

The Catholic Weekly HERALD

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.

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Celebrating as ONE nation



KUALA LUMPUR: As Malaysians unite to celebrate our 62nd Malaysia Day on September 16, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia (CBCM) calls on Catholics, Christians and all people of goodwill to embrace unity, uphold mutual respect, and work together in peace for the nation's common good.

In a pastoral letter dated August 31, CBCM President and Archbishop of Kuching, Most Rev Dato Dr Simon Poh, drew inspiration from Scripture: "Each one of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards, responsible for all these varied graces of God, put it at the service of others" (1 Peter 4:10).

Remembering the birth of Malaysia

Reflecting on the nation's history, Archbishop Simon recalled how the Federation of Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore (which later seceded in 1965) came together on September 16, 1963, to form Malaysia.

Born in Sarawak that same year, just months before the nation's birth, he remembered the debates among classmates when National Day was marked. "For example, in 1982, the newspaper would print it as the 25th National Day (since *Merdeka* was in 1957), while we only counted it as the 19th anniversary of Sarawak in Malaysia," he said. The long-standing confusion was finally resolved in 2010, when the Government officially declared Malaysia Day to commemorate September 16 as the true date of the nation's formation.

"Malaysia Day celebrates the coming together of Sabah, Sarawak and Semenanjung as a unified nation – with the aim of fostering an inclusive national identity as Malaysians," Archbishop Simon said, highlighting the nation's rich diversity of races, religions, cultures and communities, including the vibrant sounds and traditions of Borneo.

Faith leaders in nation-building

The archbishop also highlighted the significance of Malaysia hosting the Second Summit of World Religious



Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia (CBCM)



Leaders on August 28 in Kuala Lumpur. Organised by the Prime Minister's Office and the Muslim World League, the recent gathering drew 400 prominent global religious leaders under the theme *The Role of Religious Leaders in Conflict Resolution*.

Representing the Christian community were cardinals, arch/bishops, priests, pastors and church leaders – including Cardinal George Koovakad from the Vatican, and Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski, the Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia – together with delegates from the Christian Federation of Malaysia and the Association of Churches in Sarawak.

"This reflects the important role of religious leaders in strengthening multi-religious Malaysia," he noted.

Rejecting violence, living peacefully

Calling for Malaysians to be bridge-builders, the archbishop urged citizens to move beyond slogans and translate the national vision *Malaysia MADANI: Rakyat Disantuni* into concrete, life-giving actions.

"I humbly appeal to all fellow Malaysians not to allow prejudices, mistrust and violence to divide us," he said. "Let us stand together to denounce all forms of violence – bullying in our schools, abuse of children, harassment in the workplace, domestic violence in families, cyberbullying, extremism and fundamentalism in society.

"As part of nation-building, let us work tirelessly for better understanding and strengthen the bonds of unity across Sarawak, Sabah and Semenanjung.

Prayers for leaders and the nation

Quoting 1 Timothy 2:2, Archbishop Simon called for prayers for the King and Malaysia's civil, political and religious leaders, "that they may lead with wisdom, justice and integrity, guided by the principles of the *Rukun Negara*." He also reminded Malaysians of the need to safeguard the fundamental liberties and rights of the *rakyat* as enshrined in the Federal Constitution.

"On this Malaysia Day, let us commit ourselves to live in harmony as we celebrate our unity in diversity and strive for a future where everyone is respected, protected and cared for. Harmony begins with building friendship in the neighbourhoods, classrooms and offices," he said.

Archbishop Simon concluded with a blessing for the nation: "May God bless our beloved country, Malaysia, with peace, progress and harmony."

Selamat Hari Malaysia!



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HERALD

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We're looking for concise articles between 400 to 500 words, accompanied by high-resolution photos (300 DPI) in JPG or PNG format.

Don't forget to include captions that bring your images to life.

Your contributions are essential in keeping our faith community connected and informed.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Books, not barriers

The world observed International Literacy Day on September 8, a reminder that education is a universal right and not a privilege for the few. Yet, countless children remain excluded from classrooms due to war, poverty, displacement, or discrimination. Globally, over 120 million girls are still out of school, and many boys, too, are denied the chance to learn. Education is the foundation of human dignity, economic stability, and peace. Without it, societies stagnate, and cycles of poverty continue.

In Malaysia, we are not immune to these challenges. While we are spared the devastation of conflict, our children face other barriers — from rural poverty to the struggles of stateless and undocumented minors. Too many families still wrestle with the choice between putting food on the table and sending their children to school. For some, education remains fragile, a privilege they cannot afford.

Against this backdrop, the passing of the Education (Amendment) Bill 2025 in Parliament on July 30, marked a historic turning point. For the first time, compulsory education will no longer end at the primary level but extend through to secondary school. This bold move affirms a simple but profound principle: every child deserves a full education.

Lawmakers across the political spectrum praised the decision, seeing it as essential to human capital development and a necessary step if Malaysia is to become a developed nation. Six years of schooling are no longer sufficient to prepare our young people for today's realities. A minimum of eleven years — up to SPM or an equivalent qualification — offers a stronger foundation for critical thinking, communication skills, and employability. More importantly, it

ensures that children are given the tools to break the cycle of poverty and live with dignity.

Still, this policy raises tough questions. How will it be enforced fairly? Parents who neglect their responsibility risk fines or even jail. But punitive measures alone will not address the structural causes of school dropouts. Poverty remains the most persistent barrier. The indirect costs of education — uniforms, books, transportation — can weigh heavily on families in the B40 group and single-parent households.

There are also children who fall through the cracks: those with special learning needs, those in rural or Orang Asli communities with limited school access, and those who are undocumented. A law, on its own, cannot resolve these realities. Policymakers must ensure that safety nets are strengthened — from financial aid to mental health support, from transport subsidies to digital access. Otherwise, compulsory education risks being a promise unfulfilled.

The new law will only succeed if it is backed by comprehensive support. We cannot compel attendance without ensuring that classrooms are safe, inclusive, and adequately resourced. Overcrowded schools, teacher shortages, and bullying continue to drive children away from education. At the same time, the growing emphasis on exams and academic pressure can stifle rather than nurture young minds. True education must form not just workers, but whole persons — individuals with compassion, creativity, and resilience.

From a faith perspective, this amendment resonates deeply. Catholic Social Teaching has long upheld education as a fundamental human right, tied to the dignity of the person and the common good. Pope Francis reminded us that

education is an act of hope, an investment in the future of individuals and communities alike. By committing to secondary education for all, Malaysia has taken a step toward realising this vision.

But it is also an invitation to society — not only the government — to shoulder responsibility. Civil society groups, faith communities, and ordinary citizens can play their part in ensuring that no child is left behind. From supporting tuition classes for underprivileged students to advocating for inclusive policies for undocumented children, every effort matters.

We should also remember that education is about more than textbooks and exams. It is about forming character, nurturing empathy, and building bridges across our multi-religious, multi-ethnic society. A classroom where children of different backgrounds learn side by side is a seedbed for peace and understanding. It is here that they discover both, their unique identity and their shared humanity.

As we celebrate our 62nd Malaysia Day on September 16, let us renew our commitment as Malaysians: education must not remain a slogan, but a lived reality for every child. The recent amendment is historic, but its true impact will be measured in changed lives — in the Orang Asli child who no longer drops out after primary school, in the teenager from a struggling family who is supported to complete her SPM, and in the stateless child who is finally welcomed into a classroom.

The future of Malaysia will not be built by policies alone, but by our collective will to ensure that every child has a fair chance to learn, to dream, and to thrive. Books, not barriers, must define their journey. *Patricia Pereira*

Paradox of the Cross

Today we celebrate the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. This feast reminds us of the mystery of salvation through the cross of Christ and how we, as Christians, are called to embrace our daily crosses in ministry and in life.

The cross is never easy to face because it confronts us with suffering, loss, and sacrifice. No one naturally desires the cross, yet as Christians, we cannot avoid it. Jesus told us, "If anyone wants to be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk 9:23). Today's feast, therefore, invites us to look upon the cross not with fear but with faith. The cross, once a symbol of shame and death, has become the greatest sign of God's love and the source of our salvation. That is why we call it the "Paradox of the Cross."

In human terms, the cross was a cruel instrument of torture and humiliation used by the Romans to crush criminals and rebels. To die on the cross meant disgrace, abandonment, and complete failure. Yet, in God's plan, the very thing that symbolised shame and defeat became the means of salvation. Thus, through the cross of Christ came redemption. St Paul captures this paradox beautifully when he writes: "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18). The paradox of the cross shows us that through suffering came redemption, through weakness came strength, through death came life, through humiliation came glory, and what was once a sign of hatred became the ultimate expression of love.

This paradox runs throughout today's readings:

In the first reading from Numbers, the Israelites in the desert are saved not by avoiding the serpent, but by looking at the very image of the serpent that caused their suffering. Healing came from what seemed to harm.

In the second reading from Philippians, St Paul proclaims the *kenosis* of Christ — His self-emptying and obedience to the point of death on a cross. Because of His humility, He is exalted above every name.

In the Gospel according to St John today, Jesus reveals that just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up — so that all who believe may have eternal life. Lifted up in humiliation on the cross, Christ is also lifted up in glory as the Saviour of the world. The very instrument of torture becomes the bridge of salvation. For the world, it looked like defeat; but for Christians, it is the throne of victory.

The paradox of the cross is also something we can experience in our daily lives. The crosses we carry often feel heavy, painful, and sometimes unbearable. None of us desires suffering, rejection, or failure. Yet when we look at the cross of Christ, we see that God has the power to transform even our darkest moments into a path of grace. What seems like defeat can become a new beginning. What looks like failure can open the way to deeper trust in God.

In our own crosses — illness, disappointments, family struggles, failures, rejections, wounds in relationships — we might feel crushed. But if we embrace them in faith, they unite us to Christ, so that our suffering is not wasted or meaningless. The cross we wish to avoid becomes the very cross that saves us, shapes us, and draws us closer to God.

Here are a few suggestions for how we can embrace the paradox of the cross:

Embrace suffering with faith and hope

Do not give up when we face sickness, family struggles, or problems in daily life. Instead, carry them with Christ, trusting that God can bring good even from pain.

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr Ryan Innas Muthu

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross (C)

Readings: Numbers 21:4-9;
Philippians 2: 6-11;
Gospel: John 3:13-17

Choose love over revenge

Jesus conquered hatred not by violence but by forgiving His enemies. In our daily lives and ministries, when we forgive and accept those who have hurt us instead of retaliating, we live out the wisdom of the cross.

Accept weakness as a place of grace

The world tells us weakness is failure, but the cross teaches us that in weakness we are strong. As St Paul says: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell with me" (2 Cor 12:9). When we accept our weakness and depend on God's strength in prayer, we live the paradox.

