The Catholic Weekly
# HERALD

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## Mission Statement

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

**Because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.**

***1 Thessalonians 1:5-6***



**Young priests celebrate, listen and walk together**

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**New phase to preserve Pagar Tras' legacy of faith**

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**A beacon of hope on two wheels**

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# Church must reach out to FAMILIES



**VATICAN: The Church has been urged to reach out to families who identify as Catholics but feel parish life is reserved for people with money, education, or social standing.**

Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David, Bishop of Kalookan in the Philippines, told a Vatican gathering that encounters with such families had changed his diocese's approach to mission.

The meeting, *Ten Years After Amoris Laetitia: Proclaiming the Gospel with Families Today*, concluded at the Vatican on October 14. Convened by Pope Leo XIV, the week-long gathering marked the tenth anniversary of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on love in the family.

Heads of Eastern Catholic Churches, presidents of bishops' conferences, married couples and experts examined how the document has shaped pastoral care and how the Church can better support families and involve them in its mission today.

Cardinal David recalled a priest initially irritated by children spending long hours on the streets. Visiting their homes revealed a different picture: one father drove a jeepney, a form of public transport, all day because his earnings barely kept the family fed.

Through Mission Stations in poor neighbourhoods parishes barely reached, missionaries visited homes and listened. Families bereaved by killings during the campaign against illegal drugs found companionship and mutual support.

Widows, young people, recovering addicts and families who once received assistance gradually became pastoral leaders and companions to others.

The experience illustrated a central concern of the meeting: recognising families as participants in the Church's mission, with gifts and experience to contribute.

Cardinal Protase Rugambwa of Tanzania described a similar development through Small Christian Communities in East Africa, established in the region from the 1970s.

These communities helped people know one another, plan together and take responsibility for parish life. Families became involved in ministries serving young people, promoting health and supporting women's development.

He also asked whether couples and families were being given a more active role in the formation of seminarians, deacons and pastoral workers. Their experience of marriage, parenthood and social challenges could help those preparing to accompany them understand family life more closely.

French participant Véronique Lonchamp described initiatives offering families accessible places of welcome and support.

Diocesan Family Houses provided spaces for listening and accompaniment, while programmes using remote formats helped support young couples and parents in rural areas. Couples also contributed to diocesan guidelines for accompanying separated, divorced and remarried people.

She highlighted another missionary dimension: faith does not always pass only from parents to children. The journey of a child, adolescent or adult preparing for baptism can help other relatives rediscover Christianity. Memories of a grandparent's faith can also inspire a couple's desire for marriage in the Church.

Families' witness extends into schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods, she said, including settings where the Church has little direct presence. Their experience should also help shape the Church's pastoral approach.



(Unsplash photo)

Pope Leo's opening address similarly recognised families' missionary contribution through fidelity, forgiveness, educating children, and caring for elderly and vulnerable people. He stressed that pastors have much to learn from families, including those experiencing loneliness, difficulties or apparent failure.

Practical support remained part of the discussions. At the concluding press conference, Fr Giacomo Costa SJ, a consultor of the General Secretariat of the Synod who coordinated the meeting's methodology, reported calls for timely spiritual and practical assistance in situations of domestic violence and abuse, especially to protect children and vulnerable people.

Participants also emphasised the need to reduce the stigma attached to seeking help.

In his closing letter, Pope Leo said he would review the meeting's discussions and offer his reflections in due course. He expressed his hope that families would participate actively in local Churches and help discern the way ahead.

For Cardinal David, outreach meant building a community around families.

"A fragile family needs more than pastoral advice. It needs a community that can help carry what it can no longer carry alone," he said. **Adapted from Vatican News reports and official meeting texts.**

***• See also page 10***

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

# Can families finally breathe easier?

For many Malaysian families, the most important calculation happens at the kitchen table. After groceries, rent, transport and school expenses, how much remains? Can anything be saved? What happens if someone falls ill? A household may appear to be managing, yet one unexpected bill can undo weeks of careful budgeting.

Budget 2027, presented in the *Dewan Rakyat* on October 9, 2026, by Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, must prove its worth in these everyday realities. Its promises should be felt in meals families can afford, wages that provide security, and care that does not exhaust those who give it. Economic progress becomes meaningful when people can face tomorrow with greater confidence.

The proposed increase in *Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah* (STR) and *Sumbangan Asas Rahmah* (SAR) assistance to RM16 billion deserves a welcome. For people counting every ringgit, assistance makes a difference. We should never dismiss such support as insignificant simply because we ourselves can manage without it.

Yet when every ringgit is already spoken for, saving becomes a privilege. Advice to prepare for emergencies means little to a household that cannot put anything aside. Our concern for the poor must include people who work faithfully every day and still cannot meet their families' basic needs. Their struggle may be hidden behind clean clothes, steady employment and a reassuring smile.

The proposed increase in the minimum wage from RM1,700 to RM2,000, beginning in June 2027, is therefore welcome. However, the exemption for micro, small and medium enterprises, with annual sales below RM50 million, raises an important question: how will workers in these businesses share in the promise of better wages?

Smaller employers face real difficulties. Higher operating costs and limited cash reserves can threaten their survival. A business that closes cannot provide livelihoods. These concerns deserve a fair hearing especially when an enterprise supports both its owner's family and its employees'.

The exemption nevertheless needs clear criteria, effective monitoring and a credible path towards improved pay. Workers' rent, groceries and transport do not become cheaper because they work for a smaller employer. Business support should help employers become more productive and better able to reward their workers. Breathing space for employers must eventually create breathing space for employees too.

The Budget's attention to ageing and care is also encouraging. Increased assistance for older people, training for care workers and a proposed Senior Citizens Bill recognise pressing responsibilities. These measures must translate into services people can afford, reach and trust.

Behind the language of a "care economy" are personal realities: the daughter balancing employment with caring for an elderly parent, the spouse accompanying a chronically ill partner to appointments, and the family supporting a person with disabilities. When someone reduces working hours or leaves employment to provide care, the cost continues through lost income and smaller retirement savings.

The proposed expansion of tax relief for parental and grandparental care can help eligible taxpayers. But what reaches families whose incomes are too low to benefit substantially? Affordable community care, respite services and practical assistance deserve sustained attention. Love may motivate a caregiver, but love alone cannot pay every bill or prevent exhaustion.

Catholic social teaching asks us to uphold human dignity, serve the common good and give particular attention to the poor. A person's worth does not depend on productivity or earning power. Older people, persons with disabilities and those who cannot work retain the same claim to respect and participation.

Delivery is therefore a moral concern. Eligibility rules should be understandable, applications manageable and avenues for appeal available. Public reporting should show whether programmes reach their intended recipients. Every ringgit lost through corruption or waste diminishes the resources available for someone else's needs.

The Church, too, must examine how closely it listens. Do our parish communities notice those who quietly stop attending activities because transport costs money, or those who always say they are "managing"? Basic Ecclesial Communities can make discreet visits and create opportunities for people to seek help without embarrassment.

Parishes and charitable organisations can help families apply for assistance, arrange transport to medical appointments and connect caregivers with support. Partnerships with qualified professionals and local agencies can provide referrals for debt advice, employment assistance and care services. Parish activities should remain accessible to those who cannot afford fees or contributions.

That concern must extend to the Church's own employees. Are parish and diocesan office staff, pastoral workers and other employees receiving fair and adequate wages? Are cleaners, gardeners and security personnel also paid fairly and treated with dignity, including those engaged through contractors?

Church employers should review pay regularly and consider whether employees can meet basic needs. Staff facing illness, financial emergencies or caregiving pressures need clear avenues for confidential assistance and appropriate flexibility in working arrangements and leave. Limited budgets deserve honest discussion, but employees' dedication to the Church should never be used to justify inadequate pay.

Our advocacy gains credibility when we practise the justice we call for. When a worker can save a little, a caregiver can rest, and an older person can obtain dependable support, national progress becomes tangible. Budget 2027 offers grounds for hope. Can families finally breathe easier? The answer must emerge from their lives — including the lives of those who work within our own Church.

*Patricia Pereira*

# Love is seen in what we do

Reflecting on our **Sunday Readings** with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

**30th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)**

***Readings: Exodus 22:20-26;***
***1 Thessalonians 1:5-10;***
***Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40***

I think people learn more from what others do than from what they say. However, I do agree that a motivational speech can lift us up, but a disastrous speech can also put us down. Still, I will say that the habits that we pick up, good or bad, come from observing those around us, especially those closest to us. A good example would be celebrities, singers, and so-called 'influencers'. Notice that when a group or person becomes popular, many people will start to follow the way they act or dress. A personal example certainly has more influence than words.

In today's second reading to the Thessalonians, St Paul tells us to observe the sort of life that they led and to become imitators of this life. St Paul and his companions lived a life that was strictly according to the values of the Gospel, even working on their own without relying on the charity of others. This is a good example of walking the talk since St Paul always urged the believers to live upright lives and to work for their livelihood. This is exactly the kind of example that is more effective in spreading the faith. When we live our lives in right conduct, our very lives become a lesson in themselves. As St Paul continues to tell us, the word will spread because of the examples that we set.

Whatever our status, one thing is clear – when our actions do not match our words, people will lose confidence in us. We expect everyone to lead by example and not only by words, but do we behave in the same way? Very often, we put expectations on others but never put it on ourselves. In other words, we never look at ourselves in the mirror and admit that we too do not always lead by example.

In today's Gospel, the Pharisees asked Jesus, which is the greatest commandment, thinking that He would tell them about the letter of the Law. But Jesus spelt out just two commandments, which is also derived from the Ten Commandments — to love our neighbour as ourselves. I think it's fair to say that we often focus on the part of loving our neighbour, but we overlook the part of loving them as ourselves. Through my observation, many people become distressed when they are not able to love their neighbour. We forget that love of ourselves is equally important.

This theme of self-love can be widely found in web dramas originating from China. Call it whatever you want, but I find that these dramas are now trying their best to reintroduce moral values back into society. With the advancement in technology, we are slowly losing ourselves. The advancement of AI has brought about the dehumanisation of the human person, reducing even our thought and creative process. When this happens, we no longer see ourselves as capable, and we will most likely begin to devalue ourselves.

In the dramas that I spoke about, there is usually a protagonist, whether male or female, who will continue to give and give to their family, thinking that it is their duty and neglecting themselves. Then one day they experience an awakening and realise that they have neglected themselves. This is the kind of awakening that we all need. Self-love is not the same as selfishness. Although many people see it that way, self-love is about caring and loving oneself before we love others. The love of others draws its source from self-love.

In *Deus Caritas Est,* Pope Benedict XVI tells us that since we are made in the image and likeness of God, who is love, we too are an image of love and can receive love from God. This love from God enables us to love ourselves because God's love is one that builds and nurtures and not tears and destroys. When we accept and embrace this love, we see ourselves as a child of God, and we will be able to use this love to love others. Human love is limited by our prejudices and conditions, but God's love is unconditional. It is only when we have this love within us that we can truly love others as ourselves.

When we love others without pretence, others will be able to see the example that we set and, hopefully, it can influence others to do the same. That is the ideal that we are working towards. Granted, we may not be successful, but the important thing is the faithfulness to this call to love. Love is not merely expressed in words but primarily in action, and we can see this very clearly in the first reading. We can always give without loving, but we can never love without giving.

## Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese

### Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

**October / November**

| | |
|---|---|
| 26/10 | Meeting – Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Core Team |
| 27/10 | Meeting – College of Consultors |
| 27/10 | Meeting – AOHD Board |
| 27/10 | Meeting (Online) – Council of Priests |
| 28/10 | Clergy Monthly Recollection |
| 29/10 | Meeting – Archdiocesan Finance |
| 2/11 | All Soul's Day Mass & Blessing – Cheras Cemetery |
| 8/11 | 50th Anniversary Celebration of Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu |

## Penang Diocese

### Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

**October / November**

| | |
|---|---|
| 26/10 | Meeting – Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Core Team |
| 27/10-1/11 | Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference – Office of Social Communications Bishops Meet & 450th Anniversary of Evangelisation of Macau |

## Malacca Johore Diocese

### Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

**October / November**

| | |
|---|---|
| 20-21/10 | Clergy Monthly Recollection – Good Shepherd Catholic Seminary, Melaka |
| 20/10 | Diaconate Ordination – Gabriel Puvaneswaran Pillai, Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak |
| 24/10 | Mass – 100th Anniversary, Church of St Simon, Labis |
| 25/10 | Confirmation – Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak |
| 26/10 | Meeting – Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Core Team |
| 30/10 | 40th Anniversary of the World Day of Prayer for Peace (Assisi 1986-2026) – Church of St Joseph, Plentong |
| 31/10 | Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Andrew, Muar |
| 1/11 | Confirmation – Church of St Andrew, Muar |
| 2/11 | Mass – All Souls' Day at Catholic Cemetery, Ulu Tiram |
| 6-9/11 | INE-Catholic Leaders Evangelisation Seminar – MAJODI Centre |
| 9-14/11 | South Korea Pilgrimage – Footprints of the Korean Martyrs |

# RM80 million worship allocation welcomed

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) has welcomed the increased allocation for non-Muslim houses of worship under Budget 2027, while calling for a transparent, equitable and accessible disbursement process.

In a statement dated October 12, the council described the increase as a positive and meaningful step towards ensuring safe, conducive and dignified environments for religious practice.

Budget 2027 provides RM80 million for the maintenance of registered non-Muslim houses of worship, as announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim when tabling the Budget on October 9.

MCCBCHST expressed appreciation to the government, particularly Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming, for recognising the needs of non-Muslim religious communities and supporting the preservation and upkeep of their places of worship.

"We hope this increased allocation will be accompanied by a transparent, equitable and accessible disbursement process," the council said.



*Places of worship in Malaysia.*

It stressed that houses of worship throughout the country should be able to benefit, particularly those with limited financial resources.

Many non-Muslim houses of worship depend largely on donations and contributions from well-wishers to sustain their operations, the council noted. Smaller communities often struggle to raise sufficient funds for essential maintenance and repairs.

MCCBCHST also called for further increases in future budgets, emphasising that the upkeep and improvement of religious facilities require sustained financial support.

Continued government assistance, it said, is crucial to helping these places remain safe, well-maintained and suitable for the communities they serve.

## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #291



**Welcome, dear friends,**

Most of us are familiar with personal conversion. **Pope St John Paul II**, in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, introduced communitarian and ecclesial conversions.

Later, the late **Pope Francis** added in ecological conversion. It calls for conversion — a renewed desire to live simply, gratefully and responsibly; to perform small acts of care, reducing waste, planting a tree, conserving water and supporting ecological initiatives.

The **International Theological Commission** defined it simply as "sin against Creation is sin against the Creator". Our journey is a constant process of conversions, stripping away to let our goodness emerge within.

**Local Takes! Typically Malaysian Quirks!**

Some say: ***Things are falling apart*** in our country — from the FAM to MACC, from AirAsia to race relations, from East-West Malaysia relations to the royal house of N9.

Others say: ***Public schools*** have become crime scenes, nurseries of polarisation and discrimination, and factories churning out an unthinking and unqualified generation.

The ***streetwise*** notice the funny: The *kaypoh* or busybodies culture at traffic accidents — not to help but to look, take photos or note car plate numbers.

The unusual ways the elderly are addressed — the shopkeepers call them ***"boss or tauke"***, while they are ***"aunty or uncle"*** to the public.

The ***"Sudah makan?"*** sparks conversations or thaws coldness. Malaysians will always baffle foreigners.

