a very intelligent man with a high academic aptitude ... but he never used that knowledge to seek power or money for personal gain,” praised Dr Somkiat Tangkitvanich, the incumbent TDRI president.

### A legacy that transcends faith

Dr Ammar’s children, in a family statement, affirmed that their father lived the values he preached:

“He taught us integrity and empathy through his actions. We saw how he stood his ground against politicians, fought for the disadvantaged, and spoke out with wit and courage when policies failed the people.”

His independence often placed him at odds with political powers, but it also earned him enduring respect across ideological divides. His steadfast advocacy for evidence-based policymaking and economic justice — principles that resonate deeply with Catholic Social Teaching on human dignity and the preferential option for the poor — leaves a lasting legacy.

The life of Dr Ammar Siamwalla, marked by intellectual courage and profound commitment to the public good, offers a compelling reminder that integrity and faith in the service of others are virtues that transcend religious boundaries and should be celebrated by all. **Chainarong Monthienvichienchai, LiCAS News**

THAILAND: Thailand is mourning the loss of one of its most respected and influential economists, Dr Ammar Siamwalla, who passed away Saturday, Oct 4, at the age of 86. While Dr Ammar was a devout Muslim, his life and work were widely celebrated for rare moral courage and dedication to the common good — values that stand as a powerful witness to the core teachings of the Catholic Church.

The Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), the nation’s top think tank championing long-term economic and social development, announced the passing of its founding member, revered researcher, and former president.

“Ammar was the spirit, the beloved mentor, and the most respected figure of TDRI,” the institute said in its tribute, inviting the public to commemorate his lifelong dedication to academic excellence and public service.

**A life aligned with Catholic values**  
Dr Ammar’s education spanned institutions with deep ties to Catholic and Christian traditions. He attended Assumption College in Bangkok before completing secondary studies at St Paul’s School in Darjeeling, India.

## Mexican priest killed in cartel-ravaged Guerrero state

MEXICO: The body of Father Bertoldo Pantaleón Estrada, *pic*, was found on Oct 6. The Mexican priest had been reported missing on Oct 4, in the state of Guerrero.

The Mexican Episcopal Conference (CEM) and the Diocese of Chilpancingo-Chilapa confirmed that, according to authorities, the priest’s remains were found. Pantaleón Estrada was the parish priest in the town of Mezcala, located in the southeast of the country.

So far, there are no details regarding the cause of death. The Guerrero state attorney general’s office reported that it has launched an investigation to “clarify what happened.”

In a statement, the bishop of Chilpancingo-Chilapa, José de Jesús González Hernández, asked the authorities to “help us determine the responsibility of those involved in this unfortunate event.”

At the same time, he stated that “as bishop, and on behalf of the entire diocesan community, I forgive those directly involved for these acts, leaving the administration of justice to God.”



González Hernández also called for “the conversion of our hearts” and asked God that the entire population may

continue “walking the path of peace and in favor of life.”

### Violence against the Catholic Church in Mexico

In their statement, the Mexican bishops thanked God “for the priestly ministry of Father Bertoldo, for his generous dedication to the service of the Gospel and the Church, especially among the communities entrusted to him.”

They also lamented that the acts of violence have once again plunged the Catholic community into mourning.

This incident occurs almost a year after the death of Father Marcelo Pérez of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas, who was murdered after celebrating Mass.

According to the Catholic Multimedia Center, which tracks attacks against the clergy, one cardinal and approximately 60 priests have been murdered since 1990. Since 2018 alone, the organization reports 12 murders of priests; 14 attacks on priests and bishops; a weekly average of 26 churches attacked, desecrated, or

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**JOSEPH FRANCIS**  
19th October 1998

**27 Years in Our Hearts  
Eternal Rest in His Arms**

Wisdom 3:1

*But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.*

*Your smile, your simplicity, your kindness — forever remembered with gratitude and love in the hearts of your family*

### Prayer to the Blessed Virgin (never known to fail)

*Oh! Most beautiful flower of mount Carmel, fruitful and fine splendour of heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin assist me in this necessity, (make your request)*

*Oh! Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein, that you are my mother. Oh! Holy Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, I humbly beseech you, from the bottom of my heart to succour me in this my necessity (make your request)*

*There is none Dear Mother that can withstand thy Power.*

*Oh! Mary conceived without sin pray for us who have recourse to thee (thrice Hail Mary) Thank you Dear Mother, for your mercy towards us..... to me and mine.*

### 15th Anniversary In Loving Memory of our beloved Mum



**MARY NEVIS RAJ**  
Gift from God:  
07-07-1932

Returned to the Lord:  
18-10-2010

Forever cherished and loved by Children, daughter-in-law, grand-daughter and loved ones.

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*This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.*

Psalm 119:50

## Message for the Feast of Deepavali 2025

# Hindus and Christians: Building world peace through dialogue and collaboration in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate*

Dear Friends,

The Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue is pleased to offer its warmest greetings and best wishes to you, as you celebrate Deepavali on October 20 this year. May this festival of lights brighten your lives and bring happiness, unity and peace to your families and communities!

The eighth day after Deepavali this year will mark the sixtieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* (October 28, 1965), the Catholic Church's landmark document that encouraged Catholics around the world to engage in dialogue and collaboration with people of other religious traditions. It urged all to "recognise, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values" found among them (NA 2) in the service of promoting peace.

Over the past six decades, this historic initiative of inter-religious dialogue has evolved into a global project, generously supported and championed by people of diverse religious beliefs and non-beliefs alike, thereby making a significant contribution to world peace. This very message is itself a fruit of that noble vision.