Serve rather than be served

Jesus humbled Himself on the cross to bring redemption. Likewise, we Christians exercise this paradox whenever we put others before ourselves. As Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). He shows us the fullness of servant leadership. Similarly, we too may practice the paradox of the cross in our ministry.

As we celebrate the Exaltation of the Cross, let us not be afraid of our crosses in daily life. We live the paradox of the cross when we see weakness not as failure but as the very place of grace and strength. In our limitations and brokenness, God's grace is at work.



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Notifications and Updates

1. Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly 2025

In preparation for the Malaysian Pastoral Convention 2026, representatives from the three dioceses of Peninsular Malaysia gathered on August 26 and 27 at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, Kuala Lumpur to focus on the Final Document (FD) of the Synod and how its call to synodality speaks to the pastoral realities of the Catholic Church in Peninsular Malaysia. The sessions were facilitated by Dr Christina Kheng, a Catholic lay theologian, who played a significant role in the Synod process. Sharing the Final Document and the resources here for our kind reflection. <https://shorturl.at/xA50j>

2. CG360: Remembering with Gratitude, Fidelity and Hope

College General will celebrate 360 years of gratitude, fidelity and hope surviving and transcending numerous challenges and two World Wars. From its birth in Ayuthaya,

Thailand in 1665 to Pondicherry in India and finally to Penang in 1808, where it landed for 217 years to this very date, College General in its core tradition has faced all challenges including persecution and martyrdom in various parts of Asia. College General continues to move forward for 360 years. This history urges us to reflect the fidelity of God and our founding fathers, the MEP missionaries from Paris, France and their successors and calls all alumni of College General to gather in Penang, in this Jubilee Year of Hope 2025.

3. Establishment of the First Instance Ecclesiastical Tribunal in the Diocese of Penang

After nearly 40 years of faithful collaboration as part of the Inter-diocesan Peninsular Malaysia Ecclesiastical Tribunal, I am pleased to announce that the Apostolic Signatura in Rome has duly recognised the erection of the First Instance

Ecclesiastical Tribunal in the Diocese of Penang. Let us pray for the mission of this office for the diocese.

4. A Call to Celebrate the Regenerate! (PROTEC 2.0) Campaign Year 1 and the Season of Creation 2025

From the success of the first phase of the *Protect Our Earth, Protect Our Children* (PROTEC) Campaign 2020-2025, we are pleased to announce the launch of the second phase: the Regenerate! (PROTEC 2.0) Campaign. Regenerate! has been sanctioned by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei and coordinated by the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice. The theme for Regenerate! (PROTEC 2.0) Campaign Year 1 (September 1, 2025 – August 31, 2026) is *Regenerate Hope for Flora and Fauna*. Animals and plants are our sisters and brothers in creation, loved and seen by God. Please promote this campaign in all your parishes and

communities throughout the year from September 1 2025 to August 31, 2026. <https://shorturl.at/V7FEp>

The annual Season of Creation runs from September 1 (World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation) to October 4, the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi. The theme for the 2025 Season of Creation (SOC) is *Peace with Creation*. The materials to celebrate these events can be found at the link provided here. <https://seasonofcreation.org/resources/>

5. Completion of Contract at Mt Miriam Cancer Hospital Penang

Deacon Paul Kang Hian Beng has completed his term as CEO of Mt Miriam on August 31, 2025. He will continue to serve at City Parish, Penang. We thank God for the fruitful experience and continue to pray for his ministry.

Sebastian Francis

Cardinal Sebastian Francis

KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

September

- 14-19 Clergy Annual Retreat
- 20 AGM – Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism
- 20 Ecological Launch for KL Archdiocese and Cathedral of St John the Evangelist

PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

September

- 14 Confirmation – Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang at 10.30am
- 20 Meeting - The Great Pilgrimage of Hope, Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam at 11.30am
- 20 Confirmation – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam at 6.00pm

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

September

- 14 Mass in Tamil – Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai
- 19 Canossian Sisters 120th Anniversary Mass – Sacred Heart Chapel, Melaka

Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #238

Welcome dear friends

The National Day Celebrations drew crowds everywhere. Flags were not only flown but they were given out to children at Masses. Two medals gained at the BWF World Championship. Upside down flags still being reported.

What's next after the KL Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly 2025? Pray for your clergy who will be away for their annual retreat.

The Church of St Francis Xavier, Melaka prepares to commemorate the 480th Anniversary of the Landing of St Francis Xavier, on September 25, 2025.

Nearer to us: From jolts to shakeups. The jolts continue. Cracks noted. Building safety and inspections have begun.

The Jakarta unrest halts lawmakers' perks and overseas trips. Speeches, words; lectures on unity; division are not enough; only one rule of law and bold reforms, applied without fear or favour, allays fear.

Surfaces a reform group Projek Sama, calling for true national unity by reducing Malay-Muslim anxiety on losing their privileges.

SARA Aid injects RM2.2 billion into the economy and benefits 22 million.

A woman? Chinese? Malay? Attacks? Hugs? Nears the VVIP stand? Excites the media, the security and the VVIP. Maybe it is time for leaders to meet the *rakyat*, not isolate themselves in their ivory towers.

Making Peace Times: Pope Leo XIV invited all Christians to celebrate Creation Day 2025 on the 1st of September, invited by the Orthodox Church in 1989. It is an ancient Orthodox liturgical tradition from the 5th Century - a day to praise God as Creator, remember the mystery of creation in Christ, and inspire Christians to care for the created world. The theme for this year is "Seeds of Peace and Hope".

The Pope opens 'Laudato Si' Village', a place where spirituality, education; care for creation meet, at Castel Gandolfo. He reminded politicians that "values without Christ cannot change the world".

He said that Peace begins with what we say and do; by listening to God's loving voice, which alone can bring peace; recognising their God-given gifts and offering them "in loving service to God and to our neighbour."

He told the faithful that, even at the darkest moment, it was never too late to love and forgive; Jesus, despite being betrayed, HE did not allow evil to have the last word. He continued to love when everything seemed compromised.

A Thought For The Week: Emperor Akbar was inspecting his kingdom, when a minister, who was jealous of Birbal (a wise minister), complained to the Emperor about his bias to Birbal's suggestions.

Akbar then decided to show his court how wise Birbal was. There was a marriage procession going on. The Emperor ordered the ministers to find out whose marriage it was. The minister found out the name and returned with extreme pride.

But when Birbal went there, he asked all the details about marriage, both bride and groom family, where they were headed, what the bride and groom do in life, if they are educated, how the wedding was arranged and what the couple's future plans were. He came back and explained the full details to the emperor.

The Lesson from Akbar: Which was the shoddy job? Which was a good job? It is not about meeting deadlines.

It is about being thorough; using our intelligence to make whatever we do, to stand out. One can choose to be superficial and disconnected or be engaging and connected.

QnQ! Q asks: What does it mean when it is said "repay love with love."

Love has three and only three intimacies: speech, vision, and touch. These three intimacies God has chosen to make His love intelligible to our poor hearts.

God has spoken He told us that He loves us: that is Revelation.

God has been seen: That is Incarnation.

God has touched us by His grace: That is Redemption.

Well indeed, therefore, may He say: "What more could I do for My vineyard than I have done? What other proof could I give of My love than to exhaust Myself in the intimacies of love? What else could I do to show that My own Sacred Heart is not less generous than your own?"

If we answer these questions aright, then we will begin to repay love with love. Then we will return speech with speech which will be our prayer; vision with vision which will be our faith; touch with touch which will be our communion." **Archbishop Fulton Sheen**

Holy Spirit@work: Prayer is the best armour we have; it is the key which opens the heart of God. **St Padre Pio**

Something to tickle you: Every place is the place to find God, and God is in everything. **Sr Ilia Delio**

Bishop Bernard Paul

Faith rekindled at Eucharistic retreat

Sabrina Smith

SEREMBAN: More than 400 faithful attended a three-day Eucharistic retreat at the Church of the Visitation from August 22 to 24, experiencing a spirit of grace and renewal.

The retreat was led by Fr Joseph Edattu, VC, from the Divine Retreat Centre in the UK, and drew participants from across Malaysia, including Sarawak, as well as neighbouring Singapore.

Over the course of the retreat, the faithful were immersed in teaching, prayer, the

celebration of Mass, and hours of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. The atmosphere was one of unity and reverence, with many describing the experience as a time of grace and renewal.

Participants left strengthened in faith, with hearts touched and a renewed love for the Eucharist rekindled through the days of reflection and encounter with God.

Fr Joseph's talks unveiled treasures from Scripture and tradition, showing how the Old Covenant is fulfilled in Christ. He spoke of intercession, noting that Jewish tradition sees Rachel as a powerful intercessor,

foreshadowing Mary's role for Christians. Just as Jeremiah once called upon Abraham to intercede, Catholics seek the prayers of Mary and the saints before God.

The Ark of the Covenant was another focus, containing the tablets of the Law, Aaron's staff, and manna — the "bread of the face of God." This manna prefigured the Eucharist, the true bread from heaven. Fr Joseph emphasised that the Eucharist is not a symbol or ritual, but the real presence of Christ dwelling among His people.

He also reflected on Peter as the rock on which the Church was built, reminding the faithful that St Peter's Basilica in Rome stands on his tomb, a sign of Christ's enduring promise. The concept of anamnesis, or "living remembrance," was illustrated by the Israelites crossing the Jordan River and building an altar with twelve stones so future generations would recall God's power. In the same way, every Mass is a living remembrance of Christ's eternal sacrifice made present for us.

On miracles, Fr Joseph reminded participants that while healings attract people to God, true discipleship means embracing our cross. Miracles awaken faith, but faith matures in carrying our cross with perseverance and trust.

He also addressed common questions



Fr Joseph Edattu, VC

from Protestant pastors. The Mass, he explained, does not repeat Christ's sacrifice but makes the one eternal sacrifice present again. And though Christ is the one High Priest, He instituted the ministerial priesthood, just as Moses shared his mission with seventy elders. The covenant of Sinai finds its fulfilment in the new covenant sealed with Christ's Body and Blood.

Drawing the Old and New Testaments together, Fr Joseph showed that what Moses and the elders experienced on Sinai was fulfilled at the Last Supper, and is renewed in every Mass: heaven comes to earth, and Christ is present with His people.

As the retreat ended, participants were encouraged to continue deepening their faith through Scripture and resources such as Fr Joseph's Bible studies on YouTube.

The Eucharistic retreat was more than an event — it was a life-changing encounter with Christ. Over three days, the faithful were reminded that the Eucharist is not merely a symbol but the living presence of Christ. Many left spiritually renewed, carrying the powerful truth that in every Mass, heaven touches earth, and Christ is truly with us and for us.



The faithful participating in the praise and worship.