**Reading the Signs: Walking the Extra Mile**

***Pope Leo's Daily Guide to Moral Courage and Active Charity:***

1. *Draw close to those alone:* Visit the isolated, listen without distraction.
2. *Support those who are weary:* Alleviate the burdens of the tired and overwhelmed.
3. *Seek out those who have drifted away:* Reconnect with those estranged or marginalised.
4. *Forgive. Restart. Engage in Dialogue:* Choose reconciliation over resentment. (Do good when it costs)

***Pope Leo, on the 100th World Mission Sunday*** recalled: Evangelisation is always a work of love and invites the faithful to support mission through prayer, witness and generosity. A pastoral question emerges: Does my parish show a faith that works, a love that serves, and a hope that endures?

**Thought for the Week: The Hostile Mountain**

The mountain people of the Andes invaded the lowlanders; plundered them and kidnapped an infant.

Not knowing the mountains, the terrain, nor the trails familiar to the mountain people, the lowlanders sent their best fighters to save the baby.

The men tried many ways to climb the mountain. But they could only manage a few hundred feet. Feeling hopeless and helpless, the lowlanders decided that it was a lost cause, and prepared for the return journey.

That's when they saw the baby's mother walking towards them, coming down the "impossible" mountain. And then they saw, strapped to her back, the kidnapped baby. The fighters wondered: "How could that be?"

One of them greeted her: We, the strongest and the most able-bodied of the village, couldn't do it; how did you do it? ***She shrugged her shoulders and said, "It wasn't your baby."***

*Lesson from the mother:* Love feels the loss. Love finds a way. Love sees no mountain. Love overcomes.

**QnQ? Q asks: The keys of the Kingdom! What does it refer to?**

The Gospel does not give us complicated spiritual programmes. It gives us simple keys. The Kingdom is opened not by greatness but by smallness. Not by power but by presence. Not by status but by service.

The Son of Man will gather all — that fills us with wonder. He will judge — that awakens holy fear. But He has already placed the keys in our hands.

Food. Water. Welcome. Clothing. Presence. Visit. Small gestures, simple actions — these are the keys to the Kingdom.

**The Spirit @work:** "History is in the hands of God and of those who hope in Him." (*Jubilee Audience, December 2025*)

**"Something to tickle you:** Do things for people not because of who they are or what they do in return, but because of who you are. ***Harold S. Kushner***

**Bishop Bernard Paul**



# Young priests celebrate, listen and walk together

**Fr Delphin Ndungu Kahemba, SDB**

KUCHING: Young priests from Malaysia and Singapore came together for a shared journey of prayer, reflection and fraternity at the Young Priests Gathering 2026 (YPG 2026), renewing friendships and reflecting on their mission of serving God's people.

Held from October 5–9 under the theme *Celebrate, Listen and Walk Together*, the gathering welcomed 51 priests who had been ordained for five years or less. "Young" referred to their years of priesthood rather than their age, recognising that the call to priestly ministry can be answered at different stages of life.

Based at St Peter's College, Kuching's major seminary, the gathering offered an opportunity to step back from daily pastoral responsibilities, share the realities of ministry and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood. More than a programme, it became a shared pilgrimage of faith.

The gathering opened with Mass at St Joseph's Cathedral, celebrated by Msgr William Sabang. A welcoming dinner hosted by the St Joseph's Parish Council at Awah Café brought participants together with Archbishop Emeritus John Ha and Fr Nicholas Ng. Local delicacies and lively conversations offered a warm introduction to Sarawakian hospitality.

At the heart of the gathering were formation sessions that invited the priests to reflect on their vocation and the communities entrusted to their care.

Fr Patrick Heng, rector of St Peter's College, spoke as an elder brother in the priesthood, sharing the joys, struggles and challenges of ministry. Drawing on the Rite of Ordination to the Priesthood and his own experience, he reflected candidly on the realities of early priesthood and the perseverance required to remain faithful to the calling.



*Fr Ramon Borja, SDB facilitating the session.*

Through Conversations in the Spirit, participants were invited to listen attentively and share openly with one another. These exchanges offered space to voice concerns, support their brother priests and reflect on what it means to live a holy, healthy and happy priestly life. They also underscored the value of having companions with whom to share both the burdens and blessings of ministry.

The missionary dimension of priesthood came into focus during *Duc in Altum — Put Out into the Deep* — presented by Fr Ramon Borja, SDB, at Holy Trinity Church, Kenyalang. Drawing from the work of Fr Robert S. Rivers, CSP, he encouraged participants to move from a mentality of maintenance to one of mission, embracing renewal, creativity and openness to change in pastoral ministry.

Prayer gave these reflections their foundation. Lauds, Vespers and daily Eucharistic celebrations shaped the rhythm of the gathering. On Oct 7, the Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary, participants prayed the Rosary together, entrusting their priestly vocation to Mary's intercession.

Eucharistic Adoration at the Carmelite Monastery of the Immaculate Heart of Mary provided time for quiet prayer. The day concluded with Vespers and Mass at St Ann's Church, Kota Padawan, celebrated by Fr Don Don Romero Ramirez, OFM.

Encounters with parish communities added another dimension to the gathering. Mass at St Peter's Church, Padungan, was followed by a parish-hosted dinner with Fr Vincent Chin, while Holy Trinity parishioners generously prepared lunch for the participants. Time spent exploring Kuching also offered opportunities to appreciate the city's cultural heritage and culinary traditions.

A lively Cultural Night brought together local cuisine, traditional rice wine known as tuak, music, dance and cultural performances. Affectionately dubbed "PGT" — "Priests Got Talent" — the evening revealed hidden talents and the joyful spirit of priestly fraternity.

The visit to Kampung Pasir Hulu, Lundu, on Oct 8 offered an encounter with local Church history and the heritage of the Salako community. The villagers' warm welcome and traditional foods, lovingly prepared over several days, reflected the generosity of the people. Their hospitality was a reminder that the Church's mission grows through relationships, listening and the sharing of faith across generations and cultures.

The gathering concluded with *Vespers,* Mass celebrated by Msgr William Sabang and a final fellowship dinner at the seminary. Participants expressed gratitude to the bishops, parish priests, communities, volunteers and benefactors whose dedication made the gathering possible, assuring them of their prayers and asking for continued prayerful support.

As they returned to their dioceses, the priests carried renewed friendships and a shared aspiration: to be holy, healthy and happy. YPG 2026 reaffirmed that priestly ministry is never meant to be a solitary journey. By celebrating, listening and walking together, priests support one another in their vocation and service to God's people.

# International visitors encounter Sybil's story of sacrifice

IPOH: The enduring witness of Sybil Kathigasu's faith, courage and compassion was the focus of a talk hosted by the Church of St Michael for members of the Asian Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums (APAVM).

Held on September 30, the talk, entitled *The Life, Legacy and Mission of Sybil Kathigasu,* was organised in connection with efforts towards her possible beatification and canonisation. It drew participants from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Portugal, Switzerland, England and Canada.

Brigadier General Dato' Fitzgerald Augustin, together with his team members Datin Renee and James Siew, explored Sybil's spiritual journey and the deep faith in Christ that sustained her willingness to risk her life so that others might live.

The presentation recounted the brutal torture she endured and her steadfastness in the face of suffering. Her story offered a powerful example of faith expressed through action, reflecting Christ's compassion and love amid cruelty and hardship.



Following the talk, the visitors made their way to Sybil's grave to offer prayers.

Many APAVM members had previously been unfamiliar with Sybil's story. The encounter gave them a fuller understanding of her life, sacrifice and spiritual legacy, as well as the reasons behind efforts to advance her cause.

Her witness continues to invite reflection on the courage to serve others, even at great personal cost, and the strength that faith can bring in the darkest circumstances.

# Four new members join Holy Sepulchre Order in Alor Setar

ALOR SETAR: The Malaysia-Penang Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (EOHSJ) welcomed four new members during its Vigil and Investiture celebrations at the Church of St Michael on October 10 – 11.

The gathering brought together 67 members of the Order, alongside parishioners and friends, for prayer, thanksgiving and fellowship.



*The four new members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.*

Fr Michael Cheah, KCHS, Grand Prior Coadjutor, presided over both ceremonies. Ecclesiastical Knight Fr Dominic Santhiyagu was also present, while Lieutenant Dr John Luis Chen led the Prayer of the Knight and Dame at each ceremony. Cardinal Sebastian Francis, KGCHS, serves as Grand Prior of the Malaysia-Penang Lieutenancy.

The Vigil on Oct 10 offered candidates an opportunity for prayer, reflection and spiritual preparation ahead of their investiture. It reminded them of the responsibilities of membership and their call to live the Christian faith through fidelity to Christ, charity and service to the Church.

The Vigil concluded with Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction, followed by a tea gathering that provided members and guests with an opportunity to deepen their bonds of fellowship.

Invested into the Order on Oct 11 were Joseph Chang Chow Yin and Theresa Chang Yik Ling of the Church of St Michael, Alor Setar, and Maureen Lee Kim Ling and Rebecca Lim Yu Lin of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Penang.

The occasion also marked the promotion of Knight Aloysius Gasper to Knight Commander.

A celebratory lunch brought the newly invested members together with fellow members, parishioners and friends in thanksgiving.

The celebrations underscored that membership in the Order carries a continuing commitment to deepen one's faith, practise charity and serve the Church, while keeping the needs of the Holy Land and its Christian communities close to heart.

A lay institution under the protection of the Holy See, the EOHSJ has approximately 30,000 members in almost 40 countries. Its mission is to strengthen the Christian life of its members and support the charitable, cultural and social works of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, particularly those of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, helping to sustain the Christian presence there.

The Malaysia-Penang Lieutenancy currently has 100 members. Enquiries about the Order may be directed to *eohsjpg@gmail.com.*

**Jennifer Gasper**

# Who have we yet to welcome?

**Susan Teng Yee Ling**

PORT DICKSON: "Who is still missing?" This question challenged parishioners at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Port Dickson (CICPD), to look beyond those already active in parish life and consider whose voices and gifts have yet to find a place.

At its Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) 2026, the parish sought to go beyond reviewing activities and programmes. It asked a deeper question: had its pastoral decisions helped people feel that they belong, participate meaningfully, grow in faith and serve the Church?

The focus was on what those efforts meant for the people they were intended to serve. A busy parish calendar offers opportunities to gather, but renewal also calls for attention to the relationships, formation and encouragement that help people become involved.

Reflecting on the past year, the assembly identified progress in two areas — liturgical renewal and leadership transformation — while recognising that further work was needed to reach those less represented in the community.

Efforts towards liturgical renewal sought to make worship and ministry more meaningful and inclusive. Formation was offered in different languages, new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) and ministry leaders were invited to serve, and female altar servers were welcomed.

Readers, altar servers, choir members and other liturgical ministers continued to receive training and guidance. These efforts highlighted the importance of helping parishioners understand why they serve, how they carry out their responsibilities and how their contribution supports the Church's mission.



*Participants sharing their thoughts based on what was presented.*

Participation, the reflection emphasised, grows when people receive the formation and support to serve with understanding and confidence.

Leadership transformation similarly focused on developing people. Working closely with the Leadership Development Team, the parish placed greater emphasis on clearer roles and responsibilities, structured mentoring, leadership succession and proper handovers.

These measures aim to strengthen continuity and accountability, while preparing parishioners to take on responsibility and eventually guide others. Mentoring and thoughtful handovers can also help ensure that experience is shared and emerging leaders are supported.

Alongside these developments, the parish acknowledged the need to reach young people, young families, newcomers, less-active parishioners and members of different language communities.

This prompted a shift in thinking. The question "Who is already involved?" needed to be accompanied by another: "Who is still missing?"

For CICPD, the next stage of its journey is to help each person move from being welcomed to being heard, formed, trusted and empowered. Welcome opens the door; listening helps the community understand the person who enters. Formation, trust and encouragement then create opportunities for that person to contribute.




The assembly provided space to give thanks for progress, examine gaps honestly and recognise that pastoral renewal requires continued attention. Its direction must be shaped by a willingness to listen and walk together, including with those whose presence is less visible.

For a parish by the shores of Port Dickson, the image of an ark offers a hopeful reminder: there is still room aboard.

The invitation remains open, especially to those standing at the edge, waiting to be noticed, heard and encouraged to take part.

As CICPD continues its synodal journey, the question is both a challenge and an invitation: who else is waiting to be welcomed aboard?

# Becoming synodal begins with renewed relationships

KUALA LUMPUR: Listening, shared responsibility and the conversion of relationships were at the heart of the Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) at the Church of Our Lady of Fatima (OLF), Brickfields, on October 4.

Held under the overarching theme of *Becoming Synodal,* the assembly brought together 71 parish and Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) leaders, and parish administrator, Fr Andrew Manickam. Sr Margarete Sta Maria FdCC, *pic*, director of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute, facilitated the proceedings.



The gathering opened with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to breathe fresh life into the community. Spiritual preparation had begun on October 2 with a Holy Hour, Benediction and Mass, grounding the assembly in prayer and the call to communion, participation and mission.

OLF was privileged to be the second parish to hold its PPA, following the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Port Dickson, and coming in the wake of the recently concluded Malaysia Pastoral Convention in Sibu.

In his welcome, the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) chairman reflected on the parish's efforts to live out this calling. A slideshow highlighted its work across the four areas of Family, Church, Society and Ecology, showing how parish life seeks to bring Christ's presence into the wider community.

He acknowledged that becoming synodal remains an ongoing journey. There are always people needing attention, gifts waiting to be recognised and new ways in which the Holy Spirit calls the parish to serve.

Participants received a booklet entitled *Becoming Synodal.* In its introductory message, Archbishop Julian Leow explains that it accompanies parishes and ministries during the Synod's implementation phase, helping them examine practices and structures that can make Church life more synodal.

Sr Margarete guided participants through an online survey, *Synodal Awareness and Implementation,* assessing their understanding and experience of walking together through communion, participation and mission.

She explained that participating parishes would receive reports of their key findings. These would also contribute to the Archdiocesan Assembly planned for May 2027, focused on "Recollecting".

This local process forms part of the wider Synod implementation journey. Diocesan assemblies in the first half of 2027 will be followed by national or regional assemblies later that year, continental assemblies in early 2028 and an Ecclesial Assembly at the Vatican in October 2028. The successive stages of recollecting, interpreting, orienting and celebrating will assess experiences and support continued synodal renewal.

The booklet also addresses how the PPC, Parish Finance Council and Parish Coordination Council should be formed and serve within a synodal framework. Decision-making, Sr Margarete explained, must be rooted in spiritual discernment: seeking together to recognise where the Holy Spirit is leading the community.

Drawing on *Evangelii Gaudium,* the assembly reflected on directing parish resources towards evangelisation. Participants were encouraged to consider how activities give life to communion, participation and mission.



*A participant presenting the suggestions from his group.*

"Now we must look to the future and see what the Holy Spirit is telling us and what God wants from us," Sr Margarete said.

A central emphasis was Conversations in the Spirit, with attention to transforming relationships. A synodal community learns to listen, welcome others, work through disagreements and care for people, including those with whom relationships are difficult and those on the margins.

This called for an honest examination of parish relationships, particularly whether people feel welcomed, heard and able to contribute their gifts.

After a tea break, participants formed ten groups for an hour of prayerful conversation. They reflected on when they felt valued and shared responsibility in parish life, and when they experienced distance, judgement or exclusion.

They then considered what had resonated while listening to others, how their habits of relating needed to change, and what concrete shifts the Holy Spirit was asking of the parish.

Sr Margarete emphasised attentive listening, space for each person to speak and moments of silence. Participants were invited to receive one another's experiences with openness and discern together.

Each group subsequently presented up to two concrete points on changes needed in how the parish listens, collaborates and treats people. The exercise offered leaders an opportunity to recognise others' experiences and reflect honestly on the quality of parish relationships.