On this diamond jubilee, *Nostra Aetate* calls us to renew our commitment to promoting interreligious dialogue as a path to peace. During this festive season, we invite you to join us in reflecting on how Christians and Hindus, together with people of all faiths and goodwill, can strengthen our shared efforts for peace through dialogue and collaboration in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate*.

Such a spirit is rooted in "promoting unity and love among people, indeed among nations" by focusing on "what peo-

ple have in common and what draws them to fellowship" (NA 1). It calls us to reject "nothing that is true and holy" in other religions and to uphold "with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings" which "reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all people" (NA 2). It inspires a firm resolve "to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all humanity social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom" (NA 3). While much progress has been made since *Nostra Aetate*, much more has to be done.

In today's world, where mistrust, polarization, tensions and divisions are on the rise, interreligious dialogue is more necessary than ever. It must continue to sow seeds of unity and harmony, becoming a beacon of hope for all. Interreligious understanding and collaboration must find a place in our daily lives and become a natural way of living together.

Pope Leo XIV has called upon all people to "build bridges through dialogue and encounter, joining together as one people" (*Urbi et Orbi*, May 8, 2025). He reminds us that fostering a culture of dialogue and collaboration for peace is "a task entrusted to all, believers and non-believers alike, who must advance it through reflection and a praxis inspired by the dignity of the person and the common good" (Address to the Movements and Associations of the "Arena of Peace" Verona, May 30, 2025). Only by working together can we secure and sustain a peace founded on truth, justice, love and freedom (cf. John Paul II, Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2003).

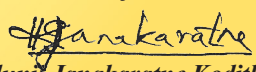
The family, as the primary place of education in life and faith, has a preeminent role in nurturing these values. Religious traditions also have a crucial responsibility in foster-

ing peace, with religious leaders bearing the moral duty to lead by example – encouraging their followers to respect diversity and to build bridges of friendship and fraternity. Educational institutions and the media likewise play essential roles in shaping hearts and minds towards peaceful coexistence. In this way, interreligious dialogue and collaboration can and must be embraced as indispensable tools for cultivating a culture of peace; they should grow into a powerful, dynamic movement dedicated to building and defending peace at all times.

As believers rooted in our respective faith traditions, and as people united by shared values and a common concern for peace, may we – Hindus and Christians, together with those of other religions and all people of goodwill – join hands in both small and great ways to nurture peace in our homes, communities and societies. May we strive to build world peace by fostering "a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard" (Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, February 4, 2019).

We wish you all a Happy Deepavali!

  
Cardinal George Jacob Koovakad  
Prefect

  
Msgr Indunil Janakarathne Kodithuwakku  
Kankanamalage  
Secretary

## Thousands of consecrated men and women gather in Rome for Jubilee



Pope Leo XIV greets two women during Mass in St Peter's Square at the Vatican Oct 9, 2025, as part of the Jubilee of Consecrated Life. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

VATICAN: Over 16,000 consecrated men and women from nearly 100 countries — including large delegations from across Asia, gathered in Rome for the Jubilee of Consecrated Life, held from October 8 to 12.

Organised by the Dicastery for Evangelisation and the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, the Jubilee brought together religious men and women, monastics, contemplatives, members of secular institutes, the Ordo virginum, hermits, and representatives of new forms of consecrated life for a week of prayer, reflection, and dialogue.

Among the countries represented, the Philippines, India, South Korea, and Indonesia sent particularly strong contingents, reflecting the vibrant and growing presence of consecrated life in Asia, where religious communities play a vital role in evangelisation, education, healthcare, and social outreach.

The celebrations began on Wednesday, Oct 8, with personal pilgrimages to the Holy Doors in Rome, followed by a prayer vigil in St Peter's Basilica, presided over by Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime, SDB.

On Thursday, Oct 9, Pope Leo XIV presided over a Mass in St Peter's Square, uniting thousands of consecrated persons in a shared moment of prayer and renewal of mission. That evening, participants joined local communities in "Dialogues with the City" — public events held in three Roman squares focusing on care for the marginalised, environmental protection, and universal fraternity. These themes strongly

resonate with many Asian religious communities engaged in social and pastoral ministries.

From Oct 9 to 11, around 4,000 registered participants took part in thematic reflection sessions organised according to their form of consecrated life. These were held in various venues, including Paul VI Hall, the Pontifical Urbaniana University, and the Jesuit Curia.

The programme featured days dedicated to Hope (Oct 10) and Peace (Oct 11), with key interventions by Fr Giacomo Costa, SJ, and Sr Teresa Maya, CCVI, as well as workshops on conflict mediation led by Fr David McCallum, SJ.

Multilingual evening prayers, including an English-language service at San Silvestro Church, provided participants, particularly those from Asia, the opportunity to enter deeply into the Jubilee's spiritual atmosphere.

The celebrations concluded on Sunday, Oct 12, with a Jubilee Mass of Marian Spirituality in St Peter's Square, drawing all pilgrims together in a powerful moment of communion and thanksgiving.

Throughout the jubilee, Asian religious communities played a prominent role in liturgies, workshops, and testimonies, bearing witness to their call as "missionaries of hope" in contexts marked by cultural diversity, creativity, and missionary dynamism.

The Jubilee of Consecrated Life forms part of the wider Jubilee Year 2025 celebrations, renewing the joy, witness, and missionary zeal of consecrated persons throughout the world. **RVA News**