Serving with love at Merdeka outreach

BESTARI JAYA: In the spirit of the nation's 68th Independence Day, the Chapel of St Anthony in Tennamaram Estate, opened its doors and its heart to ten underprivileged families.

They were warmly received by the chapel committee. Their joy was shared by a group of Catholics from Kuala Lumpur, whose presence reflected unity, solidarity, and the Church's call to go beyond borders in serving others.

The day began with an address by chapel members Alax Savarimuthu and Julie Christina, who also gave a brief history of the chapel — a reminder of the community's faith journey over the years.

A prayer session and reflection set the tone for the celebration. The reflection emphasised that faith must always be lived in action, with care and compassion for the poor, the marginalised, and those on the fringes of society. "To be true disciples of Christ is to be pilgrims of hope," it was shared, "serving with humility, walking in prayer, and preserving the dignity of all, especially the poor." The message was delivered in English and translated into Tamil.

This spirit of communion came alive as the congregation exchanged the sign of peace before moving to a tea fellowship at the chapel entrance. Smiles, stories, and gratitude

filled the air as guests and parishioners mingled freely. A Catholic widow battling cancer, who attended with her son, expressed her thankfulness for being included in the "Merdeka Outreach," a moment that reminded her she was not forgotten.

Joy filled the air as children participated in a colouring contest and balloon competition, their laughter echoing through the chapel grounds. Winners received prizes from Julie, and the children's smiles bore witness to the happiness of being seen, valued, and celebrated.

The highlight of the programme was the distribution of essential food items, along with pillows, educational books for children, and miniature *Jalur Gemilang* flags. These simple yet meaningful gifts brought relief and joy to families, both Catholic and Hindu, who expressed deep gratitude for the kindness shown.

"This programme was made possible through the collaboration of Catholics from the city centre, who joined us in bringing God's love to our community," said Alax, who also thanked all who contributed towards making the outreach a blessing.

The celebration concluded with a closing prayer in both English and Tamil. **Bernard Anthony**



CICPD jubilee team strengthens bonds

PORT DICKSON: The Jubilee team of the Church of the Immaculate Conception (CICPD) held a team-building session on August 23 at the parish, facilitated by Sr Margarete Sta Maria FdCC, Director of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute (API).

The gathering brought together 27 Jubilee committee members and their children for a half-day programme that blended joy, reflection, and fellowship. It was a lively mix of young and old, sharing thoughts, challenges, and hopes, while strengthening bonds as one parish family journeying through the Jubilee.

The session also served as a time of remembrance, looking back on eight months of activities and milestones that have deepened the parish community and prepared them to welcome pilgrims with open hearts.

With less than four months remaining in the Jubilee year, the team reaffirmed their joyful commitment to serve together, to welcome more pilgrims, and to sustain the spirit of celebration despite any challenges ahead. Their dedication, expressed through creative collages and presentations, proved

both encouraging and inspirational.

Parish priest, Fr Edwin Peter, expressed his gratitude to the Jubilee team, noting how it had grown from a small, uncertain gathering into a vibrant synodal team offering pilgrims a true experience of a spiritual journey. He described the Jubilee as a year of divine grace — not only for visiting pilgrims but even more so for the parish community. He was grateful to Archbishop Julian Leow for selecting CICPD as one of the pilgrim churches for the archdiocese.

Gratitude was extended to the parish priest for his support and presence throughout the session, and to Sr Margarete for her encouragement to remain rooted in prayer as the community journeys during the Jubilee Year.

The day concluded with words of thanks from Jubilee Team coordinator, Tracy Tham, who acknowledged all who have been faithfully serving — both visibly and quietly behind the scenes — as the parish continues its Jubilee journey as Pilgrims of Hope, strengthened by a hope that does not disappoint. **Clare Ong**



Waving the "Jalur Gemilang" in a spirit of patriotism and unity.

PROTEC 2.0 – Regenerate launched to mark Season of Creation

SIBU: The official launch of **PROTEC 2.0 – Regenerate**, was held on September 1 with a Mass at St Mary’s of the Divine Mercy Catholic Church, marking the beginning of the Season of Creation (September 1 – October 4), an annual celebration observed by Christians worldwide.

The Mass was presided over by Bishop Joseph Hii, who formally unveiled the PROTEC 2.0 banner and distributed fishtail banners and posters to parish representatives from the 12 churches in the diocese. Bishop Joseph is the President of the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice.

During the celebration, St Mary’s church signed the Ecological Parish Pledge, led by Fr Paul Chee, parish rector, affirming its commitment to ecological justice and resilience for all creation through the Ecological Parish Protocols.

The protocols encourage parishes to:

- Lead ecological transformation by pledging to be ecological parishes and establishing Creation Justice Ministries.
- Deepen ecological spirituality



Bishop Joseph Hii receiving a potted plant.

through prayer, liturgies, education, and integration of *Laudato Si’* into parish programmes.

- Build resilience against climate impacts through assessments, education, and emergency preparedness.
- Advocate and collaborate locally and globally for ecological justice and solidarity, especially during the Season of Creation.
- Strengthen accountability by auditing carbon footprints

and practising the 7Rs (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle, Redesign, Regenerate).

- Implement practical ecological actions, such as adopting renewable energy, promoting zero waste practices, encouraging plant-based meals, conserving water and energy, banning harmful substances, greening church lands, and divesting from ecologically harmful investments.
- Through **PROTEC 2.0** –



Bishop Joseph Hii holding up the signed Ecological Parish Pledge.

Regenerate, the Diocese of Sibu reaffirms its mission to live out ecological conversion and uphold justice, peace, and resilience for all creation.

In Rome, Pope Leo XIV invited Christians worldwide to celebrate the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation under the theme: *Seeds of Peace and Hope*. Marking the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis instituting the celebration, the Pope emphasised that environ-

mental justice is a faith-based duty, as the universe reflects the face of Christ.

He also introduced the “Mass for the Care of Creation” formulary, enabling Catholic communities globally to celebrate the day within the Eucharist. Pope Leo encouraged Christians to journey as “Pilgrims of Hope”, sowing peace and caring for our common home during the Season of Creation, which concludes on the Feast of St Francis of Assisi.

Laudate Deum, the climate crisis

PETALING JAYA: *Laudate Deum* is a spiritual call to urgency. It reminds us that faith alone, without care for creation, is incomplete.

“To love God is to protect His creation – especially the poor and vulnerable, who suffer most from environmental degradation,” said Fr Larry Tan SJ as he expounded the late Pope Francis’ papal document *Laudate Deum* in his talk entitled “*Laudate Deum* — the

Climate Crisis” at the Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX) recently.

He explained that the document aimed to reaffirm and build on the earlier environmental-themed papal document *Laudato Si’*. One of the key reminders in this document, he said, is the importance of Integral Ecology. “Everything is interconnected – the environment, the poor, human dignity, and peace. Ecological crisis is a moral and spiritual crisis, not just technical. Care for creation is inseparable from care for the poor and vulnerable,” he added.

Fr Larry, who currently serves as the Formator and Spiritual Director at College General in Penang, and former parish priest of SFX, said the Church highlights the need to prioritise ecological conversion in this document.

“Spiritual transformation is necessary; a change of heart, not just habits. Pope Francis speaks of ecological sin rooted in structures of greed, indifference, and dominance,” he said.

“True conversion leads to action, not just belief”.

Fr Larry’s talk is the eighth talk to

date under the *Journeying as Pilgrims of Hope* series for the Year of Hope by SFX’s Firm Foundation Ministry – all based on the pivotal documents of Pope Francis.

He said the document also underscores the need to embrace humility and limits.

“Humanity must reorganise its limits. Technological power is not ultimate,” he said, adding that Christian humility reminds us we are co-creators with God.

“Our overreliance on market solutions, technology or politics alone is spiritually inadequate. Climate action must come from love, not control,” he added.

The Church reminds us that we have a prophetic responsibility to speak truth, especially to the powerful. “We cannot stay silent as the Earth cries out”.

He pointed out that Pope Francis has criticised the denial, delay, and indifference as moral failures.

Hope and action — the other pillar of *Laudate Deum*, reminds us that grounded in Christian spirituality and with the hope of God’s promise and reaction, we are empowered as believers to act. However, we may be uncertain of the outcome.

“The Kingdom of God grows through small, faithful acts of love and justice,” he said.

So, let’s start in small ways in our daily lives, in our homes, workplaces, BECs, neighbourhood communities, and parishes. Together, we’ll become beacons of hope and catalysts for change, promoting spiritual transformation and ecological conversion.

Double celebration at Langkawi chapel



Fr Francis Xavier Selvarajoo distributing communion during Mass.

LANGKAWI: The Ave Stella Maris Chapel in Kuah was filled to capacity for the Sunday evening Mass on August 31. The Mass, celebrated by Fr Francis Xavier Selvarajoo, from Kangar, Perlis, and concelebrated by a visiting priest from India, carried the joy of Merdeka Day and the grace of Fr Francis Xavier’s 42nd sacerdotal anniversary.

A large *Jalur Gemilang*, proudly displayed before the altar, reminded all of Malaysia’s 68 years of independence. The liturgy was rich in thanksgiving, with prayers offered for the nation — that God may continue to bless Malaysia with peace, prosperity, and unity. Special prayers were also raised for Fr Francis Xavier, asking the Lord to strengthen him in his priestly ministry so that he may continue to serve with the compassion and love of Christ. The assembly’s voices then rang out in the *Negaraku*, uniting faith and patriotism in a moment of deep gratitude.

After Mass, the community

marked the double celebration with a cake-cutting ceremony by Fr Francis Xavier. A ‘double-decker’ cake was brought forward, and the congregation sang both “Happy Anniversary” and “Happy Merdeka Day”, before sharing the cake as a sign of fellowship. Later, parishioners and priests gathered for a simple yet joyful dinner fellowship, strengthening the bonds of faith and friendship.

For the small Catholic community of Langkawi, the presence of Fr Francis Xavier — who has faithfully celebrated the English Mass with them almost every week — was a source of deep blessing. Their gratitude shone through as they celebrated both his vocation and the gift of their beloved nation.

Over the same weekend, Fr Francis Xavier also celebrated similar Masses in Changlun (Kedah), Kangar, and Arau (Perlis), carrying the spirit of thanksgiving across the northern diocesan communities. **Bernard Anthony**



Laudate Deum underscores the need to embrace humility and limits, says Fr Larry Tan, SJ pictured here mowing the lawn.

PETALING JAYA: On a recent Saturday afternoon, the Church of St Francis Xavier was filled with anticipation, openness, and the quiet weight of shared grief. The Widow to Widow ministry — born out of compassion and solidarity — gathered for a special session dedicated to young widows with children, who often bear the unique struggles of grief intertwined with the responsibilities of parenthood.