In his concluding remarks, Fr Andrew returned to "relationship conversion", reminding leaders of their calling to become the hands and feet, eyes and ears of Jesus in their ministries.

The assembly closed with an invitation to carry this spirit into daily parish life: walking together, listening with respect, discerning with the Holy Spirit and serving in communion, participation and mission. **Susai Anthony Muthu**

# First class relic of St Thomas the Apostle comes to Kuantan



KUANTAN: As part of the 120th anniversary celebrations of the Church of St Thomas the Apostle, the parish received a precious spiritual gift on Sunday, October 11 — a first-class relic of its patron saint, St Thomas the Apostle.

The relic was brought from the National Shrine of St Thomas Basilica in Mylapore, India, by His Grace, Most Rev George Anthonysamy, Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore. On this auspicious occasion, Archbishop George presided over a multilingual Mass, concelebrated by our assistant parish priest, Fr Philip Asirwalam.

During the Mass, Archbishop George personally handed over the first-class relic of St Thomas the Apostle to the parish. This significant moment was received with deep gratitude and joy, making the occasion especially meaningful as the parish celebrates 120 years of its establishment, faith and mission.

Special appreciation was extended to Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur for his communication and coordination with Archbishop George, which helped make the bringing of this precious relic to our parish possible. The parish is also deeply grateful to Archbishop George for personally bringing the relic from India and presenting it to our community.

Following the Mass, a special liturgy of veneration was conducted, after which the relic was solemnly placed in the parish Adoration Room. It is now kept together with the first-class relic of St Faustina Kowalska, providing a sacred space where parishioners and members of the public can come to venerate the relics, pray, and seek the intercession of these beloved saints.

At the conclusion of the Mass, Fr Philip, on behalf of the parish, expressed heartfelt gratitude to Archbishop George for this extraordinary gift. After the celebration, the archbishop joined the parish community for breakfast at the Parish Community Centre. The gathering provided a joyful opportunity for parishioners to meet him personally, share fellowship, and celebrate this memorable occasion together.

As the Church of St Thomas the Apostle, marks 120 years of God's faithfulness, the arrival of this first-class relic is a priceless spiritual blessing and a lasting reminder of the parish's special bond with its patron saint. May the witness of St Thomas, who professed his faith in the Risen Lord with the words, "My Lord and my God," continue to inspire every generation to grow in faith, deepen its love for Christ, and bear witness to the Gospel.

This precious relic has arrived in Kuantan; may the faith of St Thomas continue to live in every heart.



# Sowing faith, strengthening catechists

**Doris Pushpam Selvarajah**

PORT KLANG: A hundred catechists from four Klang District parishes deepened their understanding of their vocation and strengthened their teaching skills through The Sower and the Seed formation programme at the Church of St Anne, Port Klang.

Organised by the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry (KLACM) together with the Klang District Catechetical ministry, the basic certification course was developed in collaboration with HELP University. It aims to equip and spiritually nurture catechists in their mission of sharing the Catholic faith.

Held over three Saturdays, the programme brought together participants from the parishes of Our Lady of Lourdes, Holy Redeemer, St Anne, and Sts Peter and Paul. Formation was offered in English, Tamil, Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia, reflecting the diversity of the district's parish communities and their shared commitment to nurturing faith.

The three modules were facilitated by lay formators trained by Dr Steven Selvaraju, director of KLACM. Drawing on their knowledge and experience, they guided participants through the spiritual and practical dimensions of catechesis, encouraging discussion, shared learning and reflection on parish ministry.

At the heart of the programme was the understanding that every catechist is a sower of God's Word, entrusted with planting and nurturing seeds of faith in children and young people. Catechesis was presented as a ministry rooted in Christ, calling catechists to accompany others towards knowing, loving and following Him.

This mission involves both teaching and personal witness. The way catechists listen, encourage and respond to their learners helps shape the experience of faith they offer. Their own relationship with Christ therefore remains central to the ministry.

Sessions on the vocation, mission and spirituality of the catechist emphasised prayer, personal faith and a deep relationship with God as foundations for service. Participants also explored the catechetical process through the "pedagogy of God", reflecting on how God patiently reveals Himself and guides His people, and how this can shape their approach to teaching.

Understanding learners was another significant focus. Participants examined behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism, alongside approaches such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Montessori's planes of development, Gardner's multiple intelligences and Westerhoff's stages of faith.

These discussions encouraged catechists to recognise the different experiences, abilities, needs and stages of faith that learners bring to their sessions. Every child is unique, and an approach that engages one learner may need to be adapted for another. Greater awareness of these differences can help catechists respond with sensitivity and compassion.

The formation also addressed clear learning aims and objectives, introducing Bloom's taxonomy and different forms of assessment. Catechists considered what they hoped learners would understand, experience and take away from each session, reinforcing the importance of thoughtful preparation.

Participants then put these principles into practice through lesson planning, teaching strategies and activities suited to their learners. They reviewed learning objectives, considered appropriate tools and explored how to translate their plans into meaningful learning experiences.

Microteaching sessions gave them opportunities to present lessons, learn from one another and receive constructive feedback. These practical exercises helped catechists review their methods and consider how to make their sessions more engaging, meaningful and centred on Christ.

Reflection remained an important part of the process. Participants looked back on their teaching experiences, recognised what they had learnt and identified areas for further growth. This affirmed that catechists are themselves lifelong learners, continually being formed as they serve God and His people.

The programme also brought catechists together as a community of faith. Sharing experiences and learning from fellow catechists reinforced the value of mutual support in a ministry that calls for patience, preparation and perseverance.

Participants left with practical tools, renewed faith and a deeper appreciation of their vocation to serve with love, helping others encounter Christ and grow closer to Him.

# Rooted in the Gospel, enriched by culture

PETALING JAYA: The Church of Saint Francis Xavier (SFX) recently hosted a thought-provoking talk on *Faith and Inculturation* by Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, *pic*, director of the Catholic Research Centre and ecclesiastical assistant for the KL Archdiocesan Social Communications Ministry.



Organised by the SFX Social Communications ministry, this insightful session explored how the Catholic faith can engage meaningfully with diverse cultures, while remaining faithful to the Gospel.

Fr Clarence explained that inculturation is the encounter between the Gospel and human culture, whereby the Gospel takes root within a particular people and their way of life. He stressed that inculturation goes far beyond mere adaptation, imitation, or assimilation. Rather, it is a dynamic process that allows the Gospel to be expressed meaningfully within diverse cultural contexts, while remaining faithful to the universal teachings of the Church.

Drawing on Church teaching, Fr Clarence noted that the Church does not seek to impose "a rigid uniformity" in matters of faith. Cultural expressions and traditions can be adapted, provided they remain in harmony with the Gospel.

"The challenge is to build unity without demanding uniformity," said Fr Clarence.

He cautioned against adopting a "holier-than-thou" attitude when discussing matters of faith, and encouraged Catholics to engage in deeper reflection and discernment rather than becoming "keyboard warriors." Liturgical diversity, he explained, should be seen as a source of enrichment, as unity does not require cultural uniformity.

Fr Clarence emphasised that inculturation extends beyond language, music, gestures, dress, and other liturgical expressions. It involves bringing the Gospel into meaningful dialogue with the values, traditions, symbols, and realities of each culture. As such, inculturation shapes Christian living, relationships, pastoral ministry, social engagement, and mission, not merely the way Catholics celebrate the liturgy.

He further clarified that inculturation is not simply translating words into another language, adding local decorations to a Western expression of Christianity, uncritically adopting every cultural practice, or rejecting the universal dimension of the Church. Rather, it is a deeper process of encounter, transformation, and mutual enrichment.

Referring to the International Theological Commission's 1988 definition, Fr Clarence noted that inculturation is the process by which the Gospel enters, engages, purifies, transforms, and enriches cultures, while enabling the Church to express the one faith through the diversity of peoples and cultures.

The talk concluded with a call for the Church to be more inclusive and welcoming. Fr Clarence encouraged the faithful to listen to cultures and enter people's worlds, recognise the seeds of the Word already present within them, proclaim Christ, and build unity without demanding uniformity. In doing so, the one Gospel can take root and flourish in many cultures, enriching both the Church and society.

**Cordelia Lee**



*Participants listening attentively to Fr Dr Clarence Devadass's talk.*



# New phase to preserve Pagar Tras' legacy of faith

**Christopher Kushi**



*From left: Deputy CM II, Jagdeep Singh, Cardinal Sebastian Francis and French Ambassador Marc Abensour.*

BUKIT MERTAJAM: The Diocese of Penang is preparing to begin the second phase of conservation work at the historic Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Pagar Tras, safeguarding a treasured legacy of faith, missionary service and community life.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, outlined the plans during an October 3 visit involving Penang Deputy Chief Minister II Jagdeep Singh Deo, French Ambassador to Malaysia Marc Abensour, Think City managing director Dato' Hamdan Abdul Majeed, USM Honorary Professor Dr Stephen Chia, members of the Catholic community and Friends of Pagar Tras.

The delegation visited the church ruins at Sungai Lembu before proceeding to the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Kulim, where artefacts from the original church have been preserved.

Situated near the Penang–Kedah border beside the Seraya Forest Reserve, Pagar Tras is closely associated with French missionaries of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP), or Paris Foreign Missions, and the local Hakka Catholic community.

Its early chapel dates to 1875. The Gothic-style brick church that subsequently developed, with stained-glass windows and twin bell towers, became affectionately known as the "Notre Dame in the Jungle". Together with its presbytery and school, it served as a centre of worship, education and community life.

During the Malayan Emergency, residents were relocated to New Villages, dispersing the community and leaving the church abandoned. Its legacy continued through the faithful and the religious treasures transferred to the new Sacred Heart Church in Kulim, built under Fr Marcel Selier in the 1950s.

In his welcome address, Cardinal Sebastian paid tribute to the MEP missionaries who left France as young men to live among local communities and share the Gospel. Their dedication helped nurture the Church's growth in Penang and northern Malaya.

Among the missionaries associated with this heritage were Fr François Allard, Fr François Terrien, Fr Pierre Sorin and Fr Marcel Selier. The cardinal also offered prayers at the graves of Fr Selier and Fr Barnabas Gao in the adjoining cemetery.

He highlighted the wooden signboard preserved at the Kulim church, bearing the Chinese characters for "Faith, Hope and Love". It remains a tangible expression of the community's enduring faith and cultural identity.

Launched in 2021, the conservation initiative, themed *On 100 Year Trail – Pagar Tras*, is a partnership between the diocese and the Penang government's Tourism and Creative Economy portfolio.

The completed first phase included soil analysis and the stabilisation of surviving walls with steel girders. Preparatory meetings between the state government and the Penang Diocese Catholic Heritage Conservation Committee have paved the way for the next phase.

The diocese envisions the site as a historical landmark, visitor attraction and pilgrimage centre. Planned improvements include landscaping, suitable parking and information panels to help visitors understand its history.

A dedicated viewing room at the Kulim church will showcase preserved artefacts, including stained-glass windows, religious statues, wooden Stations of the Cross, sacred vessels, relics, three bronze bells, old church registers and a wooden clergy chair assembled without nails.

Jagdeep reaffirmed the state government's commitment to conserving heritage across both the island and mainland, recognising that Penang's historical legacy extends well outside George Town's UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Ambassador Abensour highlighted the long-standing cultural connections between France and Penang. These include the partnership established with Arles in 2018 and the French Heritage Trail, launched in 2020 by the French Embassy and Think City with local partners. The trail explores the contributions of French missionaries, educators and other figures to Penang's development.

Cardinal Sebastian also thanked USM, Think City and the diocese for workshops that enabled local communities to share and document Pagar Tras' oral history. He welcomed the publication of *History and Heritage of Pagar Tras,* preserving the memories of those who shaped the site.

The conservation effort seeks to safeguard both the surviving structures and the stories of faith, service and belonging they continue to hold.

# Prayer and art inspire compassion for wildlife

SHAH ALAM: Prayer, reflection and art came together at the Church of the Divine Mercy (CDM) as participants explored how faith can inspire greater compassion for wildlife and a more active commitment to caring for Creation.

Held as Care for Creation month drew to a close, the gathering was hosted by CDM's Charismatic Prayer team under the theme *Let Our Elephants Be Elephants*. Nearly 20 people attended, from senior citizens to young children.

Organised in collaboration with Catholic wildlife conservation artist and animal activist Christine Das, the session combined storytelling with contemplative art, inviting participants to consider humanity's responsibility towards the natural world.

At its heart was the story of Dara, Amoi and Kelat (DAK), three Malaysian elephants transferred to Tennoji Zoo in Osaka, Japan. Christine shared concerns about their welfare and the realities of captivity, encouraging participants to reflect on the needs of animals whose lives are shaped by human decisions.

Art became a means of bearing witness, opening difficult conversations and giving expression to concerns for creatures unable to speak for themselves. Through contemplation and creativity, participants were invited to move beyond distant sympathy towards a more personal response.

Christine also raised concerns about alleged financial wrongdoing surrounding the elephants' transfer, which has been the subject of a Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission investigation. She described art as a way of drawing attention to wildlife welfare and demanding accountability.

"Art is our resistance," she said.

For Venessa Sandra, the session offered a fresh understanding of both the elephants' circumstances and the wider significance of God's creation.

"It was an eye-opener for me, especially as someone who was unaware of the situation surrounding the elephants. I also learnt something new about God's creation," she said.

Catherine Agnes described the story of Dara, Amoi and Kelat as a call to greater awareness and compassion. She reflected on the suffering discussed during the presentation and the responsibility to protect vulnerable creatures.

"Their story is a powerful reminder that animals, too, experience fear, loneliness and suffering," she said.

She hoped the encounter would encourage participants to respect wildlife and speak up for animals unable to defend their own interests.

For Anne Chan, the reflection reached beyond the three elephants to animals closer to home.

"This contemplative art session opened my eyes to the sad state of our elephants in captivity. I'll tell more people about their plight. It also moved me to consider what I can do for other animals in the neighbourhood, particularly strays," she said.

Her response showed how awareness of a wider conservation issue could prompt practical compassion within one's own community.

Victor Vel said that although many participants had heard of DAK, the session helped them better understand the concerns surrounding the elephants' welfare. He praised Christine's dedication to defending their lives and raising awareness.

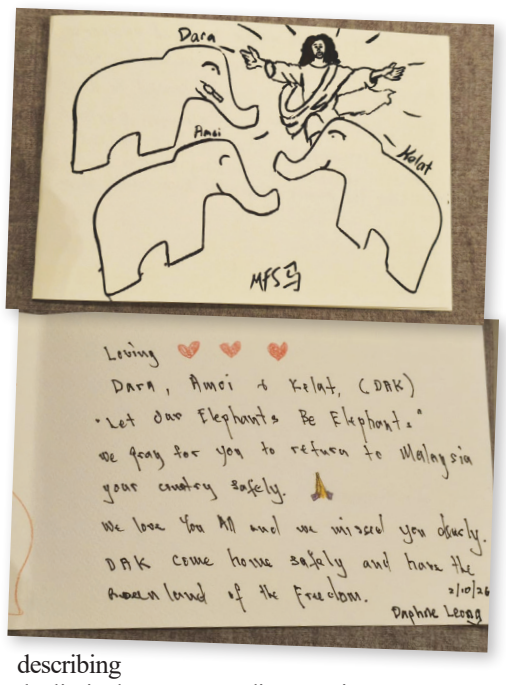
"This created not only awareness of DAK but also greater appreciation for wildlife conservation in general," he said.

Don Bosco valued the openness with which Christine shared her experiences, describing her honesty as refreshing and inspiring. The session also prompted him to reflect through the lens of faith, drawing on 2 Peter 1:4, which speaks of escaping the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Heavy rain may have affected attendance. Participant Stalin Leo nevertheless expressed disappointment that more parishioners had not attended, despite an announcement by the parish priest and publicity on social media.