On this occasion, the ministry also welcomed the perspective of a widower, specially invited to share his journey — a reminder that while each story is unique, grief is a language understood by all who have loved and lost. Peter, who lost his wife when their son was just six years old, spoke with gentle conviction about his choice not to remarry, dedicating himself instead to creating a stable home for his child. Today, his son is 22 and studying in the United States — a living testimony to Peter's love and commitment.

As he reflected on carrying both a mother's and father's role after his wife's passing, his words, though edged with tears, radiated strength and devotion. For a widower to say, "It was my decision not to remarry after losing my wife," carries such depth of love and fidelity — something truly beautiful to treasure. He encouraged the group to honour their late spouses' wishes and to move forward without self-condemnation, reminding them that grief, though deeply personal, is also a universal experience that transcends gender.

From loss to hope



Some of the participants with Peter, a widower who shared his journey.

Then came Adele, whose loss was both sudden and heart-wrenching. Her husband drowned in a waterfall while saving another's life, leaving her with two very young children — a son just 10 months old and a daughter. Today, her son is 14 and her daughter a slightly older teenager. Adele shared how God's Word became her anchor, guiding her as she walked closely with her children through grief. She spoke of the different ways each child expressed their loss, and how open conversations at home helped them heal together. Her testimony of faith and perseverance deep-

ly touched those present, showing that even in the darkest valleys, God's strength enables a mother to carry both sorrow and hope.

Theresa, a cancer survivor, offered another deeply moving perspective. She had cared for her husband through his illness, even while fighting her own battle with cancer. Not long after his passing, she found herself facing widowhood while still on her own journey of recovery. With raw honesty, she shared, "Grief is harder to overcome than cancer. I am now walking on uncharted grounds — alone and unguided. Everything feels so scary, un-

certain, and indecisive. I have never felt so lost and alone before." Yet, after listening to Peter and Adele, Theresa found a glimmer of hope: "There is added clarity to my past few months as a new widow. I know this will help my mental well-being too. I'm not out of the deep yet, but I am slowly finding and gathering strength to do so."

The participants' reflections echoed a common spirit of encouragement. Caroline Gomez shared that Peter and Adele's stories gave her confidence in her own decisions and offered practical tools to guide her child. For recently widowed Lee Hui, the session was a reminder that the greatest challenge is simply enduring the journey. Marilyn, a young mother, drew comfort from Adele's example, recognising the importance of staying close to her children and trusting that God will provide.

The afternoon closed with a quiet sense of togetherness. Each testimony became a thread woven into a fabric of hope, strength, and faith. To any young widow reading this — know that you do not have to walk this journey alone. There is a place for you among sisters who understand, where comfort and strength can be found in Christ's love.

For information, please contact Caroline Tay, coordinator of Widow to Widow Ministry, at 012-7018185.

St Jude's parish hosts cancer screening programme

RAWANG: The Church of St Jude became a place of both faith and healing as it hosted a cancer screening programme on August 23, drawing about 130 parishioners.

Organised in collaboration with the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM), Reset Health Malaysia (Roczen Universal), and the National Cancer Society of Malaysia (NCSM), the initiative reflected the parish's care for the whole person — body, mind, and spirit. By promoting early detection and preventive health care, the Church reminded the faithful that safeguarding the gift of life is part of our Christian calling to cherish and protect God's creation.

The initiative was led by assistant parish priest, Fr Jonathan Rao, who expressed joy at the overwhelming turnout. "It is important to be prepared and to take the necessary precautions to fight these illnesses," he emphasised, reminding parishioners that caring for one's

health is also part of caring for the life God has entrusted to us.

Parish priest, Fr Simon Labrooy, was also present to warmly welcome the doctors and volunteers who dedicated their time and expertise. Their presence highlighted the strong bond between faith and service.

The event benefitted greatly from the commitment of medical professionals and volunteers. Dr Michelle Elizabeth John and Dr Ahmad Benjamin Sabri from Reset Health Malaysia, together with nutritionist Nirvesha Nair, provided invaluable guidance. Dr Dominic Lopez, a volunteer from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, offered his medical expertise, while Joseph Soosai Nathan, a coordinator from the Red Crescent Society, served as consultant.

Volunteers, including Jojo Lee Zi Wei, Amelia Lee, Abdul Raziq, Masuria Kamarulzaman, Wilfred Chew, and NCSM staff member Fion Ong, worked hand in hand

to ensure the programme ran smoothly.

Reflecting on the day, Diana Jayabalan, coordinator of the PIHDM's Women's Desk, acknowledged some challenges with space and waiting times, but noted that the close collaboration between organisers, healthcare professionals, and volunteers made the programme a true success. "With improvements in space management, participant flow, and support resources, future events can be even more impactful," she said. Diana also extended heartfelt gratitude to the NCSM, Roczen Universal, and parish volunteers for their invaluable support.

Parishioners Lawrence Gnanasegaran and Michelle Gomez, among the first to arrive, expressed their appreciation for the initiative. "We are both looking forward to more such events," they shared, reflecting the community's desire for more health-focused programmes that nurture both body and spirit. **Mercy Almeida Stellus**



Parishioners filling up the form before the test.

Visitation parish celebrates anniversary with gala dinner

SEREMBAN: The Church of the Visitation marked its 177th anniversary with a Fundraising Gala Dinner on August 31, themed *Be Joyful in Hope*. Held at a local restaurant, the event aimed to galvanise community support and raise essential funds for the church's ongoing building project.

The gala dinner attracted 1,030 attendees, raising approximately RM400,000.

The success of the evening was made possible through the generosity of parishioners and supporters, with dinner tables priced at RM1,000 (standard) and RM3,000 (VIP) and anonymous donations from individuals as well as local businesses.

With a growing congregation of 12,000 parishioners, the church faces an urgent need to upgrade its facilities to accommo-

date religious and cultural events, community activities, and educational programmes for youth. In response, the Church Building Fundraising Project Committee was established in June 2024 under the leadership of Parish Priest Fr Xavier Andrew. The committee has launched various initiatives to achieve an ambitious target of RM5 million over the next two years, earmarked for improving the community hall, classrooms, and overall infrastructure to better serve the parish and wider community.

Past fundraising efforts have met with considerable success, including the Banana Leaf Luncheon (RM20,011), Chinese New Year Reunion Luncheon and goodies sale (RM45,000), Rise Up Youth Carnival (RM37,000), Christmas Sales (RM6,000), and the Buy-A-Brick Programme (RM230,000).

The event was graced by Yang Berhormat Tuan Teo Kok Seong, Negeri Sembilan EXCO Member for Non-Islamic Affairs and Archbishop Julian Leow. Highlights included a keynote address, performances by the church choir singing thanksgiving hymns in English, Mandarin, Tamil, and

Bahasa Melayu and a video presentation chronicling the church's 177-year history and community achievements.

In his address, Fr Xavier Andrew said, "Our fundraising initiatives celebrate the profound impact we can achieve when we unite for a common purpose. Fundraising is not just about raising money — it brings people together for a noble cause: to have fun while making a difference."

As the event coincided with National Day, a 'Guess the Number of Flags' game allowed attendees to contribute with a minimum donation of RM10.

Meanwhile, YB Anthony Loke Siew Fook, Malaysia's Minister of Transport, visited the church on August 30 to review Phase 1 renovations and receive briefings on Phase 2. His engagement helped secure RM1 million in support from the YTL Foundation through a corporate social responsibility initiative.

The gala dinner not only demonstrated the generosity of the community but also reinforced the church's commitment to enhancing its infrastructure and fostering a spirit-filled, engaged congregation.



Fr Xavier Andrew receiving a cheque donation of RM2,000 from YB Puan Nicole Tan Lee Koon presented by her representative, in the presence of YB Tuan Teo and Archbishop Julian Leow.

Navigating the digital world safely

Mildred Lopez

KUALA LUMPUR: Technology is advancing at an astonishing pace. With the internet and digital platforms placing information at our fingertips, the pressing question arises: are these tools truly serving humanity? To explore this vital issue, Susan Thomas, head of the Women's Ministry under the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD), organised a talk on Safe and Responsible Digital Citizens.

Speaker, Karen Arukesamy, *pic*, President of SIGNIS Malaysia enlightened the audience that whether technology serves humanity or not depends entirely on the conscious choices made by individuals using the digital technology. Hence, awareness is important.

She highlighted that, while internet browsing may seem like a harmless pastime, users must realise that every click is being tracked. Behind the scenes, teams of engineers study browsing habits and use psychology to influence choices,



flooding users with targeted ads and persuasive alternatives. This is not accidental but deliberately designed to entrap unsuspecting consumers. Karen urged the audience to be vigilant about what they share online, especially personal details such as their location, daily routines, photos of their homes, or even profile pictures. Such information, she warned, can be misused for identity theft, scams, or stalking. She also reminded participants of the dangers of forwarding unverified messages on WhatsApp, noting how misinformation can spread quickly and harm communities.

The session also emphasised the importance of being responsible digital citizens. Participants were reminded that just as in real life, the Golden Rule applies online — “Do to others what you would have them do to you.”

Among the key tips shared were:

- Respect others' privacy by not posting photos or personal information without consent.
- Avoid using unsecured public or free Wi-Fi networks.
- Always fact-check, as information found online may be false or outdated.
- Strengthen privacy settings on devices and social media accounts to safeguard personal data.

Raymund Jagan, also from SIGNIS Malaysia, highlighted the psychological effects of social media use. He cited research from the University of Toronto showing that teenagers who split their attention between devices — such as smartphones, video games, and television — tend to score lower in Mathematics and English. Studies also link multitasking, such as



Raymund Jagan highlighting the psychological effects of social media use.

texting while watching television, to greater impulsivity and weaker working memory. He warned that constant distraction reduces focus, while gaming addiction has now been officially recognised as a mental disorder.

Participants learnt that social media addiction has a chemical basis. Platforms like Facebook trigger dopamine and oxytocin release, driving pleasure, trust, and social bonding. This can lead to compulsive online activity, turning users into “internet search fiends” and increasing vulnerability, particularly among girls aged 13–15, to sexting and online grooming. Studies show that one addiction can lead to others, including vaping, alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, and heavy use can reduce frustration tolerance. Prolonged engagement may also cause Hikikomori, a state of social withdrawal, or obsessive behav-

iours like constant photo-taking, which prevent users from fully experiencing events.

Experts warn that the internet has assumed a near-God-like role — omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. Many equate technology and material wealth with a flourishing life, yet loneliness, despair, and a lack of meaning remain widespread. True human flourishing, according to the Church, involves integral human development—nurturing the physical, social, cultural, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

To support healthy growth, young people need real-world interaction, movement, touch, outdoor play, and connection with nature. Churches can contribute by opening their grounds for children's play, fostering social and ecological engagement, and integrating holistic development into evangelisation.

CIC Penang celebrates Confirmation and commissioning

PENANG: The Church of the Immaculate Conception recently held a dual celebration with the Confirmation of 16 candidates and the installation of 12 new

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC). The ceremony was presided over by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, marking a significant moment in

strengthening both the spiritual and pastoral life of the parish.

The celebration commenced with the Sacrament of Confirmation, where the 16 candidates, having completed their catechetical formation, were anointed with the sacred chrism and sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to strengthen them as mature disciples of Christ. Their commitment was met with warm applause and prayers of support from the congregation, affirming their fuller participation in the life of the Church.

Following this, Cardinal Sebastian Francis formally entrusted 12 parishioners with their mandate as EMHC. These men and women will serve the community by assisting at the altar, distributing Holy Communion, and bringing Christ to the sick and homebound — a vital ministry that

reflects the Church's mission of love and service. Significantly, the group included members from the expatriate and migrant communities, a reflection of the parish's rich diversity and the Church's universality. Their commissioning underlined the inclusive mission of the Church, where all the faithful, regardless of origin, are called to serve.

In his homily, the cardinal called on the faithful to be “visionaries and dreamers”. He urged the newly confirmed and the new ministers to see beyond the ordinary and to live with a bold faith that dares to dream of a Church rooted in compassion, courage, and unity. “The Spirit gives us the courage not only to dream, but to make those dreams real in our families, parishes, and society,” he reflected.

The Mass also witnessed a significant pastoral milestone. Cardinal Sebastian officially approved and signed Phase 2 of the Columbarium at Kelawai Road cemetery, announcing to the assembled faithful. This expansion will provide more dignified resting places for the departed, embodying the Church's commitment to accompany the faithful not only in life, but also in death, with reverence and love.

The celebration concluded with thanksgiving, as parishioners expressed joy at the strengthening of their parish community and gratitude for the cardinal's leadership. The confirmands and newly installed ministers stood as living witnesses of a parish inspired to continue dreaming and building a vibrant Church for today and tomorrow. **Nicholas Khor**



The newly chosen extraordinary ministers of holy communion.

Encountering Christ in silence and prayer

IPOH: The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, Lieutenancy of Malaysia Penang held its annual retreat from August 30 – September 1 at MU Hotel. A total of 60 Knights and Dames participated.

The English section was led by Fr Bernard Hyacinth SJ from the Minor Basilica of St Anne in Bukit Mertajam, while Grand Prior Co-adjutor, Fr Michael Cheah, KCHS conducted the retreat for the Chinese-speaking members.

The retreat comprised four sessions, focusing on personal reflection, individual spiritual direction, silence, and prayer. It was struc-

tured around themes of preparing the heart, encountering Christ, and nurturing a love attentive to both creation and the poor.

Guided by Fr Bernard's probing questions, participants were reminded that prayer tills the soil of the heart, opening it to God's Word, and that even moments of restlessness can become opportunities for encounter with Him.

Fr Bernard emphasised that spiritual direction involves discerning God's action in our lives. He encouraged participants to be honest with their feelings, free from self-judgment, and to trust in God's boundless mercy. Highlighting

that God provides according to our capacity, he urged everyone to remove spiritual blockages, deepen their relationship with the Lord, and attune themselves to His quiet joy amid the demands of daily life.

Daily Mass, *Lauds*, *Vespers*, and *Compline*, anchored each day of the retreat, while a Penitential Service on the final evening offered grace and renewal.

The retreat proved to be a spiritually enriching experience, deepening personal faith and fostering fellowship among members. Participants departed joyfully, strengthened and renewed in their faith. **Shirlene Tay**

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Bible symposium explores Scripture in the digital and AI age

GOA: The Karnataka-Goa Province of the Discalced Carmelites and the Diocesan Centre for Biblical Apostolate hosted a three-day Bible symposium at the Divine Springs Retreat Centre, Xellim, on the theme *Biblical Text in Its Context in the Digital and AI Age*.

Organised for the Jubilee Year 2025 and the centenary of St Thérèse's canonisation, the event was inaugurated by Auxiliary Bishop Simião Fernandes of Goa and Daman, who urged participants to make Scripture "bread for daily use."

The symposium trained priests and lay leaders to preach with depth, use digital tools, and integrate the wisdom of the Church Fathers into modern teaching. Workshops introduced AI applications such as BibleGPT and Biblia Savant, and software like Libronix, Verbum, and Accordance.

Speakers included scholars from India, Rome, Jerusalem, and Trivandrum. The gathering closed with a Eucharist led by Fr Silvestre D'Souza, provincial superior of the Carmelites' Karnataka-Goa Province, who highlighted the humility and courage of St John the Baptist as a model for Christian witness. **LiCAS News**

Filipino Catholics launch prayer and fasting campaign

MANILA: Various Filipino Catholic groups have launched nationwide initiatives of prayer and fasting to raise awareness on good governance, electoral reform, and ending political dynasties. The movements come amid controversy over the Supreme Court and Senate's dismissal of impeachment proceedings against Vice President Sara Duterte, accused of fund misuse and conspiring to assassinate President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Clergy for Good Governance (CGG), founded in November 2025 by 12 bishops and 211 priests, led a penitential service in Cubao, reaffirming their mission to "defend what is just, what is true, and what promotes the common good." In an open letter, the group stressed that silence in the face of corruption is not an option, calling the faithful to pray, fast, and act for the nation.

Other groups, including ISAC, Church Café, Ateneo, De La Salle University, and Caritas Philippines, have expressed solidarity, urging integrity, justice, and accountability. Catholic leaders also denounced corruption in flood control and mining projects, warning that democracy and public trust are at stake. **Fides**

Indonesian bishop named member of Vatican's Dicastery for the Clergy

FLORES: On August 28, Pope Leo XIV appointed an Indonesian bishop as one of the members of the Vatican's Dicastery for the Clergy, which is headed by South Korean Cardinal Lazarus You Heung-sik.

Bishop Siprianus Hormat of Ruteng Diocese in Indonesia is among 12 bishops and eight cardinals named to serve a five-year term as members of the dicastery.

Upon learning of his appointment, Bishop Hormat expressed gratitude to the Pope for the trust bestowed upon him, saying it was a call to share in the Church's responsibility of forming future priests.

The appointment has brought joy to priests and the faithful of Ruteng Diocese, located on the island of Flores, one of Indonesia's Lesser Sunda Islands. "As a bishop, I am close to the priests, journeying with them both in vocation and in mission duties within the local Church of Ruteng," he added.

The Dicastery for the Clergy provides guidance and assistance to bishops in the recruitment, training, and ongoing formation of diocesan priests and permanent deacons. **RVA**



Indonesian bishops stand with people amid unrest

JAKARTA: The Bishops' Conference of Indonesia (Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia - KWI) has expressed deep sorrow over the recent wave of violence, standing in solidarity with ordinary Indonesians who are suffering amid economic hardship and political tension.

In their statement dated August 30, the bishops lamented the violence that has left casualties, injuries, and widespread fear. They called for compassion, justice, and restraint, urging leaders to listen to the cries of the poor and

vulnerable, who have borne the greatest burden of rising living costs and policies perceived as unjust.

The protests, which erupted following the death of a young motorbike driver during a demonstration in Jakarta, quickly spread to several cities. What began as calls for fairness and dignity escalated into violent clashes, vandalism, and arson.

For many, the tragedy of the young man's death has become a symbol of the pain and frustration felt by families, workers, and youth across the nation.

The bishops appealed to government leaders to correct policies that add to people's suffering and to govern with transparency, accountability, and justice.

They also urged security forces to act with humanity and patience, serving as protectors of the people even in tense situations. All Indonesians, they said, are invited to reject provocation and violence and to join hands in building reconciliation and solidarity.

President Prabowo Subianto, responding to the turmoil, announced the revocation of certain parliamentary allowances that had sparked popular anger.

At the same time, he condemned violent acts as treasonous and damaging to national unity, warning that the State would act firmly against looting and arson. While reaffirming the right to peaceful protest, he emphasised that public safety must be preserved.

Despite the turmoil, the bishops' message remained one of hope. They encouraged Indonesians to walk together, hand in hand, to build a future rooted in justice and peace.

"Let us radiate the light of goodness for the sake of our beloved Indonesia," their statement concludes, entrusting the nation to God's blessing and protection. **RVA**



Demonstrators set alight banners as they shout slogans during a protest demanding police reform and the dissolution of the parliament, in Bandung, West Java on September 1, 2025. (LiCas News/Timur Matahari/AFP)

Myanmar plans demolition of historic cathedral

YANGON: Amid growing repression of religious heritage, Myanmar's State Peace and Security Commission, its military junta, is pushing ahead with a plan to demolish the historic Catholic Sacred Heart Cathedral and at least 19 other Buddhist religious sites in Taungoo (Taungngu), a city in Bago region, sparking a deep sense of dismay among religious communities.

The new demolition order follows a pattern of intimidation and violence against religious institutions that has intensified since the February 2021 coup. Citing the expansion of archaeological excavations in the 16th-century city of Ketumati, the ancient capital of the Taungoo dynasty, the junta ordered the removal not only of Christian sites, but also of 16 Buddhist monasteries, a convent, a retreat centre and a pagoda, all located within the so-called "cultural zone."

The Sacred Heart Cathedral's roots run deep in Taungoo's history, serving as a spiritual refuge for generations of Catholics since its founding by Italian PIME missionaries, who had been present in what was then Burma since 1869. The land was provided by the then British administration. Parishioners remember baptisms, weddings, and prayers offered for loved ones within its walls. Its current structure dates back to 1987, after damage suffered



Sacred Heart Cathedral of Taungngu.

during World War II and subsequent reconstruction.

The order to demolish Taungoo Cathedral adds to the many other wounds suffered by the Catholic Church in Myanmar. Military actions following the coup have forced the displacement of bishops from several dioceses: Hakha in Chin State, Bhamo in Kachin State, Loikaw in Karen State, and Lashio in northern Shan State. Now, the bishop's see of Taungoo is similarly threatened. In a recent example of this escalation of violence, Bhamo Cathedral was set on fire just three months ago by soldiers of the military junta, marking ever-increasing

insecurity for the faithful.

For Taungoo Catholics, the loss of the cathedral would represent much more than the destruction of a building: it would mark a rupture in the city's faith life and add to a growing sense of fear, displacement, and disenfranchisement for minorities nationwide. Despite the grief, however, there remains a quiet determination to continue their journey.

As bulldozers approach Sacred Heart Cathedral and Buddhist monasteries, Myanmar's religious communities are looking to their faith for comfort, resilience, and solidarity, united in prayer that their sacred sites may continue to live. **AsiaNews**

Papal bike to be auctioned for charity

VATICAN: A group of black-clad bikers rumbled into St Peter's Square on September 3, to present Pope Leo XIV with a custom cruiser motorcycle destined for charity.