"It was an excellent session," he said, while describing the limited response as discouraging.






Although the group was small, those present shared a meaningful encounter through prayer, reflection and creativity. The participation of children and older people gave the gathering an intergenerational character, reminding participants that care for Creation is a responsibility shared across all ages.

Their responses revealed how the session extended beyond art itself. The story of three elephants became an invitation to learn, empathise and consider how everyday choices affect other living creatures.

As the month concluded, the gathering affirmed that caring for Creation remains an ongoing expression of faith: speaking up for wildlife, sharing what we have learnt and showing compassion towards animals within our own communities.

# Discovering Christ through the Franciscan way of life

PENANG: The call to encounter Christ through the Gospel, Creation and everyday relationships was the focus of a vocation outreach programme organised by the Fraternity of St Felix of Cantalice.

Held at the Church of Divine Mercy, Sungai Ara, on September 12, the programme drew 29 participants from various parishes to learn more about Franciscan spirituality and the Secular Franciscan vocation.

Fraternity minister Catherine welcomed participants before an opening prayer and the hymn *To God Be the Glory.*

Two videos introduced significant moments in the life of St Francis of Assisi. The first depicted Francis praying before the San Damiano Cross, where he heard the call, "Francis, go and rebuild my Church." The second portrayed his renunciation of earthly possessions and his declaration that his Father was now the Father in heaven.

Fraternity member Florence then shared a brief account of the saint's life, providing a foundation for a deeper exploration of his spirituality.

Spiritual assistant Fr Michael Teng, OFMCap, introduced the "Franciscan Tree", explaining how the movement inspired by St Francis embraces friars, cloistered nuns and Secular Franciscans within a wider spiritual family.

He described Franciscan spirituality as a Christ-centred, down-to-earth way of life that seeks to encounter God through the Gospel, creation and daily human relationships.

Fraternity formator Mary Anne Khoo added that the Secular Franciscan Order is a consecrated life and professed members take a public promise to live the Gospel way of life which demands strong commitment, faithfulness and total dedication.

She also shared that the Fraternity of St Felix of Cantalice was canonically established in 1962 at the parish of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows in Penang.

The personal dimension of this vocation emerged through testimonies from Anne Ong, an observer, and Catherine, a professed member. Both shared how the example of St Francis and their journey with the Secular Franciscan Order had helped them rediscover Christ after periods of spiritual dryness.

Their experiences offered participants an insight into how Franciscan spirituality can nurture faith and provide companionship on the journey towards a closer relationship with God.

The outreach concluded with an offering to the parish, fellowship and a final blessing by Fr Michael. Participants also received San Damiano crosses as gifts, a reminder of the call that shaped St Francis' life and continues to inspire those who follow his example.







# Faith in action along the Klang River

KUALA LUMPUR: Thirty volunteers put care for creation into practice during a *gotong-royong* at Kebun-Kebun Sungai Klang on October 3, combining a riverside clean-up with a hands-on introduction to composting.

Held to mark the close of the Season of Creation, the activity was organised by the Creation Justice Ministry in collaboration with KongsiKL, a local NGO working to revitalise public spaces, including the Klang River riverside along Old Klang Road.

Despite the hazy conditions, volunteers arrived with enthusiasm and divided into two groups to clear rubbish from the surrounding area.

At 10.30am, they regrouped for a composting session led by KongsiKL. Volunteers learnt how green and brown materials contribute to composting, collecting aquatic plants from the ponds, dried leaves and tree branches for the activity.

For participant Jayanthi, the morning offered an opportunity to contribute to a meaningful task while enjoying fellowship. She was also pleased to discover a small shelter within the garden that helps keep stray dogs safe.

"They look so happy just running around, playing with each other and digging the ground. As a dog lover, it brings me joy to see this," she said.

Yolanda described the experience as a reminder of the Christian responsibility to care for the environment.

"I am reminded of God's call for us to be responsible stewards of His creation," she said, highlighting the rubbish collection, composting session and collective effort behind the Kebun-Kebun Sungai Klang community project and Klang River Festival.

She expressed appreciation to the organisers and volunteers for the fellowship and shared commitment.

"May God continue to bless and guide us to be faithful stewards of His creation," she added.

The activity concluded at 11.30am with a group photograph and lunch. Some volunteers stayed to explore the Klang River Festival, an annual event aimed at bringing renewed life to the riverside public space.

The morning brought together practical learning, community service and fellowship, showing how simple, shared efforts can give expression to care for our common home.



*Volunteers collecting rubbish along the riverside.*

# Cardinal Tagle is first Asian dean

MANILA: Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, *pic,* has become the first Asian dean of the College of Cardinals, the body that advises the Pope and elects his successor.

Pope Leo XIV approved the 69-year-old Filipino cardinal's election by the cardinal-bishops on October 8, with the Vatican announcing the decision the following day.

He succeeds Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, 92, who has stepped down and assumes the title of dean emeritus.

Cardinal Tagle expressed gratitude and emotion when news of his election was announced to staff of the Dicastery for Evangelisation.



The dean presides over the College as *primus inter pares,* or "first among equals", coordinating its activities without exercising governing authority over fellow cardinals.

He also convenes the cardinals for a conclave when the papacy becomes vacant and presides over it if eligible to vote. Only cardinals who are under 80 when the papacy becomes vacant may participate in the election. If the dean is ineligible, another eligible cardinal presides according to precedence.

Cardinal Tagle's election marks a new chapter in a ministry spanning diocesan leadership in the Philippines and senior responsibilities at the Vatican.

Appointed Bishop of Imus in 2001, he became Archbishop of Manila in 2011, succeeding Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales. Pope Benedict XVI created him a cardinal in November 2012.

In December 2019, Pope Francis appointed him prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. Following the restructuring of the Roman Curia, he became pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation's Section for First Evangelisation and New Particular Churches, which supports the Church's missionary work.

He was admitted to the Order of Cardinal-Bishops in 2020.

Church leaders in the Philippines welcomed his election as a milestone accompanied by a call to service.

The Diocese of Imus congratulated its former bishop and urged the faithful to pray that God would grant him wisdom, courage and faith.

Conventual Franciscan Fr John Vianney Acosta described the election as significant for both the Philippines and Asia. He recalled Cardinal Tagle's approachable manner and concern for the marginalised, stressing that the role was a responsibility rather than simply an honour.

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos likewise encouraged Filipinos to see the election as an invitation to share the Church's gifts in service of the poor.

"For us Filipinos, this is a source of pride, but also a call to deeper service," he told the Inquirer.

"His election reminds us that the Church is truly universal: its life and leadership are enriched by the faith, experience, and hopes of peoples across the world." **Agencies**

# A catechism for peace

VATICAN: Archbishop Andrew Nkea of Bamenda has drawn on Pope Leo XIV's appeals for peace to produce a practical guide for families, schools and parishes in conflict-torn Cameroon.

The archbishop presented *Catechism of Pope Leo XIV on Peace* to the Pope on October 7. Its 100 questions and answers address forgiveness, dialogue, care for displaced people, the role of young people and responsible leadership.

The answers quote or paraphrase the Pope's addresses and homily during his April 16 visit to Bamenda, where he repeatedly called for dialogue and reconciliation.

Archbishop Nkea, who heads Cameroon's bishops' conference, said that the book conveys the Pope's teaching rather than his own. He compiled it to help communities apply that message in daily life.

Pope Leo said he was "happily surprised" by the book and expressed hope that many people, especially children, would read it and develop a culture of peace. He thanked the archbishop and his team for translating the visit's message into a pastoral resource.

The guide responds to the suffering of Cameroon's English-speaking regions, where fighting between government forces and separatists since 2017 has killed thousands and displaced many more. Homes, public property and infrastructure have also been destroyed.

Copies will initially be distributed to parishes and Catholic schools in Bamenda before reaching other dioceses. Diocesan justice and peace commissions will use the book for community formation.

Archbishop Nkea said the publication should mark the beginning of a way of life inspired by the papal visit. For communities trapped in conflict, he stressed, peace is a daily choice.

He expressed hope that the questions and answers would help Cameroonians learn, teach and live the Pope's message by becoming promoters and messengers of peace. **Vatican News**



*Pope Leo receiving a copy of "Catechism of Pope Leo XIV" on Peace, from Archbishop Andrew Nkea of Bamenda in the Vatican on October 7, 2026 (Vatican Media)*



# Nurturing Bangladesh's small flock

DHAKA: In a country where Christians make up less than one per cent of the population, the centenary of Bangladesh's first minor seminary was both a celebration of the past and a call to nurture the Church's future.

More than 1,000 people, including priests, religious, former seminarians and lay Catholics, gathered at Little Flower Minor Seminary in Bandura, about 40km from Dhaka, on October 2.

Presiding over the anniversary Mass, Archbishop Bejoy N. D'Cruze of Dhaka, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh, described the institution as the country's "cradle of the priesthood".

He paid tribute to generations of rectors and formators who had guided the spiritual, intellectual and human development of future priests.

"I urge you to send your sons and grandsons to this seminary to become priests," he told the faithful. "Encourage others to do the same. May this seminary never stand empty."

Founded in 1926 by Holy Cross missionary Fr John Baptist Delaunay, the seminary has educated nearly 5,000 young men. Its alumni include five archbishops, five bishops and around 200 priests, alongside professionals and community leaders.

The centenary also celebrated the contribution of those whose discernment led them to other vocations.

Among them was Augustine Pratap Gomes, chairman of the Metropolitan Christian Co-operative Housing Society Ltd., who entered the seminary in 1981 alongside 84 other young men. Six from that intake eventually became priests.

"Those who became priests serve the Church by proclaiming the Gospel. Those of us who have taken up different professions serve society in other ways. The formation we received here helped us find our way in life," he said.

Former students have gone on to work as teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, civil servants and entrepreneurs.

Archbishop D'Cruze acknowledged that only a small proportion of seminarians proceed to priesthood, but said their formation continues to influence their lives and service.

"Even those who did not become priests have grown into people of worth and have built successful lives," he said. "They are contributing to the Church and to society in many different ways."

Dedicated to St Thérèse of Lisieux, the seminary currently has 52 students. **AsiaNews**

# Kenyans pray for peace

SUBUKIA: Kenya's Catholic bishops urged citizens to safeguard peace and national unity ahead of the 2027 General Election as thousands gathered at the Subukia National Marian Shrine for the annual National Prayer Day.

Organised by the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB), the October 3 gathering in the Diocese of Nakuru centred on the Beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Mt 5:9).

The day was also marked by grief following the deaths of 17 pilgrims from St Mathias Mulumba Parish in Mikindani, in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, in a road accident while travelling to the shrine. Prayers were offered during Mass for the deceased and their families.

Archbishop Maurice Muhatia Makumba of Kisumu, the KCCB chairman, called on Kenyans to place national unity above political differences.

In a message issued before the gathering, he stressed that peace requires justice, truth, respect for human dignity, reconciliation and commitment to the common good.

"Kenya is greater than our differences," he said, warning that no political position justified the destruction of human life and no election was worth sacrificing national unity.

Drawing on Kenya's National Anthem, the archbishop said its appeal for justice, unity, peace and liberty was both a prayer and a responsibility.



*Subukia National Marian Shrine Prayer Day 2026. (James Kagwima)*

The gathering, coordinated by the Kisumu Metropolitan region, included Eucharistic adoration and other devotions. Pilgrims prayed for harmony among Kenyans and leaders committed to serving the common good.

In his homily, Bishop Mark Kadima of Bungoma drew on Isaiah, the Letter of St James and the Beatitudes to remind Christians of their responsibility to bring peace wherever they are.

Bishop Joseph Mwongela, chairman of the Commission for Pastoral and Lay Apostolate, welcomed young participants and reaffirmed the Church's continuing pastoral commitment to them. **Vatican News**

# When family life takes an unexpected turn

A couple can prepare carefully for a wedding and still feel unprepared for married life. There are bills to manage, household responsibilities to share and disagreements to resolve. Later may come children, illness, ageing parents or disappointments neither spouse had imagined. The promise made at the altar must find expression in these ordinary, sometimes difficult, circumstances.

How does the Church accompany that journey — and recognise the faith and wisdom families bring to it?

These questions ran through the Vatican meeting marking the tenth anniversary of *Amoris Laetitia,* Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on love in the family. Convened by Pope Leo XIV from October 7–14, the gathering brought together the heads of Eastern Catholic Churches, presidents of bishops' conferences, married couples and experts to reflect on proclaiming the Gospel with families today.

The discussions, the Pope's homily for the concluding Mass and his closing message invite our communities to consider how families experience the Church, especially when life becomes difficult.

In his opening address, Pope Leo asked: "What kind of Church, then, do people encounter precisely when they are most fragile?" He recognised that families contribute to the Church's mission through fidelity, forgiveness, raising children and caring for others. Their experiences, including those marked by loneliness and apparent failure, also have much to teach the Church.

That invitation concerns parents anxious about a child who has stopped attending Mass, couples struggling to communicate, families exhausted by caregiving and people rebuilding life after bereavement or separation. It also concerns young people wondering whether lifelong love is possible.

At a press briefing, Fr Giacomo Costa SJ, a consultant to the General Secretariat of the Synod who coordinated the meeting's methodology, highlighted how insecure employment, housing difficulties and financial pressures can make it hard for young people to imagine a shared future. Discussions also recognised fears about commitment and repeating painful family experiences.

Encouraging marriage therefore requires an understanding of what young people are carrying. They need space to ask honest questions, understand their prospective spouse and consider the commitment they are making. Credible examples of lasting, respectful relationships matter.

In his homily for the concluding Mass in St Peter's Square on October 14, read by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Pope Leo turned to how people learn to love. Marriage preparation courses, he explained, need to be supported by an education in love beginning in childhood. Quoting Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia,* he recalled that "learning to love someone does not happen automatically". Family life provides the first school of affection and commitment.

Children absorb lessons about love long before they understand the marriage vows. They notice whether adults listen, apologise, share responsibilities and treat one another with respect. They also notice whose needs are repeatedly dismissed and who is always expected to give way.

This does not require parents to be perfect. A sincere apology after an argument can teach a child something important about humility and reconciliation. What matters is the willingness to keep learning how to love.

That learning continues after the wedding. Cardinal José Cobo Cano, Archbishop of Madrid, emphasised accompaniment throughout married life, while theologian María Marcela Mazzini highlighted the early years, when couples reorganise finances, work, household tasks and relationships with their families of origin.

Our parishes would do well to ask what happens after marriage preparation ends. Who checks how a couple is managing once the celebrations are over? Experienced married couples could offer mentoring, supported by training and access to qualified counsellors. Help should be available before a relationship reaches crisis.

Spouses themselves also have responsibilities. Love needs time, honest conversation and mutual effort. Both need to recognise the work that sustains their home, including tasks that easily go unseen: remembering appointments, managing household needs or rearranging work when a child falls ill. Listening includes asking what one's spouse is carrying and helping to share it.



The concluding discussions also addressed circumstances in which urgent intervention is necessary. Fr Costa reported calls for timely spiritual and practical assistance in situations of domestic violence and abuse, especially to protect children and vulnerable people. Participants also highlighted the need to reduce the stigma attached to seeking help.



(Vecteezy)

Pastoral care must uphold safety and dignity. An appeal to perseverance must never become an expectation to endure abuse. Communities need to recognise harm and help people obtain appropriate protection and professional support.

Other suffering may be less visible. The meeting recognised the pain infertility can bring, reminding us to be careful with assumptions about couples without children. Someone postponing marriage may likewise be carrying concerns they have never voiced. Asking gently, and respecting privacy, can express pastoral sensitivity.

Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David, Bishop of Kalookan in the Philippines, offered a perspective that connects these realities. Speaking about *Amoris Laetitia,* he said: "It asks us to accompany real people in the often painful distance between the ideal and their actual situation." His reflections acknowledged how poverty, migration, violence and insecure employment affect family life.

For our communities, accompaniment could mean BEC members helping with meals or transport during illness, affordable parish activities and referrals to counsellors. Those who are separated, widowed or raising children alone should encounter friendship and appropriate pastoral guidance. Single people caring for relatives also belong within our concern for family life.

Listening may require changes to parish arrangements. Timetables and activities could be shaped through consultation with working couples, parents and caregivers. Limited availability should not automatically be interpreted as indifference. Someone whose caregiving leaves little time for parish ministry is already living a demanding form of Christian service.

The Pope's concluding homily brought this concern into a wider vision of the Church as a "family of families". He urged support for those in difficulty, appreciation for older people, openness to the gift of children and respect for life from conception to natural death. He also encouraged renewed prayer at home and participation in Sunday Eucharist, recognising prayer and the Sacraments as sources of nourishment and healing.

These practices belong within the everyday work of sustaining family relationships. Grace before a meal, a prayer before school or a quiet moment at the end of a difficult day can help a household bring its concerns before God. Families need opportunities to draw strength together, especially when illness, conflict or exhaustion makes love demanding.

Their mission also extends beyond the home. Hospitality to neighbours, honesty at work, concern for struggling families and the patient transmission of faith give Christian teaching a recognisable face. Families have wisdom to offer, including lessons learnt through struggle. Their experience should help shape the Church's pastoral priorities.

At the concluding press conference, participants described a renewed commitment to place families at the centre of pastoral life.

In his closing message, sent while he was recovering in Rome's Gemelli Hospital, Pope Leo thanked participants for their prayers and work. He assured them: "I will read the fruits of your work and discussions, and offer my reflections in due course." He encouraged them to share their experience with their bishops' conferences and dioceses, expressing his hope that families would participate actively in local Churches and help discern the paths ahead.

The task now reaches our parishes and homes. The promise made at the altar is lived through years of change, with grace, effort, forgiveness and support. When family life takes an unexpected turn, the Christian community has a responsibility to offer practical help, spiritual support and a place to belong — and to recognise the gifts people continue to bring, even in the midst of their struggles.

**HERALD Malaysia**



***Archbishop Julian Leow, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, at the ecclesial encounter "Ten Years After Amoris Laetitia: Proclaiming the Gospel with Families Today", held in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican from October 7–14. (Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life facebook)***

# Learn their language

***In dementia, when words become difficult, perhaps it is not the person who has stopped communicating. Perhaps we have simply stopped understanding.***



**Dancing with Dementia**

**Dr Cecilia Chan**

"Her husband is busy. He has two meetings."

That was what Su, a woman living with dementia, told me when we were chatting one day.

"Really?" I asked, looking slightly surprised.

She smiled and explained, "Sick meeting. One in the morning and one in the afternoon, in that sick place."

And suddenly, it made sense.

She was talking about her husband's two appointments with the doctors at the hospital.

She wasn't speaking gibberish.

She was communicating.

She simply didn't have the words we would normally use to describe what she meant.

This is something we need to understand when we are communicating with someone living with dementia.

**We need to learn their language instead of constantly expecting them to speak ours.**

As dementia progresses, finding the right word can become increasingly difficult. A person may know exactly what they want to say, but the word they need may not come.

So they improvise.

They use another word.

They describe something rather than name it.

They may gesture, point, repeat themselves or use a word that seems completely unrelated to what they are trying to tell us.

If we focus only on the words, we may conclude that what they are saying makes no sense.

But if we slow down and listen — not just to the words, but to the **person** — we may discover that there is actually a great deal of meaning underneath.

***Listen beyond the words***

Later that same day, another person living with dementia told us that there were "three people" and "two people" in the bedroom, pointing towards it.

But there was nobody there.

One of our volunteers became worried. It was also the month of the Hungry Ghost Festival, so naturally, the statement caused some concern.

I reassured the volunteer.

She wasn't necessarily seeing people.

She was referring to the beds in the room.

She simply couldn't retrieve the word "bed" at that moment.

So she used the word "people" instead.

Once we understood the context, what initially sounded frightening became much less mysterious.

This is why dementia care requires us to look beyond the literal meaning of words.

A person living with dementia may say one thing while trying to communicate something else. The words may be inaccurate, but the **message behind the words may still be very real.**

Perhaps our first response should be to become curious.

**"I wonder what she is trying to tell me?"**

That simple question can change the way we care for someone.

***Communication is more than language***

We often think of communication as words.

But human beings communicate in so many other ways.

A person's facial expression.

A gesture.

The direction they point.



Their tone of voice.

A repeated action.

Their body language.

Even silence.

When dementia affects language, these forms of communication can become even more important.

Instead of asking, "Why doesn't she make sense anymore?" perhaps we can ask, "What is she trying to communicate?"

Instead of immediately correcting, perhaps we can gently explore.

Instead of saying, "No, that's not right," we might say, "Tell me more."

Instead of insisting on the correct word, we can look for clues.

What was happening around her?

What was she doing?

Who was she talking about?

What had happened earlier?

What does she usually mean when she uses that particular word?

In other words, **context becomes our dictionary.**

***Don't make them work harder than they already are***

Imagine travelling to a country where you don't speak the language.

You know exactly what you want to say.

You know that you need help.

But you don't know the words.

You try to explain.

You point.

You gesture.

You use whatever words you know.

Now imagine that instead of trying to understand you, everyone around you keeps correcting your grammar.

"You're saying it wrongly."

"That isn't the right word."

You would probably feel frustrated, embarrassed and eventually give up trying.

For some people living with dementia, this can happen every day.

They are living in a world where familiar words are becoming harder to retrieve, while everyone around them continues to expect them to communicate in the way they always have.

Perhaps we need to meet them halfway.

Perhaps we need to learn their new language.

Let's build bridges, not walls.

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

# Someone's child did not come home today



**Hope, Healing & the Human Heart**

**Dr Brendan J. Gomez**

Rohan was seventeen (not his real name). His classmates thought him a bit odd, so they left him out — of games, jokes, weekend plans. Nobody hit him. Nobody shouted at him. They simply made him a little more invisible each day.

He was not completely alone. Jason was another boy the others called strange. From Form Four to Form Five, the two of them held each other up. One friend was enough. One friend is very often enough. Then one afternoon they quarrelled in the science lab, and were sent to the principal. Something broke between them that day, and Rohan lost the only person in that school who talked to him.

He did not come home that evening. The next morning, his mother found him. He was still in his school uniform. Still in his school shoes. His bag was still with him. He had left for school that morning like any other day. He never came back from it.

World Suicide Prevention Day fell on September 10. It is not a day we celebrate, and this year our newspapers barely marked it. A month later, World Mental Health Day came with forums and ribbons. The children we lost in between made no news at all.

**A school of a thousand**

We used to speak of suicide in adult terms. That is no longer true, and it saddens me more than I can put into words. The National Health and Morbidity Survey of 2023 found one in six Malaysian children aged five to fifteen likely to have a mental health problem — double the burden of 2019. Among teenagers aged 13 to 17, one in four shows signs of depression, one in eight has had suicidal thoughts, and one in ten has already attempted.

Put that into a building you know. In an ordinary school of a thousand at assembly, some 250 are struggling, and about 100 have already tried to end their lives. They sang the anthem. They sat their exams. They said they were fine.

And here is the finding that should stop us. Asked what troubled them, these children did not name exams, or phones, or money. Nearly half of it was other children: having no good friends, being left out, being bullied, not being liked. That happens in classrooms, canteens and group chats — which means the rest of us can do something about it.

**One death is never one death**

The loss never stops at the family; the World Health Organisation estimates that 135 people are affected by a single suicide. I heard recently of thirteen-year-old Nicole (not her real name). The day after she died, her best friend tried to take her own life too — not only because she had been left without her friend, but because fingers had started pointing at her. A child was made to carry the blame for another child's death, on top of grief already unbearable.

**Things we do not count as harm**

Leaving a classmate out, on purpose, day after day, is a form of bullying. It leaves no bruises, so we do not count it. So is talking behind someone's back. This is not a soft point: when Ministry of Health researchers looked at nearly 27,500 Malaysian secondary students, those who had been bullied were almost five times more likely to have attempted suicide.

I think of a sixteen-year-old girl who could not bear her schoolmates gossiping about her being interested in another girl, and a seventeen-year-old boy who was the running joke of his school for years. Both died. None of us was in the space where these kids were found. But we built the room.

**The one who is missing**

The Gospel gives us an image of a shepherd counting His sheep and finding one missing; He leaves the ninety-nine to go after that one. He does not wait for the lost sheep to report itself.

Every school has its ninety-nine — the ones who are fine, who get invited. And every school has the one at the edge of the field. Our instinct is to mind the ninety-nine. Faith asks something harder: go and look for the one.

**What we can do**

***Parents:*** ask who your child sat with at recess, not "how was school" — they will say "okay". Ask who they would call when they are hurting. If the answer is "nobody", that is information you need. And if they ever say they want to die, do not promise secrecy. Say: "Thank you for telling me. We will get help together."

***Teachers:*** exclusion is data. Watch the child at the edge of the field, the one no group will take. Push for proper screening, so the one in ten is found before, and not after an incident.

***Parishes:*** our children are already with us — on Sundays, in catechism class, at BEC gatherings. Train catechists and youth leaders to notice and to ask. Watch the teenager who arrives alone and leaves alone. A parish may be the only place a child is known by adults who are not his teachers or his parents.

***Young people:*** be the one who says "come sit with us"; and the one who does not forward toxic messages. If a friend tells you they want to die, tell a trusted adult. That is not betrayal. That is loyalty.

***Those who decide;*** fund school counsellors properly and create school psychologist posts in every district.

**The part that belongs to all of us**

We did not push these children over the cliff. Most of us would think we haven't met these children. But every child belongs to a community, and every community is made of ordinary people making ordinary choices — to include or exclude, to speak up or scroll past. Rohan had been in the care of a school, a class, a country. We are all somewhere in that story.

One hundred children in every thousand have already tried to leave us. They are still here. That is the whole point. There is still time, and still a hundred small things we can do before the next loss of life.

**Helplines**

You are not a burden for asking. Asking is the bravest thing in the story. If you or someone you know needs support, these are free:

- *Talian BuddyBear* (for children and young people): 1800-18-2327
- *Befrienders Kuala Lumpur*: 03-7627 2929, 24 hours — or find your nearest centre at *befrienders.org.my*
- *Talian HEAL* (national mental health helpline): 15555, daily 8.00am to midnight
- *Talian Kasih:* 15999, or WhatsApp 019-261 5999

A fuller list: *findahelpline.com/countries/my*

*No real names were used in this article, and circumstances were changed so that no actual person can be identified.*

**Dr Brendan** *is a psychologist, associate professor, and fellow traveller of life that believes each one of us matters, and each one of us can make a difference — especially when our journey is filled with storms, and our ability to cross waves is by the power of Jesus Christ.*







# A BEACON OF HOPE ON TWO WHEELS

**Christina Lazaroo**

For the members of St Jude Bikers Club, their motorcycle journey began long before the high-powered engine started. It began with prayer.

Gathered before the altar, they entrust their journey to God, asking for protection for themselves and everyone sharing the road. Then, with helmets on and engines running, they set off, not simply to enjoy the ride, but to discover the churches, people and experiences waiting along the way.

"When the helmet goes on and the engine starts, the highway becomes our aisle, and the ride becomes our prayer," said Augustus Anand, one of the founders of St Jude Bikers.

It is a simple expression of what the St Jude Bikers hope to embody: a Catholic fraternity that transforms every journey into a pilgrimage, sharing a Christ-centred brotherhood wherever the road takes them.

Their vision is captured in a phrase that has become central to their identity, *"A beacon of hope on two wheels."*

**A vision born over coffee**

The story of St Jude Bikers Club began in 2025, during the Feast of St Jude at the Church of St Jude, Rawang. Augustus Anand, Francis Vincent, Peter Savirimuthu and Ravindran Nicholas were discussing motorcycles over coffee when the idea of forming a group emerged.

Inspired by the Year of Hope, they saw an opportunity to bring together their shared passion for riding and their Catholic faith. Rather than forming a group centred solely on motorcycles, they envisioned a fraternity whose journeys would have a spiritual purpose.

Five members formed the founding group. Soon, others joined, and seven members embarked on their first pilgrimage, visiting five parish churches over two days.

Led by Francis, their maiden journey covered approximately 800 kilometres, taking them from Rawang through several churches before reaching Kuantan and returning via Port Dickson. It was an ambitious undertaking, particularly for a group whose members were still finding their footing as long-distance riders.

The return journey brought heavy rain, poor visibility and unexpected difficulties. One rider was struck by a trailer, escaping with damage to his motorcycle's side mirror, while another struggled to continue because of the cold.

Yet the experience became part of the group's shared story, teaching them about endurance, responsibility and the importance of staying together.

They recalled a phrase the members took away from that journey: "No pain, no journey. No journey, no growth. No growth, no fulfilment."

For the members, the challenges were part of a larger journey of growth. They were learning not only how to ride together, but how to become a fraternity grounded in faith and mutual care.

**Finding God along the way**

Since that first pilgrimage, the group has continued to explore their faith through the places they visit. In May 2026, the members embarked on a Marian pilgrimage to churches and shrines in the northern region, including Gopeng, Parit Buntar, Bagan Serai and St Anne's, as well as the College General Seminary in Penang.

Each stop offered an opportunity to pray, learn about the Church and deepen their understanding of their faith. The journeys also created space for members to share their personal experiences, joys and struggles.

For Jeevan Durai Raj, who joined the group more recently, this fellowship became a source of spiritual renewal.

Before the first pilgrimage, he had been going through personal difficulties. Even when the trip approached, he was unsure whether he should go. But his fellow members encouraged him to join them.

The journey began at 5.00am with prayer. As the group travelled from one church to another, Jeevan found himself taking in the scenery, listening to praise and worship music,




and reflecting on the challenges he had been carrying.

At every stop, there was another opportunity to pray. At the end of the day, the members gathered to talk about their lives, share their struggles, and encourage one another.

Gradually, Jeevan found himself experiencing a sense of peace and clarity he had been missing.

"My mind was so clear and peaceful," he recalled.

He described the pilgrimage as a restart, an experience that helped him return to daily prayer and rekindled his desire to attend church. He began to see riding not merely as a hobby, but as a time when he could quieten his mind, reflect, and communicate with God.

"I won't say I got everything sorted, but I gained a lot of clarity," he said.

The experience was deeply personal. During the interview, Jeevan shared that it was the first time he had spoken openly about how the journey had affected him.

His story reflects the heart of St Jude Bikers' mission. The pilgrimage was not simply about covering kilometres or visiting a list of churches. It became an opportunity for one member to reconnect with his faith, supported by friends who encouraged him to take that first step.

Peter also spoke of renewed enthusiasm for prayer and church life after visiting different churches and the seminary. The experience deepened his appreciation of the Church and encouraged him to learn more about the faith.

Through these journeys, the members are discovering that pilgrimage is not only about reaching a sacred destination. It is also about allowing God to work within them along the way.

**A brotherhood with a purpose**

While the pilgrimages give the group a spiritual direction, their sense of fraternity is expressed in the way members care for one another.

"Never leave a brother behind" is their guiding principle. If a motorcycle breaks down, the group stops. If a member loses contact with the others, they wait until everyone is reunited.