The Pope met members of the Christian Jesus Bikers at the end of his general audience at the Vatican. The motorcycle club rolled into Rome for a Jubilee of Hope pilgrimage after a three-day ride from Schaaheim, Germany.

The Pope blessed and signed the white BMW R 18 motorcycle before briefly climbing onto the seat to the bikers' applause.

The custom-designed papal motorcycle will be auctioned off

in Munich on Oct 18, and the funds will benefit children working in mica mines in Madagascar through Missio Austria.

The director of Missio Austria, Fr Karl Wallner, OCist., told EWTN News that the point of the pilgrimage was "not just fun and coming to see the Pope, but also to help the poorest of the poor" through the project for exploited children.

Wallner said Pope Leo appeared to like the motorcycle a lot. At the audience, "he told the CEO of BMW that he himself liked to ride the motorcycle. So, I think we have the first motorcycling pope..."

The two-cylinder boxer engine cruiser was given a papal redesign by the Witzel company in Germany, before taking to the road for the biker pilgrimage, which included daily Mass in churches along the way to Rome.

Around 30 members of the Jesus Bikers club also processed through the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica before attending Mass together.

One of the motorcyclists, a Protestant from Berlin who goes by the name "Rocky," said he joined the Jesus Bikers after finding the club on the Internet.

"The honesty and freedom attracted me," Rocky said. "It's not like other motorcycle clubs,



Pope Leo XIV poses on a custom BMW R 18 papal motorcycle gifted to him by the Christian Jesus Bikers at the Vatican, September 3, 2025. (Vatican Media)

where I have to prove myself for a year and perform certain rituals. I was accepted here, and a year later, I received my robe. You just have to be baptised, believe in Jesus Christ, and have a motorcycle. We want to pray, ride, and do good."

Claus Dempewolf, who is responsible for those interested in joining the motorcycle club, expressed his satisfaction with the

first leg of the ride.

"The weather was perfect, the roads were good," he said.

When asked who ultimately decides whether or not someone can become a member of the Jesus Bikers, Dempewolf replied: "That's decided by our president and our road captain; our president is Jesus Christ, our road captain is the Holy Spirit." CNA

Burundi marks 100 years of priesthood with national congress

BUJUMBURA: The St Curé d'Ars Major Seminary hosted a national congress on the priesthood from August 27 to 30, bringing together bishops and representatives of priests from all eight dioceses of Burundi.

The gathering had a dual purpose: to celebrate the centenary of the first Burundian priestly ordinations (1925–2025) and to mark the Jubilee Year of the universal Church.

The congress opened with a Mass presided over by Archbishop Bonaventure Nahimana of Gitega, President of the Burundian Episcopal Conference. Reflecting on the martyrdom of St John the Baptist, Archbishop Nahimana urged priests to embrace their prophetic mission, particularly in a nation still healing from years of conflict. "Burundi needs to promote the worship of truth and justice," he said.

Tribute was also paid to

the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers), whose work in evangelisation and priestly formation led to the ordination of the first Burundian priests a century ago. Today, the Church in Burundi counts more than 1,300 indigenous priests serving a Catholic population of nearly 70 per cent, with many Burundian clergy and religious now serving as missionaries across Africa and Europe.

Discussions during the congress centred on two key themes: *The Identity and Mission of the Priest in the Socio-Cultural Context of Burundi* and *The Physical Wellbeing of the Priest*. Workshops explored challenges such as poverty and insecurity, gaps in seminary and ongoing formation, and the need for stronger collaboration with the laity in pastoral and temporal affairs.

Participants also addressed the

lingering wounds of Burundi's past conflicts, which continue to hinder reconciliation within society and the clergy. One proposal was to revisit the acts of diocesan synods held after the Arusha Peace Accords, in order to strengthen the Church's mission as a family promoting peace and unity.

Despite the challenges, the atmosphere was marked by fraternity and hope. Priests left the congress renewed in their mission, with plans for concrete initiatives, including projects for pastoral and material self-sufficiency, deeper reflection on priestly identity, and improved systems of solidarity and financial support among clergy.

The congress was hailed as a moment of grace for the Church in Burundi — celebrating a century of faith while looking ahead to a future of strengthened priestly service rooted in unity, resilience, and mission. **Vatican News**



The Church in Burundi is thriving

African bishop denounces marital infidelity

SÃO TOMÉ: Bishop João de Ceita Nazaré of the Diocese of São Tomé e Príncipe has sounded the alarm over what he described as a deepening crisis in family life, warning that widespread marital infidelity among men is leaving lasting scars on women, children, and society at large.

In a recent homily at Holy Trinity Parish, the bishop lamented that many couples have forgotten the sacred meaning of their vows. "Marriage is not a game. It is a sacred mission," he said. "Our families are wounded, destroyed, deceived, and left adrift because many have already forgotten the value of the word given at the altar."

He stressed that betrayal within marriage is one of the greatest spiritual and social challenges facing the island nation, noting that women and children often bear the heaviest burdens. "Our married women are dying inside; they die of abandonment because they gave everything of themselves and were left with nothing," he said, describing infidelity as a "silent social wound that slowly disintegrates the family and spiritual fabric."

Nazaré highlighted the struggles of women who, despite working tirelessly to support their homes, are left abandoned. "The wives

who cry today did everything to keep their homes: They carried rice, sold fish, washed clothes, helped build the house, and today they are abandoned," he said.

He warned that children growing up in broken families face confusion and instability. "How can we have a strong youth if the model we give them is one of lies, abandonment, and wounds?" he asked.

The bishop also called men to greater responsibility as husbands and fathers. "To be a real man is not to collect relationships but to keep your heart in one place: with your wife and children," he said, condemning those who "lie, cheat, and then show up in church with the face of saints."

For Nazaré, true Christian witness begins at home. "You cannot be a Christian on Sunday and unfaithful on Monday," he said. He urged couples to embrace fidelity, honesty, and love as the foundation for rebuilding both families and society.

"If we want to change this country, we must start at home," the bishop concluded. "The Church can preach a thousand sermons, but if couples are not faithful, the children will continue to grow up wounded. Let us not allow betrayal, lies, and selfishness to destroy what God has united in love." CNA

Six million children out of school by 2026

NEW YORK: Global funding for education is set to drop sharply, putting millions of children at risk of losing access to schooling, the UN's children's agency has warned.

A new UNICEF analysis shows Official Development Assistance (ODA) for education could fall by US\$3.2 billion — a 24 per cent decrease from 2023. As a result, the number of out-of-school children worldwide could rise from 272 million to 278 million by 2026. That figure is equal to emptying every primary school in Germany and

Italy combined.

UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell said cuts in education budgets "aren't just financial decisions — they put a child's future at risk." She stressed that schools, particularly in humanitarian crises, provide not only learning but also vital healthcare, protection, food, and a pathway out of poverty.

The report highlights that West and Central Africa could see nearly 2 million children pushed out of classrooms, while the Middle East and North Africa may add 1.4 mil-

lion more. Twenty-eight countries, including Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, are projected to lose at least a quarter of the external support they rely on for schooling. Primary education will be the hardest hit, potentially reducing lifetime earnings for affected children by an estimated US\$164 billion.

Beyond learning, the cuts threaten school meal programmes, teacher training, girls' education initiatives, and services for refugee children such as the 350,000 Rohingya youth already at risk of losing access to basic education. UNICEF warns that reduced support could leave children vulnerable to exploitation, labour, and trafficking, while compromising education quality for 290 million students who remain enrolled.

UNICEF urged donor countries to safeguard education by rebalancing aid and protecting funding in humanitarian contexts. "Investing in children's education is one of the best investments we can make for the future — for everyone," Russell said. **Vatican News**



School year starts in Ukraine amid Russian invasion. (ANSA)

Charles Bertille

The tears of a young woman at the recent Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly (PMPA) left an imprint on our souls. The young woman shared her pain at being treated as ignorant and inexperienced by priests and parish leaders, not respected, not listened to. Her efforts to serve seemed futile and unappreciated.

A bishop shared how he is so overwhelmed by the demands put on him, and it affects his ability to truly listen and be present to his people. Another bishop could not attend due to his health condition, not unrelated to his workload as pastor.

The chairperson of a large parish confided in private that he is unaware of the findings of the Regional Pastoral Assembly (RPA), as it was not discussed in the parish, nor the Synod report findings of the parish or diocese. Their parish pastoral focus seems to be different.

For a moment, the assembly touched the suffering flesh of Jesus. These are all signs that the Body of Christ is ailing. We are unable to cope with the workload, current ways of working, and work structures. Something will give way – the minister, the bonds of relationships, the quality of listening, the mission... but are these not essential to our way of life as Catholics?

No issue or need stands isolated – it is part of the system we have constructed or maintained over the years and now needs to be re-examined in the light of a synodal Church.

Voices of the People of God

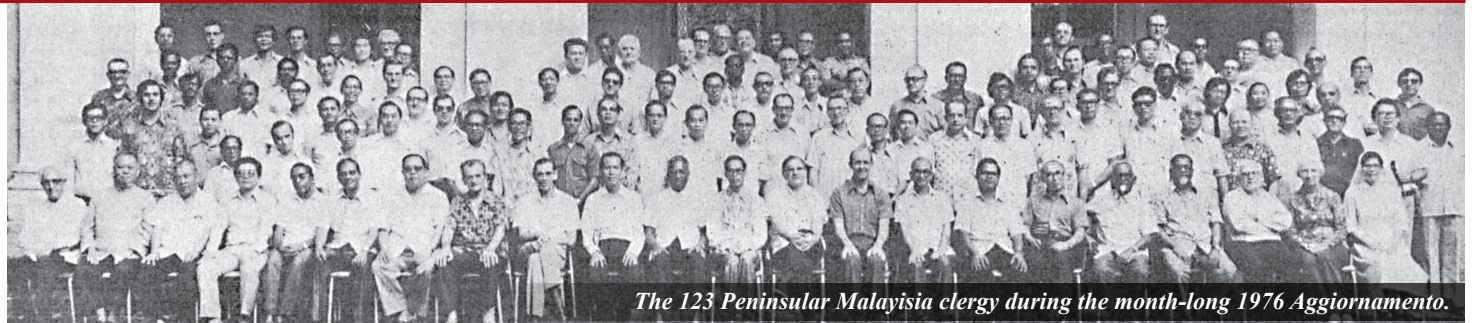
While there have been many activities and assemblies – parish, diocese, region – to consult the People of God (which consists of bishops, priests, deacons, religious, laity) on the Synod questionnaire, as well as the thematic areas (family, church, society, ecology); there seems to be a lack of awareness and limited participation in the ecclesial journey of the Semenanjung Church. This lack needs to be explored to bridge the gap between synodal efforts and the subjects of participation, that is, the larger portion of the People of God. Is it due to the lack of connection with real-life issues affecting the

A New Synthesis

Through all the assemblies, what is the “new synthesis” that is emerging for the Malaysian Church? It is good to recall here the new synthesis that the original renewal team of seven members, known as 5 Loaves and 2 Fishes, brought forth for the *Aggiornamento* 1976. They were women and men, religious and clergy, coming mainly from a pre-Vatican training, foreign missionaries, and Malaysians, yet worked together for a new synthesis among them and for the Semenanjung Church. They initiated processes that continue to generate new life and did not seek to occupy spaces of power.

The late Archbishop Dominic Vendargon, Bishop James Chan, and Gregory Yong took the risk of calling the 123 priests to leave their parishes for an entire month and come together to listen, study, and discern the way for the Peninsula Malaysia Church at the *Aggiornamento*.

The local churches did not suffer a collapse – rather, laity and religious women rose to the occasion in the parishes to celebrate the Word of God every Sunday and continued the various



The 123 Peninsular Malaysia clergy during the month-long 1976 Aggiornamento.

Impressions of an observer



Participants at the Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly 2025.

people within the thematic areas? Is it a lack of understanding of synodality and what it means? Or are the demands of daily life preventing people from reflecting and journeying with the Church? How can this faith journey take flesh and form in the lives of our people and not become another activity?

The animation and leadership of the various assemblies (parish, diocese, regional, national) is strongly led by clergy. The voices and participation of others are not very visible. Where are the young, the lay, the women, the Indigenous, and more in the animation? The Catholic faith teaches that every voice matters: for none of us is saved alone. The Fathers of the Church (St Cyprian) teach us the fundamental communal nature of the People of God with a triple “nothing without”: “nothing without the bishop”, “nothing without presbyter and deacon”, and “nothing without the consent of the people”

pastoral ministries.

The three regions of Sabah, Sarawak, and Semenanjung are invited to continue promoting the “exchange of gifts” (FD 69 - 74) – between churches, vocations or states of life, ministries, offices, and persons. And through such an exchange, a new synthesis will emerge, reconciling our differences and diversities not into uniformity but unity. For an exchange of gifts lived out in reciprocal love is the place and form of encounter with God (FD 44).

Cast the net together

When the fishing had not caught anything and the dejected disciples wanted to return home, a voice rang out: “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” (FD 79, cf. Jn 21: 5-6). Some scholars and translations emphasize “Cast the net together...” How can we cast the net together for the mission? And would it not require weaving the net together first?

Very often, we have gone fishing with our individual single-line rods, working in silos or in competition, while Vatican II had already set out

(Final Document of the Synod 88), each contributing to a symphony of differentiated co-responsibility (FD 89).

The Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC) 2026 is envisaged as a historical turning point in the journey of the Malaysian Church. After 63 years of nationhood, we are coming together, thanks to all our bishops, for the very first national pastoral assembly. What will this new chapter mean for the Malaysian Church and Catholics? The scripture verse selected for the MPC 2026 (Isaiah 2:2-5) includes these lines, “They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

What does this prophecy of Isaiah mean for us in Malaysia, called to be synodal, missionary, and prophetic in this millennium? (We are a small number in a multi-cultural, multi-religious, and challenging environment. Official statistics show that Chinese and Indian communities will continue to dwindle in the coming years.)

Official statistics show that Chinese and Indian communities will continue to dwindle in the coming years.)

If the Bishops are seeking and have agreed to a unified pastoral thrust for the country, as has been stated during the RPAs and other instances, or as Canon Law says; “the organisation of common pastoral action” (CIC 445), then the participation within the MPC can be enhanced as a preparation towards a gradual adoption of actual synodal structures already provided for in Canon Law in the following year/s (cf. International Theological Commission, 2018, Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church”, 70). This will help us move towards the needed “change in [ecclesial] culture” (FD 102).

The Malaysian Church needs to amplify its message regarding synodality and participation.

The Voices of the People of God from the three regions (Sabah, Sarawak, and Semenanjung) and representing the four areas (church, family, society, and ecology) can be carried through print and social media, parish councils, and pulpit. It can be done in close collaboration with the *Perjalanan Salib*, especially when the *Salib* moves to the peripheries. All these should be viewed in the perspective of “extending the tent” (cf. Isaiah 54:2) and giving the people and the poor a voice rather than taking their voice away and retelling their stories. Their voices can highlight how synodality is lived out and experienced, or not.



The Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly in 2024 brought together 427 clergy, religious, seminarians and laity.

a more collaborative theology.

“The whole is greater than the parts.” In all living systems — human bodies, ecological systems, or the Church — the whole becomes qualitatively greater than the individual parts.

Each part contributes unique gifts, perspectives, and experiences, yet it is their interconnection, mutual support, and shared purpose that gains transformative power richer than what each could achieve alone. This reflects St Paul’s ecclesiology (1 Cor 12) where no one in the Body of Christ can say to another, “I do not need you.” Our “dependence on one another embodies the heart of synodality” (FD 13). The Church’s vitality does not derive only from individual holiness of its members but from their communion. Synodality thus transforms the individual ‘I’ into a collective ‘we’ (FD 50).

The Highest Dignity

Building on the theology of Vatican II, the Synod document states, “There is nothing higher than this baptismal dignity, equally bestowed upon each person... The name ‘Christian’.. contains the grace that is the basis of our life and enables us to walk together as brothers and sisters” (FD

21). How far we have wandered away from this truth! Like the African Ubuntu philosophy, the principle of reciprocal existence says, “I am because we are.” It is the ‘People of God’ in whom we are born into new life in Jesus Christ, who give us our deepest identity as sons and daughters of God, and through whom flows all vocations and ministries. When we forget our fundamental identity and the reciprocity that animates it, domination takes over.

An intensive and ongoing human formation together with life in the Spirit will be a vital ingredient for all states of life. Formation must generate the capacity for “openness and encounter, sharing and collaboration, reflection and discernment in common” (FD 143). Each one and the local Churches are being invited to examine attitudes, relations, processes, and structures. Only through a kenosis or self-emptying can the process of ecclesio-genesis of Christ’s synodal body in this time and place take flesh.

Charles, a layperson, has dedicated over 30 years to full-time ministry, including starting new missions both regionally and internationally.



The Five Loaves and Two Fishes team.

Trusting God's purpose for every woman

As a Catholic woman approaching 40, married for 15 years, there is one question that seems to follow me wherever I go, whether it's the Jubilee Walk, a parish feast day, or a quiet church event: "Still no baby after so many years of marriage?"

It's a question often asked with genuine concern, sometimes with pity, and occasionally with a hint of spiritual urgency. Over the years, I've heard it phrased in many ways, some tender, some awkward, and some deeply unsettling. Parishioners have pulled visiting relatives from other parishes to pray over me. Others have insisted I ask St Anthony for a child or that I pray "hard enough" so that God will finally answer.

Some have promised, with startling certainty, "Next year, same time, same place, you'll have a baby." Some pass me a gift and say this is for the child, "So quickly have one." Others have suggested I visit a particular shrine in Malaysia or India or undergo artificial treatments to conceive.

I know these gestures often come from a place of love. But they also reveal something deeper about how we, as a faith community, view womanhood, motherhood, and divine purpose. I have felt so small during these times, as though every success through His mercy and grace, from education to career, passion in serving, and everything else along the way, means nothing unless I am with child.

The unspoken pressure

In Catholic culture, motherhood is rightly honoured. The Blessed Virgin Mary is our model of faith, obedience, and maternal love. Scripture is filled with stories of miraculous births — Sarah, Hannah, and Elizabeth, women who bore children in God's time, often against all odds. These stories are beautiful and sacred. But they are not the only stories worth telling.

When we reduce a woman's identity to her ability to bear children, we risk missing the fullness of her vocation. We overlook the ways God may be working through her life in other profound, purposeful ways. We forget that discipleship takes many forms — and that fruitfulness is not limited to biology.

Now, I am not against having a child. I have prayed. I have hoped. But I have also surrendered. I genuinely believe that if God wills it, I could bear a child even at 50 or older, like Elizabeth. But I do not measure my faith or my worth by whether that happens.

Which brings me to a scene from *The Chosen* that reminded me of how much God loves me. In the scene, Jesus tells James that he has healed and will heal many, many people, and they will have a good story to tell.

But, He tells him, "Think of your story if I don't heal you. To know how to proclaim that you still praise God in spite of this, to know how to focus on all that matters, so much more than the body, to show people that you can be patient with your suffering here on Earth because you know you'll spend eternity with no suffering. Not everyone can understand that. How many people do you think the Father and I trust this with? Not many." I am that not many!

God's timing, God's purpose

Over the years, I've come to see that God's plan for me is rich and layered. He has blessed me with a loving partner in Christ, a strong education, meaningful work, and a life filled with grace. These are not consolation prizes — they are gifts. They are part of my calling.

In a world that often equates womanhood with motherhood, it can be hard to explain this peace. But it is real. It is rooted in trust. I believe in God's timing. I believe in His wisdom. And I believe that my life, as it is,

is not lacking — it is unfolding. There is a quiet strength in waiting. There is holiness in surrender. And there is dignity in trusting that God's purpose for each woman is unique.

A community of compassion

So, what do we do, as a Church, when we encounter women like me, faithful, married, and childless? We listen. We honour. We refrain from assumptions. We stop treating childlessness as a problem to be fixed or a prayer request to be urgently resolved. We recognise that God's plans are mysterious and beautiful and that His will is not always aligned with our expectations.

We also broaden our understanding of fruitfulness. A woman may nurture others through teaching, mentoring, hospitality, or ministry. She may be a spiritual mother to many. She may be called to serve in ways that stretch far beyond the home. And all of this is sacred.

He has provided me with this time to be available to serve in various needs around the church and in the community. I can run when there is a last-minute call to help someone in need. I can spend my entire Sunday from morning Mass to catechism to parish activity to adoration in the evening and attend meetings in between to share ideas, put plans together, and work on implementing improvements for the parish.

Let us remember that Elizabeth waited decades before bearing John the Baptist. But her life before that moment was not meaningless. It was preparation. It was faithfulness. It was on purpose.

The grace of letting go

There is a kind of grace that comes with letting go, not of hope, but of control. I have learned to release the need to explain myself, to defend my choices, or to meet others' expectations. I have learned to rest in the knowledge that God sees me, knows me, and loves me.

And I have learned that my story, even without children, is still a testimony. It is a testimony of trust. Of quiet faith. Of believing that God's goodness is not contingent on outcomes, but on His presence.

A call to see differently

As a community, perhaps it's time we look at women differently. Not through the lens of what they lack, but through the lens of what they offer. Not through assumptions, but through appreciation. Let us celebrate the diversity of vocations among women. Let us affirm those who are mothers and those who are not.