During one ride to Penang, a member took a different route and lost contact with the group. The others waited by the roadside for about an hour until they could reconnect. On another journey, a motorcycle broke down twice, delaying the group's arrival at their hotel.

For the members, these are not inconveniences to be brushed aside. They are reminders that the journey is shared, and that reaching the destination matters less than ensuring everyone arrives together.

This spirit of care extends beyond their motorcycles. The members come from different backgrounds and professions, including lorry driving, air-conditioning work and aircraft engineering. They also contribute to various parish ministries, from the Parish Pastoral Council and Family Life ministry to the Basic Ecclesial Community, choir and parish feast celebrations.

Their common ground is their Catholic faith and the friendship they have built through riding.

Even their shorter breakfast rides often include a visit to a church or chapel, where they spend time in prayer before continuing their day. Along the way, conversations about motorcycles give way to conversations about family, personal struggles and life.

Parish priest of the Church of St Jude, Fr Simon Labrooy, has set the parish theme for 2026 as *All Are Welcome, Everybody Belongs*. For them, this message resonates with the fraternity they are building: people with different experiences and responsibilities coming together through a shared faith.

The motorcycles may have brought them together, but it is the relationships formed along the way that give the group its deeper meaning.

**A logo that tells their story**

The group's mission is also reflected in their emblem, which brings together the symbols that guide their identity.

On the left is St Jude, the patron saint of hopeless cases, representing hope and resilience. The emblem also features St Columbanus, patron saint of motorcyclist, known for his his vast, adventurous travels by road across Europe during the Middle Ages, alongside a crucifix that identifies the group as a Catholic fraternity.

Wings represent the protection of guardian angels, while the motorcycle itself serves as a reminder of the passion that first united the members.

Together, these symbols express the balance the group seeks to maintain: a love of riding, rooted in faith and directed towards a greater purpose.

Although named after the Church of St Jude, the group is not restricted to parishioners. Anand said the invitation is open to anyone who owns a motorcycle, with the hope that the fraternity can continue to grow.

For its members, being a Catholic biker is not simply about displaying a religious emblem while riding. It is about allowing their faith to shape how they travel, how they treat others and how they live their lives.

**Looking beyond the road**

As St Jude Bikers Club continues to grow, its members hope their mission will eventually extend beyond pilgrimages and fellowship.

Jeevan envisions a community that can be called upon to volunteer at parish events, assist with camps, participate in social services and offer help wherever it is needed. He hopes the group can use the different talents and experiences of its members to serve both the Church and the wider community.

He also hopes their example will encourage young people to discover a place for themselves in the Church, showing them that faith can accompany their interests, friendships and everyday lives.

In the longer term, he dreams of seeing other parishes establish their own motorcycle ministries, creating opportunities for similar fraternities to connect and serve together across Malaysia and beyond.

These are aspirations the group hopes to develop in the years ahead. For now, its members continue to build their fraternity one ride and one pilgrimage at a time, with plans to travel along the East Coast in November 2026 and a longer-term goal of visiting every church in Peninsular Malaysia.

Their journey is still unfolding, but its direction is clear. For St Jude Bikers, the open road is an invitation to grow in faith, strengthen friendships and become a source of hope to others. Every church visited offers a moment for prayer; every challenge presents an opportunity to practise patience and solidarity; every journey brings the members closer together.

And as they continue riding towards new destinations, they carry with them a mission that reaches beyond the kilometres covered: to remind one another that faith is a journey best travelled together, and that hope can be shared wherever the road leads.

# Known, loved and called

***"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." – Jeremiah 1:5***



**Thinking Aloud**

Susai Anthony Muthu

Every generation inherits unique opportunities and challenges. Ours is the digital age, which has transformed how we learn, work, travel, and communicate. We rightly give thanks for these achievements, yet technology cannot answer every question.

Perhaps the most important question every human heart eventually asks is: ***Who am I?***

This question belongs to every stage of life. Children ask it as they discover the world; teenagers seek acceptance; adults revisit it as careers change, families grow, and retirement brings uncertainty. The search for identity lies at the heart of being human.

Previous generations often sought answers close to home, discovering themselves through family, teachers, friends and the parish community. Their smaller world often offered clearer reference points for understanding their place in society.

Today's young people inhabit a different world. From waking until putting away their phones at night, they encounter endless opinions, images and expectations. They compare themselves with strangers, measure their worth by numbers on a screen and judge themselves through others' approval — or disapproval.

The digital landscape offers genuine benefits: young people can study from home, learn languages, discover cultures and develop talents. Social media reunites friends, inspires charitable works and connects communities in crises.

Yet every blessing has its shadow. Comparison can distort our self-understanding, making us believe our value depends on appearance, popularity, success or attention. Seeking outside affirmation leaves our identity fragile, because public opinion constantly changes.

Families and parish communities therefore have an important role: offering young people spaces where they are welcomed without performing, listened to without judgment, and encouraged to recognise their gifts. Such belonging helps them grow in confidence and offer acceptance to others.

The Christian understanding of the human person offers a more secure foundation. Our dignity does not depend on achievement, wealth, appearance or public recognition, nor does it disappear with failure. It is rooted in a profound truth: we are created by God, loved into existence and fashioned in His image and likeness.

Long before the world knew us or judged our successes and mistakes, God knew and loved us. If our identity is received rather than invented, we need not spend our lives proving our worth. We can develop our talents, pursue excellence and contribute generously, not to earn acceptance but in gratitude for our immeasurable value in God's eyes.

This understanding transforms how we see others. Every person is more than a profile, an opinion or a passing acquaintance. Dignity cannot be measured by social standing or digital influence. The elderly neighbour with few visitors, the child struggling at school, the colleague carrying hidden burdens, and the stranger sitting alone at Mass all share the same God-given worth.

Friendship is not measured by phone contacts or online followers. Genuine friendship grows through trust, shared experiences, honest conversations, and the willingness to remain present when life becomes difficult. It cannot be created instantly or sustained by convenience; it requires time, sacrifice and fidelity.

Jesus modelled patient companionship: He walked with people, listened, entered their homes and shared their tables. Hearts change through such accompaniment, and lives are renewed when people feel seen, heard and loved.

These lessons matter when young adults discern marriage. The desire to love and be loved is profound. Relationships across cultural and religious backgrounds can be marked by affection, respect and goodwill, which the Church recognises.

At the same time, she encourages young Catholics to reflect carefully on the deeper meaning of Christian marriage. Marriage is more than the union of two people who love each other today. It is a lifelong covenant in which husband and wife help each other grow in holiness, remain faithful through joy and suffering, and pass on the gift of faith to future generations.

For this reason, the Church encourages Catholics, wherever possible, to marry someone who shares not only their hopes and dreams but also their faith in Christ. This guidance is not prejudice against people of other religions or those without religious belief. The Church respects every person and the truths found in other faith traditions; her concern is pastoral.

Questions overlooked during courtship may become central in marriage. How will the family pray together? How will children be introduced to God? What values will guide decisions during a crisis? Where will husband and wife turn when suffering comes? These are spiritual as well as practical questions.

Shared faith cannot guarantee a perfect marriage, but it gives couples a common foundation in prayer, the sacraments, and passing on the faith.

Older generations can offer the young the witness of their lives. We cannot choose their vocation or live on their behalf, but we can demonstrate enduring love through spouses who forgive, parents who pray through hardship, and grandparents whose quiet faith remains steadfast. Their lives testify to authentic love's beauty.

Ultimately, every person longs to be known, to be loved, and to know that life has meaning. Technology can introduce us to the world, but it cannot satisfy these deepest desires. Only the God who created us can reveal who we truly are. Discovering our identity in Him frees us to love others with generosity, fidelity, and hope.

In a world that constantly invites us to define ourselves, the Gospel offers a liberating truth: our deepest identity has already been given. We are beloved sons and daughters of God, called by name, destined for communion and invited, in Christ, to become the people we were created to be.

**Susai** *describes himself as neither an accomplished nor a regular writer, but someone who occasionally puts his thoughts to paper, thinking aloud as it were.*

# Budget: The magic of a spending plan



**Faith and Finance**

Hazel Ong-Archibald

Budget.

Everyone needs a budget. In fact, it is so important that even an entire nation needs one.

Our Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, tabled the national budget on October 9, which inspired this piece. I had been looking for inspiration for this column, and there it was.

My first-hand experience with budgeting began during the 1980s recession, when I had to help provide for my family. I was only a teenager then. Looking back, it was one of the best ways to learn about managing money. Adversity has a way of shaping us for the better, if we choose to learn from it.

Today, my daughter, a Foundation student, is learning to budget as I give her just enough money to manage her expenses. I hope this teaches her to distinguish between needs and wants and appreciate the value of what she has.

Then, there's the short-term budget, which my husband is using to plan for our 25th wedding anniversary celebrations, to ensure we have a good one, but doesn't leave us "pokai" after the event.

So, what comes to mind when you hear the word budget?

From my experience with friends, family and clients, the word often recalls cutting back, scrimping and saving, or delaying a purchase. It can evoke negative feelings because, let's face it, most of us enjoy spending money. Being told to limit our spending is hardly something we look forward to.

A few years ago, when I attended the *Navigating Your Finances God's Way* course, I came across a brilliant way to counter this feeling. Instead of calling it a budget, why not call it a spending plan?

A budget can sound like a list of restrictions, telling us what we cannot buy or must give up. A spending plan, on the other hand, puts us in the driver's seat. It is about deciding beforehand how we want to use the money entrusted to us.

Rather than asking, "What must I stop spending on?", we can ask, "What do I want my money to do for me and my family?"

At the time of writing, the national Budget has just been announced, and we are still discovering how its measures will affect our daily lives. This piece is not about the Budget highlights. I am sure you have read about them in the newspapers, WhatsApp forwards and social media commentaries.

Instead, I invite you to ponder how the Budget touches our lives in the different roles we play: as wives and husbands, parents and children, caregivers and elderly parents, parishioners, neighbours and citizens.

Personally, I am happy that the My50 unlimited public transport pass continues. It has allowed me to commute without a car, and what a blessing that has been.

Going carless saves me the costs of maintenance, insurance and road tax, parking, tolls and hire-purchase payments, not to mention the depreciation of a significant financial commitment. I also enjoy doing my part for the environment by reducing the number of cars on the road. Walking, one of my preferred forms of exercise, naturally becomes part of my daily routine. One decision, several benefits.

Being part of the sandwich generation, I am also pleased to see the expansion of tax relief for parents and grandparents to cover care-related expenses beyond healthcare. For those of us supporting our children while caring for ageing parents, every bit of help matters.

But what do we do with the money we save or the additional tax relief we receive? Do we simply spend it elsewhere, or use it to strengthen our financial foundations?

As Catholics, we can take this opportunity to reflect on how we can become better stewards of the resources entrusted to us. Beyond meeting our family's immediate needs, how can we reach out to the wider community?

Our children's education and our retirement needs are important financial pillars. If we have elderly parents, their care must also be factored into our plans. We need to meet these responsibilities while considering what we can contribute to our Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC), parish and archdiocese.

This is where the magic of a spending plan kicks in.

When we put our plan on paper or in a spreadsheet, we gain clarity. We can see where our money goes and whether we are allocating too much to one area while neglecting another. Perhaps, savings from commuting without a car can strengthen our emergency fund. Tax relief may ease the cost of caring for our parents. These resources resulting from the National Budget can go towards our children's education, retirement savings or charitable giving.

The possibilities differ from one household to another. What matters is making these decisions intentionally rather than leaving them to chance.

A spending plan allows us to give with greater confidence and peace of mind because we have also provided for our responsibilities. Good stewardship is not about choosing between caring for our family and giving to others. It is about finding a sustainable balance that allows us to do both, intentionally and faithfully.

A spending plan is more than a spreadsheet filled with numbers. It reflects what matters to us, the responsibilities we carry, the future we hope to build and, the people we wish to bless along the way.

So, as we reflect on the national Budget, perhaps the more important question is this: What will I do with the resources entrusted to me?

Ultimately, it is not just about how much money we have, but how wisely and purposefully we use it. And perhaps that is the real magic of a spending plan.

**Hazel** *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.*



Fr Gerard Theraviam

# Returning to 'that little springtime'

I recently returned from Taizé, France, which Pope St John II (quoting Pope St John XXIII who had visited it as a cardinal) described as 'that little springtime'. Pope John Paul II visited it as part of his visit to France, compelled, as he put it, by 'an interior need'. I was blessed to make my annual retreat there, part of a contingent of seven Malaysians, both Protestant and Catholic.

The ecumenical community of Taizé, known for its simple prayer style, meditative chants and focus on youth, annually attracts tens of thousands of young pilgrims from Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox backgrounds. However, older adult participants like myself, some who had been coming from their youth, are also welcome, especially outside the summer months when the huge influx of youth have returned to school although there were some school groups and young adults there.

Taizé is situated in rural Burgundy, France, where about 80 brothers from Protestant and Roman Catholic backgrounds live, work and pray together. They live a "parable of community" with lifelong monastic vows committed to reconciliation.

The Community at Taizé was founded by Brother Roger (1915-2005), the son of a Lutheran pastor and a French Protestant mother. He visited the village of Taizé when he was 25, desiring to found a Protestant monastic community. He later bought two houses to help the victims of war, including Jews escaping from the Nazis. In 1944 he set up a religious community with some other like-minded men. He said at that time, 'I discovered my Christian identity by reconciling within myself my Protestant origins and my faith in the Catholic Church'. Five years later, the brothers would take their first monastic vows and the community grew. Initially viewed with suspicion, the Brothers gradually were accepted by the different denominations and today the brothers come from different traditions and 30 countries. In the first 20 years, the brothers lived in relative isolation but in the sixties, young people started coming to share with the brothers, pray, and search for spiritual peace. Many young people from Malaysia have visited Taizé, some staying for longer periods as volunteers.

All his life Bro Roger devoted himself to the reconciliation of the Churches. Sadly, Bro Roger's life ended tragically in 2005, during the evening prayer service among 2,500 youth and the brothers. He was stabbed by a young schizophrenic woman from Romania. He died shortly afterwards. True to their call to reconciliation, the brothers forgave her and Bro Alois, his successor prayed at his funeral, 'With Christ on the cross we say to you, Father, forgive her, she does not know what she did.'

The day in Taizé is punctuated by Community prayer at the Church of the Reconciliation – morning, noon and night. This is perhaps the highlight – repetitive chants in different languages, silence and the Scriptures punctuate the time. Night prayer was particularly evocative for me as after the official prayers were over, the chants continued allowing time for personal prayer and meditation, as well as counselling with a Brother and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, if so desired. Daily Mass is celebrated in the Crypt, something I deeply appreciated.

Most visitors, or pilgrims, come for a week, arriving on the Sunday as I did. Each day there was a formation led by a Brother – and then there was plenty of time for reflection. Also there was a time to come together as groups to share. I was truly blessed to have a very open group that shared from the heart, being very vulnerable as well as supportive to each other. Deep spiritual friendships were made, sustained today as we have returned to our daily lives by WhatsApp. Meals are very basic, helping us to embrace simplicity and also be one with the poor. There were chores to do as well from washing up to sweeping and cleaning the toilets. Accommodation is basic but so much more comfortable from when I first went and lived in a large tent. The week climaxed the following Sunday when the Eucharist is celebrated – it was a privilege to concelebrate in it.

For me, it was also going back to the springtime of my own life as I had known of Taizé particularly through its music since my teens. However, it was not till my twenties where I made a fleeting 24-hour visit. That made a powerful impact on me as I longed for a more contemplative spirituality – the chants, silence and scripture spoke to my heart. I was also blessed to encounter Brother Roger, the founder personally. While he spoke to me in French which was interpreted, it was not just the words but the person himself that has stayed in my memories. This time I had the opportunity to meet the current Prior, Bro Matthew and have lunch with the brothers.

Some Taizé brothers have visited Malaysia over the years and soon after I visited, Bro Ghislain and Bro Jean-Marie came to Penang, staying in the seminary where I was studying and so the connections were strengthened. This time I met Bro Ghislain, now much older (as I am too) but missed Bro Jean-Marie, who had gone on home leave. In recent times, Bro Jean Patrick has visited Malaysia and is due to be back soon.

I returned to Taizé in my thirties this time for an entire week but the opportunity did not revisit itself till my sixties when I went with a group of 7, both Catholics and Protestants from Malaysia.

My time in Taizé was an opportunity to rekindle my relationship with God, Self, Community and Creation. There was a strong sense of being buoyed by God's love during the week. As a practitioner of Christian Meditation, I found the chants helping me to launch into the quiet and to meditate in my personal silence, while buoyed by the chants resonating around me. Far away from my normal hustle and bustle, it was an opportunity to emulate Mary, rather than just Martha – while recognising that both contemplation and action are necessary. While I enjoyed the contemplative silence, I also appreciated the deep conversations where hearts met. Being in France in mild summer weather allowed the opportunity to go for walks and be in touch with nature as well as visit little village churches nearby.

Would I go again? Hopefully, if the opportunity arises, but one must live the spirit of Taizé wherever we are planted, making time for contemplative prayer. The pilgrim may go away on a journey but must return to continue the pilgrimage at home, blooming where God has planted me. Taizé 2026 allowed me to rekindle the springtime of my love relationship with God and the Other – for this I praise God.

For more information on Taizé: *http://www.Taize.fr*

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



Fr Ron Rolheiser

# You must have a wonderful mom

There is an instance in the Gospels where, while Jesus is speaking, a woman from the crowd calls out to Him: "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts that nursed You!" (Luke 11, 27).

In effect, she is saying: *"You must have a wonderful mother! Look how you turned out!"* Jesus responds by saying: "Rather, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it."

It's easy to misunderstand His answer because, on the surface, it sounds like He is downplaying the compliment to His mother. But His response is really: "Yes, I have a wonderful mother, but it's not because she gave Me biological birth that makes her special; it's her faith that makes her special and particularly wonderful as a mother." In essence, He's saying: "Yes, My mother, like all mothers, is wonderful in her biology, but My mother is particularly wonderful in her faith." When Jesus says, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it, He has His mother especially in mind.

The renowned Scripture scholar Raymond E. Brown points out that the apostolic community gave Mary such a special place, not particularly because she was Jesus' biological mother, but because of her special faith.

Among the various lessons contained in that is this: For Jesus, *faith trumps biology.* For Him, real family is defined by faith, not biology or anything else. Who are my actual brothers and sisters? For Jesus, it's those who hear the Word of God and keep it.

I write this next part only with this caveat: Biological family is a foundational anthropological structure, coming from God and nature, and it needs to be nurtured and defended, especially today when it is under siege from many sides. A healthy society needs healthy families; a healthy Church needs healthy families; a healthy country needs healthy families; a healthy world needs healthy families; healthy liberals need healthy families; healthy conservatives need healthy families; and healthy individuals tend to come from healthy families. Moreover, many of our deepest joys are experienced within a biological family. The biological family needs to be defended. The same holds for all our other families.

But, that being respected, we must also have the courage to say that, for Jesus, *faith trumps biology, denomination, religion, ethnicity, nationality, ideology, and gender.* Our deepest, real, forever family has faith as its root.

- *Who are our brothers and sisters?* Our biological family makes for real family, but our deepest, forever family is made up of all others who have faith in God, which does include our biological family if they share faith with us.
- *Who are our fellow church members?* Our fellow church members are all fellow Christians, irrespective of denomination, who have a sincere faith in Jesus Christ. In faith we are all one family.
- *Who are our fellow pilgrims as we journey through this world?* Our deepest, forever fellow pilgrims are all women and men, irrespective of their religion or honest agnosticism, who are sincerely searching for truth, goodness, beauty, and justice.
- *Who is our real ethnic family?* It's everyone on this planet, irrespective of skin colour, mother tongue, or racial history, who is sincerely searching for a community within which differences will make for harmony and unity.
- *Who are our fellow citizens?* Our fellow citizens, fellow patriots, are not necessarily those with whom we share a country and a common history; more deeply, it's people from every country in the world who, with us, share one land given equally to us all by God. For Jesus, there can be no Christian nationalism.
- *Who constitutes my ideological, political family?* It's not those who share a liberal or conservative temperament and ideology with me. My deepest, forever ideological family is made up of those for whom truth and justice lay waste to all ideologies, both liberal and conservative.
- Who is my family in terms of gender? Male? Female? LGBTQ? My real family is inside the Body of Christ, within which "there is no male or female." (Galatians 3, 28)

When Jesus asks who are My brothers and sisters and then identifies them with those who are listening to Him, (Matthew 12, 48-50) He is teaching that our true, forever family is not rooted in biology, denomination, religion, ethnicity, nationality, ideological temperament, or gender, but in a shared faith which transcends all of these.

So, like the woman who wanted to compliment Jesus' mother, go out to that good friend of yours who is a pious Muslim, and to that honest colleague of yours who voted the opposite of how you did, and to that struggling immigrant you've ignored whom you see living in a fear you have never shared, and go out to that gracious, bubbly New Age neighbour of yours, who has just brought a casserole to your door and who once gave you a rainbow keychain, and say: *You must have a wonderful mum! Look how you turned out!*

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

# LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER

Dear children,

Have you ever wondered how to show someone that you love them? Is it by giving them a gift, saying something nice, or helping them when they need you?

One day, a religious leader asked Jesus, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"

Jesus answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This means we should love God with our whole selves. We can show our love by praying, trusting Him and following His teachings.

Then Jesus gave a second commandment: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

But who is our neighbour? It is not just the person living next door! Our neighbours include our family, friends, classmates and even people we find difficult to get along with.

How can we live out these commandments?

We can show love for God by making time to pray and thanking Him for His blessings. We can show love for others by sharing our things, helping someone who is sad, forgiving those who hurt us and treating everyone with kindness.

Jesus teaches us that loving God and loving others go hand in hand. We cannot say we love God while treating others badly.

Love, Aunty C



## The Ten Commandments

Fill in the blanks using the words from the box.



I I am the Lord your God; you shall not have _____ before Me.

II You shall not take the _____ of the Lord your God in vain.

III Remember to keep holy the _____ day.

IV _____ your father and your mother.

V You shall not _____.

VI You shall not _____ adultery.

VII You shall not _____.

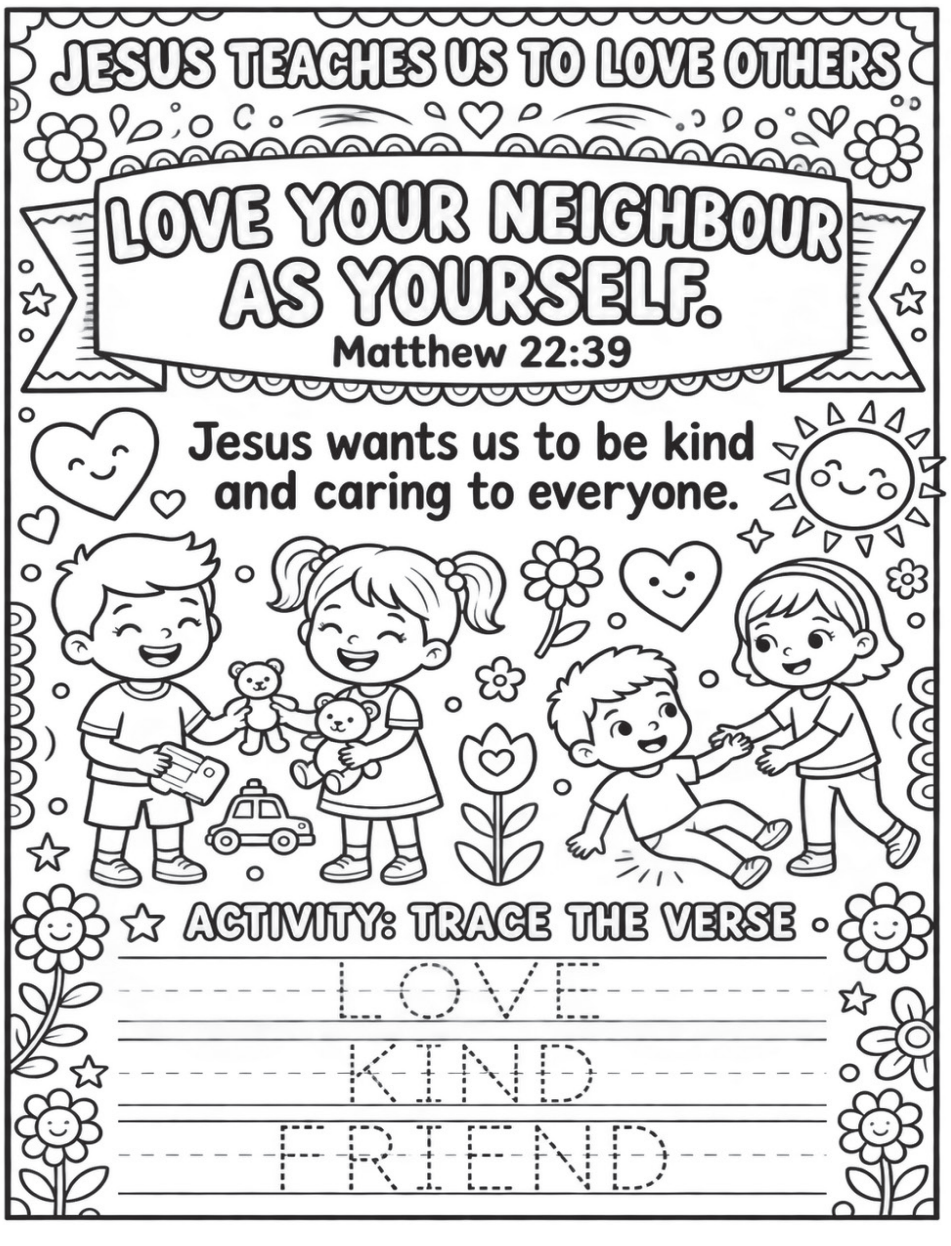
VIII You shall not bear false witness against your _____.

IX You shall not covet your neighbour's _____.

X You shall not covet your neighbour's _____.

**Word Bank**

- name
- neighbour
- other gods
- wife
- kill
- goods
- Honour
- Sabbath
- commit
- steal




## Connect the Dots!

Join the dots from a to q to complete the picture.



YOUTH



# Longing for love, uncertain about marriage



**VATICAN: Young people's hesitation about marriage does not always signal a rejection of lasting love. For many, it reflects uncertainty about whether they can build a stable future together, Church leaders told an international Vatican gathering on the family.**

The October 7–14 meeting marks the tenth anniversary of *Amoris Laetitia,* Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on love in the family. It brings together heads of Eastern Catholic Churches and presidents of bishops' conferences to consider how the Church can better accompany families.

Speaking on Oct 9, Auxiliary Bishop Stephen Fernandes of Bombay, India, urged participants to understand what young people seek when they speak about love, freedom, dignity and their future.

"Young people have not ceased to thirst for love. What has weakened for many is confidence that love can endure," he said.

Employment difficulties, housing costs, migration and social instability can make lifelong commitments appear daunting. For some, delaying marriage reflects a lack of confidence in the possibility of building an enduring life with another person.

Bishop Fernandes also noted that digital culture encourages immediacy and continual choice, while marriage requires patience, presence, forgiveness and perseverance.

He urged the Church to listen carefully to young people's experiences and present marriage as a freely chosen vocation grounded in fidelity and mutual self-giving.

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, said many young people encounter cultural attitudes towards sexuality and relationships that differ substantially from Church teaching.

In Australia, he observed, the connection between sexual activity, openness to children and Christian marriage is no longer widely understood or accepted. Social media, entertainment, peer culture and online influencers often place greater emphasis on personal fulfilment and immediate happiness than on permanence and sacrifice.

Young people's experiences also shape their expectations. Family breakdown, domestic violence, inequality between women and men, and the moral failures of Church leaders can undermine confidence in marriage and the Church's witness.

Nevertheless, Archbishop Costelloe emphasised that many continue to seek relationships that bring out their best and provide a foundation for a meaningful future. Those aspirations deserve encouragement and patient accompaniment.

He highlighted the importance of couples whose lives demonstrate faithful, enduring love.

As one married couple told him: "The most persuasive argument for Christian marriage is often a married couple living it well."

Parishes, Catholic schools and marriage preparation programmes could make such witnesses more visible, he suggested. Church teaching on marital intimacy should also be presented positively, helping young people appreciate its meaning rather than encountering it chiefly as rules and prohibitions.

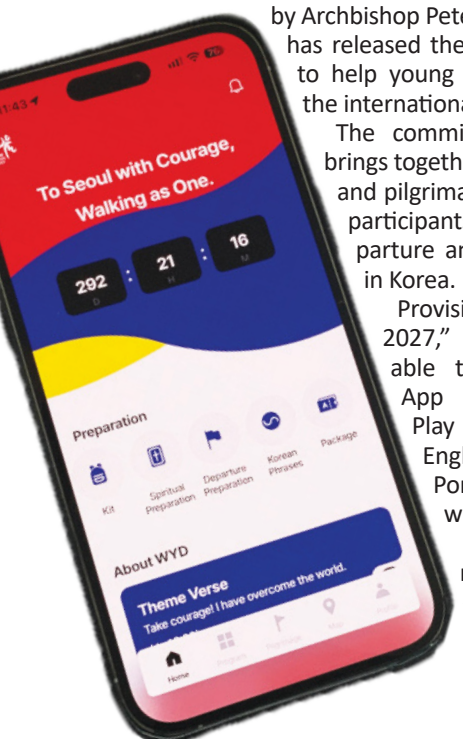
Cardinal Kevin Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life, said declining civil and Church marriages concern both pastors and parents, many of whom see their children struggling with loneliness or uncertainty about commitment.

He called for attention to the different causes in different communities, alongside a search for signs of hope.

The experiences of those who choose marriage, whether earlier or later in life, he said, can help the Church understand and present the vocation more effectively. **Register**



# Seoul launches WYD 2027 app for international pilgrims




SEOUL: The Local Organising Committee for World Youth Day 2027 Seoul, headed by Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taick, has released the official pilgrim app to help young people prepare for the international gathering.

The committee said the app brings together practical, spiritual and pilgrimage information that participants can use before departure and during their stay in Korea.

Provisionally called "WYD 2027," the app is available through the Apple App Store and Google Play in Korean and English. Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Italian will be added later.

Its permanent name will be selected through a global naming contest.

The app opens with the message, "Take courage and come to Seoul, a pilgrimage journey we walk together," along with a countdown to World Youth Day 2027.

Pilgrims can access most of its content without registering or logging in.

A preparation section covers pilgrim kits, spiritual preparation, travel arrangements, Korean greetings, and package information.

It also provides practical guidance on Korea's weather in July and August, humidity, ultraviolet exposure, sudden rain, indoor air conditioning and typhoons.

Travel information includes electrical voltage and plug types, packing tips, emergency alerts and the government's multilingual disaster notification app.

The app also provides information on everyday practices and regulations involving toilets, pedestrian crossings, waste disposal, lost property, smoking areas and noise.

Its Korean-language section offers expressions for greetings, farewells, thanking and apologising, asking for directions, and phrases that can be used in churches and during Mass. The expressions are presented in Korean with English pronunciation guides and meanings.

A separate pilgrimage section introduces the Catholic Seoul Pilgrimage Route, prayers for visits to holy sites, and a museum pilgrimage program.

Pilgrims who visit three designated sites can receive a completion certificate after verifying their visits through the app.

The sites are the Archdiocese of Seoul History Museum at Myeongdong Cathedral, the Seosomun Shrine History Museum at the Seosomun Martyrs' Shrine, and the Korean Martyrs Museum at the Jeoldusan Martyrs' Shrine.

Registration and login are required for the visit-verification feature.

The app also includes a Google Maps-based guide to shrines, event venues, and other facilities. Information on 24 locations is currently available, mainly covering pilgrimage sites and museums.

Other sections provide information on World Youth Day, the Catholic Church in Korea, Korean Catholic history and martyrs, Korean culture, public transportation and emergency procedures.

Organisers said the app will continue to be updated so pilgrims can access information before and during the gathering. Services linked to a pilgrim card are also under development.

World Youth Day 2027 is scheduled to be held in Seoul from August 3 to 8, 2027. **LiCAS News**

# GO FORTH IN FAITH AND COURAGE

**Isabel Joseph & Faustina Francis D'Cruz**

TELUK INTAN: Confirmation marks a call to move forward with courage, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide one's choices and inspire service, Cardinal Sebastian Francis reminded newly confirmed young people at the Church of St Anthony on October 4.

The celebration brought together 41 candidates from St Anthony's and three from the Church of St Jude, Gopeng. Cardinal Sebastian presided at the Mass, concelebrated by parish priest Fr Michael Dass and Fr Francis Xavier, with Deacon Anthony Michael assisting.

An entrance hymn sung by the Indonesian choir drew on the biblical imagery of the vineyard and the people of Israel, setting a prayerful tone for the celebration.

In his homily, the Cardinal reminded the congregation that God's blessings are not confined to the people encountered in ancient biblical accounts. They continue to be experienced today, including through the young people preparing to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

He emphasised that receiving the Holy Spirit does not remove life's obstacles. Rather, it strengthens believers to face them with faith and courage. For the newly confirmed, those challenges would extend beyond parish life into schools, universities, workplaces and the wider community.

Whatever difficulties they encounter, he urged them to trust in God's presence and guidance.

"Go forth, do not go backwards!"

The Cardinal's exhortation underlined the responsibility that accompanies Confirmation: to grow as disciples of Christ and put faith into practice through words, actions and service.

Highlighting the significance of the colour red, he spoke of the fire of the Holy Spirit, calling on the young people to keep that fire burning through active participation in their parishes and a deepening relationship with Christ.

Their gifts, he reminded them, are to be used generously for the good of the Church and society. They are called to stand firm in faith, face challenges bravely and reflect Christ's goodness and love wherever life takes them.

Through the anointing with sacred chrism, the candidates received the Sacrament of Confirmation, strengthening them for this continuing journey of discipleship. Certificates were presented at the end of Mass.

Gratitude was expressed to all who had supported their preparation and formation, nurturing their faith and accompanying them towards this celebration.

The parish community was also encouraged to continue praying for the newly confirmed, that the Holy Spirit would guide their decisions, sustain their courage and inspire them to serve God and His people.






# Called to bear sweet fruit

MELAKA: Six young people were encouraged to deepen their faith and bear "sweet fruit" through lives of love, faithfulness and service during a Confirmation Mass at the Chapel of St James, Merlimau, on October 4.

Bishop Bernard Paul presided at the multilingual celebration, which brought together the English, Tamil and Mandarin communities, with parish priest Fr Alexuchelvam Mariasoosai present.

The candidates, all aged 17, comprised four from the Chapel of St James and two from the Church of the Holy Spirit, Jasin. Two of the Merlimau candidates were Chinese-speaking.

Drawing on the Gospel image of the vineyard, Bishop Bernard posed a question to the confirmands: "Are you ready to bear fruit?"

He reminded them that Christians are called to bear sweet fruit — lives and acts of service that are pleasing to God. Their faith should find expression in love, goodness and faithfulness, bringing blessings to those around them.



The bishop also encouraged the young people to recognise their own growth rather than compare themselves with others. By reflecting on who they were a few years ago and who they are today, they could become more aware of God's work in their lives and more grateful for His grace and guidance.

He highlighted three attitudes essential to their continuing journey: trusting God, trusting themselves and taking responsibility for their choices and actions. Faith calls them to place their confidence in God while accepting their responsibility to grow, make good decisions and remain faithful.

Bishop Bernard urged the confirmands to sustain their commitment beyond the enthusiasm of the celebration. The grace received at Confirmation is meant to strengthen them throughout life, helping them remain steadfast in faith and consistent in their service to God.

The candidates were prepared by James, head of catechism teachers at the Chapel of St James; Sharon Lim, the chapel's Mandarin catechist; and Regina, head of catechism teachers at the Church of the Holy Spirit. Their dedication and guidance supported the young people in preparing for this important sacramental milestone.

As the newly confirmed continue their journey, the bishop's challenge offers a lasting invitation: to trust God, grow faithfully, and bear sweet fruit that glorifies Him and enriches the lives of others. **Magdalene Luis**




# St Michael's chapel celebrates young achiever

BATU ARANG: Academic achievement and faithful service came together in a joyful celebration at the Chapel of St Michael, where young parishioner Eric Marshall Benedict Lawrence received the Tan Sri Dominic Vendargon Award for his outstanding results in the 2025 Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examinations.

Parish priest, Fr Simon Labrooy, and assistant parish priest, Fr Jonathan Rao presented Eric with the award certificate and a cheque during a simple ceremony witnessed by his proud parents, family members and fellow parishioners.

Fr Simon commended Eric's dedication, hard work and commitment to academic excellence. An active member of the altar servers, Eric also contributes to the worship life of the community through his service at the altar.

The recognition offers encouragement for Eric to continue developing his talents, using them for the greater glory of God and the service of others. His achievement is also an inspiring reminder to other young people that commitment to learning and participation in parish life can grow together.

As Eric takes the next steps in his educational journey, the community is encouraged to keep him in prayer, asking that he continue to grow in knowledge, faith and generosity.



# Migrant boat tragedy prompts plea for action

OBOCK, Djibouti: At least 139 people, including children, have died after a boat carrying more than 300 migrants capsized off the coast of Djibouti.

The boat, which set off from Djibouti in the Horn of Africa, was on its way to Yemen when it capsized in the early hours of October 9. About 82 people survived.

Reporting the shipwreck on Oct 11, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) described the shipwreck as one of the deadliest recorded on the Eastern Route, which runs from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula.

The IOM specified that the number of those who drowned only includes those buried by authorities in Djibouti. Others have been buried by the migrants themselves but they won't be added to the official count until authorities can verify the bodies.

IOM Chief of Mission in Djibouti, Alexandre Coissac, told *AP news agency* that the victims were buried with no names, in a common grave, like in a war situation.

"They all have a mother, a father, and we may never learn what happened." Coissac said, explaining that the ship sank soon after departure, close to shore, "mainly because it was overcrowded."

At least 84 people remain missing, and the death toll is expected to rise.

Tens of thousands of migrants from the Horn of Africa travel through Djibouti and across the Bab el-Mandeb Strait every year toward Gulf countries in search of safety and economic opportunities.

Meanwhile, travelling in the opposite direction, in recent weeks, at least 2,000 Yemenis have received aid in Djibouti as the fighting has escalated in Yemen between the Saudi-backed, internationally recognised government and Iranian-backed Houthi rebels.

IOM Director-General Amy Pope mourned the tragedy, noting that "No one gets into a boat like that unless they believe there is no other safe way." Recalling that over 900 migrants died or went missing along the route last year, she appealed to governments and donors "to act before the next boat goes down." **Vatican News**

# Dozens of children killed in the collapse of school roof

PESHAWAR, Pakistan: The 34 children killed and those injured at Al-Khair school in Peshawar on October 15 morning were between 6 and 12 years old, while the oldest was 14. A teacher is also among the victims. Declaring an emergency situation and the need for extra staff, hospital authorities said some of the injured were in critical condition.

Hours after the collapse in the northwestern city, an emergency services spokesperson said that everyone trapped beneath the rubble had been pulled out and crews had cleared debris.

He told *The Associated Press* that the roofs of two classrooms collapsed when second- and third-grade children were in them with their teachers.

He said ambulances and disaster management personnel arrived within minutes and nearly 100 rescuers eventually joined the operation. He credited the rapid evacuation with saving at least 40 lives.

As grief gripped the neighbourhood, announcements broadcast over mosque loudspeakers invited residents to attend mass funeral prayers for those killed.

Building collapses are reportedly common in Pakistan, where construction standards are often poorly enforced. Many structures are built with substandard materials, and safety regulations are frequently ignored to reduce costs.

Officials offer condolences and promise investigations. The Police chief said that the school's owner had been arrested.

In Islamabad, the President and Prime Minister expressed sorrow over the deaths, called for a comprehensive investigation into the collapse and stressed the need to ensure school buildings meet safety standards.

"The entire nation", President Asif Zardari said, "shares the grief of the affected families in this hour of sorrow." **Vatican News**

## MEMORIAM

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**In Memory of Elvyn Ganasen Sivasothey**

**On his 1st Anniversary with the Lord**
**27-10-2026**

*A year may have passed,*
*but your love, wisdom, and guidance*
*lives on in us every day.*
*May God grant you eternal peace.*
Forever loved, remembered and deeply missed by children, family, and loved ones.

**17th Anniversary**
**In Loving Memory of**



**Mr Arokiasamy s/o Gnanapragasam**

**From the Lord:**
**17-08-1939**
**To the Lord:**
**28-10-2009**

*Dad*
*You are the greatest gift that we ever had in our life that came from God.*

Deeply missed and forever remembered by:
Wife: Madam A. Mangalamary,
Children, Grandchildren,
Sons-in–law & daughters-in-law.

**In Loving Memory of**



**James Muniandy**

Departed:
17th July 1989

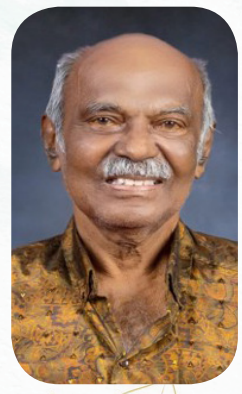


**Rosalind Michael (Sefora)**

Departed:
31st October 2016

*In cherished memory of our dear parents,*
*Ten years have passed since Mom joined Dad in glory.*
*Though absent from our sight, they are forever present in our lives through the love they left behind.*
*Forever loved, never forgotten.*

**5th Anniversary**
**In Memoriam**
**Beautiful Memory of My Loving Hubby**



**M. ARUL DASS**
**Departed:**
**17th October 2021**

*Though sad,*
*memories of you*
*always bring smiles*
*to our faces.*
*Though painful, we are*
*still learning to live*
*without you.*
*Though you are gone,*
*we will always love*
*and cherish you*
*In our hearts.*

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by
Loving Wife,
Sons, Daughters in law,
Grandchildren,
a host of relatives
and friends

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

Psalm 119:50



**36th Anniversary**
**In loving Memory of**
**Aisu s/o Sinnathamby**

**Born:**
**01-05-1937**
**Departed:**
**27-10-1990**

*Precious in the sight of the Lord*
*is the death of His saints.*
*- Psalms 116:15*

Lovingly missed by
wife, daughter, sons, daughters-in-law,
grandchildren & loved ones.



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# Missing Mass but still keeping the faith

SYDNEY: Many Australian Catholics surveyed about their irregular attendance at Sunday Mass continue to pray and regard their faith as important, according to a study released by the country's bishops on October 7.

The report, *Absent from the Table: Catholics in Australia Who Do Not Regularly Attend Sunday Mass,* explored both their continuing connection to faith and the reasons they do not attend Mass regularly.

Commissioned by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and conducted by its National Centre for Pastoral Research, the study surveyed 1,973 self-selected adult Catholics online in 2024. Researchers also interviewed 67 participants between March and July 2025.

"Despite their irregular attendance, most participants remained deeply connected to their faith," the executive summary states.

Around two-thirds said faith was very important to them, while 77 per cent affirmed that Jesus is the Son of God and 64 per cent prayed regularly. Just over half — 55 per cent — affirmed the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist; 24 per cent understood the Eucharistic elements as symbolic, while 21 per cent were unsure.


(Diocese of Parramatta/Alphonsus Fok)

The report cautioned that its findings, drawn from a self-selected sample, "are not fully generalisable to all Catholics in Australia".

Researchers identified 14 reasons for missing Mass. Leading factors included Mass not being a priority, a crisis of faith, family or household circumstances, liturgical concerns, difficulties with priests or other clergy, and the misuse of power and authority within the Church. Abuse, particularly clergy sexual abuse, was also cited as a significant factor undermining trust.

The bishops' most recent national count, conducted in 2021, found that about 417,000 people — 8.2 per cent of Australia's Catholics — attended Mass on a typical weekend.

Bishop Greg Bennet of Sale, the conference's vice-president and bishop-delegate for pastoral research, said the findings would help dioceses shape their pastoral responses.

"The hope is that each diocese will listen carefully to what people have shared and respond with pastoral initiatives shaped by their own communities and contexts," he said.

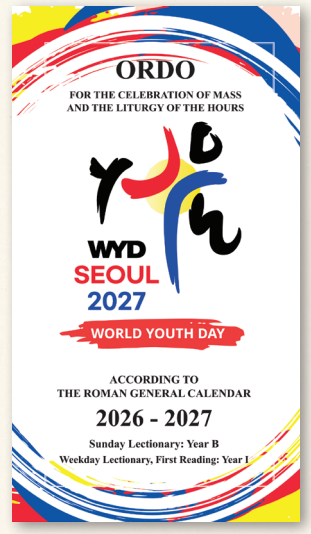
Many remained open to re-engaging with the Church, he added, calling for greater efforts to help them reconnect.

In a reflection published by his diocese, Bishop Michael Kennedy of Maitland-Newcastle urged the Church to consider people's experiences and sense of belonging.

"Rather than simply asking why people are no longer coming to Mass, we should be asking what they are looking for, what their experiences of the Church have been and what we can do to help them feel they belong."

**EWTN News**

ORDO
2026-2027

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# Church brings hope amid Ukraine's suffering


*Archbishop Visvaldas Kulbokas with the families of victims of a Russian attack on Ternopil.*

KYIV: The Catholic Church's mission in war-torn Ukraine is to remain close to those who suffer and offer hope against despair, said Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Visvaldas Kulbokas.

Speaking at an online conference on October 15, the nuncio said presence and hope were essential to the Church's response to war.

"Being present, because geographical distance always entails emotional distance. And then giving hope, because the Church's primary mission is always to make eternal life present in people's lives," he said.

Without this, the psychological consequences of war would be far worse, he added.

Archbishop Kulbokas likened this mission to that of approximately 100 military chaplains serving at the front. Their task, he said, was to accompany people in suffering and bring hope "so that people do not succumb to despair".

The Church's international networks also provide food, water, shelter, assistance for displaced people and psychological rehabilitation. He estimated that aid channelled through international Church organisations had considerably exceeded €1 billion.

This solidarity means Catholics in Ukraine "do not feel alone", he said.

Turning to diplomacy, the nuncio stressed the Holy See's willingness to maintain contact with all parties, including the aggressor.

He criticised what he called "sporadic diplomacy", questioning the international community's commitment to peace beyond occasional statements.

Drawing on Pope Leo XIV's appeal, he urged people to build peace through cooperation when political leadership falls short.

Otherwise, he warned, the world risks being governed by those with the most missiles and tanks.

"We must all take responsibility," he said.

**Vatican News**




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