Let us honour the spiritual gifts, the emotional labour, and the quiet sacrifices that often go unseen. And let us remember that God's plan is never one-size-fits-all. His will is perfect. His timing is precise. And His love is abundant.

His will be done

I do not know what the future holds. Perhaps one day, I will hold a child in my arms. Perhaps not. But I do know this: I am held by God. And that is enough. So, the next time you meet a woman like me, married, childless, and faithful, may we pause before asking? Consider what God might already be doing in her life.

And instead of offering advice or promises, offer something deeper: respect, love, and the affirmation that her life is already bearing fruit. Because in the end, it is not our plans that prevail — it is His. And His will be done.

Elvina Fernandez explores faith as a living story — woven with kindness, service, and love. Her reflections invite readers into the spirit of community and discipleship, reawakening unity, hope, and purpose.



For generations, the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL) in Klang has been a place of prayer, healing, and renewal, where many have turned to the Blessed Mother for guidance and strength. Within these sacred grounds, a love story, deeply rooted in faith, quietly unfolded. It was a story shaped not by grand gestures but by quiet fidelity and service, ultimately culminating in a life-changing moment before the grotto of Our Lady.

On the morning of February 14, 2025, amidst the season of the OLL feast day celebrations, Andrew knelt before Jenny at the grotto and asked for her hand in marriage. It was a moment of deep emotion, witnessed by those in quiet prayer. More than just a proposal, it was an act of trust in God's divine providence.

Their journey began, not with romantic intentions, but through service to others. Jenny recalls that their first encounter was on December 18, 2021, during a flood relief effort at OLL. Both had volunteered to help sort clothing for flood victims. At the time, neither of them expected that this act of compassion would become the beginning of a journey towards something greater.

In April 2022, they attended a few sessions led by parish priest, Fr Gregory Chan, alongside others who were grieving the loss of loved ones. Their participation in faith-based programmes deepened when they became facilitators for two *Landings* programmes at the Church of the Holy Redeemer in Klang and later, for the first *Landings* programme at the Church of Divine Mercy in Shah Alam.

Love finds a way before Our Lady

Jenny remembers how, in those early days, she and Andrew carpooled with two others to attend the sessions. What may have seemed like small moments of companionship were, in hindsight, part of God's quiet preparation.

Their collaboration in ministry continued to grow. Andrew joined the Lectors Ministry, and both he and Jenny began working together on projects under the Parish Ministry for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (PMEIA). Through these shared acts of service, their friendship deepened. Love was not something they were actively seeking, but rather, it quietly grew within the context of mutual dedication to the Church and to those they served.

In December 2024, Andrew recognised that his heart had found a home with Jenny. Guided by prayer, he prepared to take the next step. When he shared his proposal plans with me, I was caught by surprise. Not because the proposal itself was unexpected, but because of the depth of faith and meaning behind it. He had chosen a moment and place of great spiritual significance. When he knelt before the grotto on Valentine's Day 2025, it was not only a proposal, but a prayer, entrusting their future to the Blessed Mother.

Jenny later remarked on his boldness, to which Andrew replied with a smile, "No faint heart won a fair lady!" Though said in jest, his words reflect a deeper truth.



Love requires courage. In the Catholic faith, marriage is not merely a commitment of affection. It is a vocation, a sacrament that mirrors Christ's love for the Church. It is a journey of self-gift, of choosing the good of the other before oneself, and of walking together in faith.

Having completed the Catholic Marriage Preparation Course (CMPC) in April 2025, Andrew and Jenny were joyfully united in the sacrament of Holy Matrimony in August 2025. Their wedding was a

beautiful witness of love rooted in Christ and celebrated among family, friends, and fellow parishioners.

More than just the start of a new chapter, their union stands as a testament to a life built on service, prayer, and trust in God's timing. Their love story reminds us that some of the most enduring relationships are born not out of seeking, but out of giving. In the quiet spaces of ministry and community, God writes His most beautiful stories.

As they begin this sacred journey together, we join their community in prayer.

May the Lord bless Andrew and Jenny in this vocation of marriage. May their love be steadfast, their faith unwavering, and their home a reflection of God's grace. May Our Lady, before whose grotto they made their promise, intercede for them and accompany them in every season of life.

Their story echoes the words of St John Paul II:

"Love is not merely a feeling; it is an act of will. It consists of preferring, in a constant manner, the good of others to the good of oneself."

Andrew and Jenny's love is a reflection of this truth. Quiet, steady, and sincere. Born of service, sustained by prayer, and sealed before the Blessed Mother.

In the sacred space where prayers rise and hearts are healed, love found its way, and before Our Lady, it was joyfully fulfilled.

Thomson Emmanuel Wong

From relics to legacy

Bob Ho

Liturgical artefacts, once found among items set aside for deconsecration and disposal, have now become treasured exhibits in the Heritage Gallery of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Ipoh (LOL).

The gallery, established in 2010, was the brainchild of LOL's 15th parish priest, Fr Anthony Bernard Gnanapragasam Paul, who now serves as the Bishop of Malacca Johore (widely known as Bishop Bernard Paul). His successor, Fr Francis Anthony, oversaw its completion, leading to the official opening by the then Bishop of Penang, Antony Selvanayagam on November 27, 2011. Today, the gallery continues to thrive under the dedicated service of volunteers, guided and supported by parish priest Fr Robert Daniel Francis, assistant parish priest Fr George Vaithynathan, and Deacon Sandnasamy Peter.

Stories behind the artefacts

Each artefact bears a story that links the present to the parish's 120-year journey of faith and hope in the railway colony of Silibin. "When documentation is lacking for a particular item, we consult senior parishioners and engage with interest groups, both locally and abroad, to gather information," explained gallery curator Alexandar Anthony Dars.

The collection features an array of artefacts, including disused liturgical vessels, host-baking machines and cutters, Roman Missals in Latin, Bibles, monstrances, reliquaries and cassocks. Complementing these are historical documents, rare photographs, a film projector, film-editing equipment, and numerous other items. Notably, among the chalices is a unique black chalice, meticulously carved from a single block of wood.

Among the prized exhibits is a Bible that once belonged to a seminarian who served in the parish and later became Malaysia's first cardinal, Anthony Soter Fernandez. Also on display are a Roman Missal and a film projector used by Archbishop Emeritus Tan Sri Datuk Murphy Nicholas Xavier Pakiam during his ministry at the parish — first as assistant priest (1967–1970) and subsequently as parish priest (1970–1972). His connection to the parish is further deepened by the fact that he was ordained at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Ipoh, on May 10, 1964.

Other exhibits capture the heartbeat of

parish life in earlier times. Two host-making machines — one crafted in France and the other in India — are displayed with an assortment of hand-operated and mechanical cutters once used to prepare altar bread for Mass. Though long silent, they speak of the devotion and care that went into every detail of worship before the responsibility was entrusted to the convent sisters. Nearby, a pair of vintage pump organs, still playable, stand ready to revive the hymns that once uplifted countless voices in prayer. Even the old twin generators, sturdy and reliable, bear witness to a bygone era when a single unit was sufficient to power the entire church — a quiet reminder of the community's resourcefulness and simple faith.

Documents that speak

Among the treasured manuscripts is a Baptism Registry, the earliest entry dated October 22, 1905. This invaluable record serves as a rich resource for those tracing family roots within the railway colony, which once flourished with housing, amenities, and facilities. The community itself played a pivotal role in the rapid expansion of the railway in Perak, particularly in serving the tin mines of the Larut region and the Kinta Valley.

Also on display is a Roman Missal in Latin from the 1920s, which had been set aside and forgotten after the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) which permitted the celebration of Mass in local languages. Another

notable artefact is the original land transfer agreement of 1902, signed by the parish's first priest, Fr Émile Marie Henri Zacharie Sausseau of the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP).

These documents were among those selected for conservation, preservation, and restoration efforts undertaken in Singapore. "Each individual page undergoes a meticulous process of assessment, documentation, dry non-invasive surface cleaning, humidification, flattening, repairing, stabilisation, and storage," explained Alexandar. To ensure longevity, every page is placed in an archival-grade, acid-free transparent sleeve. He added, "We have to be selective, as the conservation and restoration process is costly." Given their age and fragility, the documents require careful handling, always with gloves.

A journey through photographs

Visitors to the gallery will find themselves drawn to a captivating wall of high-resolution reproductions of old photographs, arranged in chronological order like a visual timeline of faith. Each image unfolds a chapter in the parish's story, offering a spiritually enriching journey through the milestones that have shaped its life and mission. Crowning the display are portraits of the parish priests who have shepherded the community from 1905 to the present day, their presence a reminder of enduring pastoral care. On an adjoining wall, a rare collection of photographs brings



Alexandar with the Roman Missal from 1920s. In the background is a gallery display of the life of St Bernadette.

to life the story of St Bernadette Soubirous, the humble visionary of Lourdes who witnessed the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Complementing these are images of the assistant parish priests, whose quiet yet faithful service has also left a lasting imprint on the parish's history.

Harnessing his professional expertise in IT and photography, Alexandar has played a pivotal role in safeguarding the parish's visual heritage. He painstakingly digitalised old photographs in a lossless format to ensure maximum image fidelity and undertook meticulous digital restoration to bring faded images back to life. Beyond the technical work, he also traced information and sourced photographs from Anthony Morris, a history enthusiast from Ipoh, and from Ipoh World, a non-profit organisation dedicated to preserving Perak's rich cultural legacy.

His efforts extended further afield, tapping into the National Archives of Singapore and the France-Asia Research Institute (IRFA), founded by the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP). Formerly known as the Archives des Missions Étrangères de Paris, the IRFA preserves the MEP's missionary records, including their legacy of founding several churches in Malaya — among them the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes. Alexandar's dedication has thus not only preserved artefacts but also woven together technology and history, ensuring that the parish's story is passed on with clarity and integrity.



Artefacts continue to transmit a message that the Christian communities, living in past epochs, wanted to hand on to posterity.

Enduring legacy of vocations

The historical items also stand as enduring reminders of a parish that has been richly blessed with vocations and spiritual vitality. Over the years, 22 parishioners have answered God's call to the priesthood, while nearly 20 others have embraced life in various religious orders—an extraordinary legacy for the community. This tradition began with Fr Xavier Anthony Roch, ordained in 1928 and who served in the Diocese of Hyderabad, India. He was studying medicine in India, when God called him to be a healer of souls instead. Fr Roch also holds the distinction of being among the pioneer batch of 39 students at St Michael's Institution, Ipoh, when it opened in 1912.

Beyond the railway colony

The story of the railway colony itself also unfolds through the eyes of Alexandar, a passionate history enthusiast. He points out that while many imagine the colony as populated solely by railway workers, its community was far more diverse. "While the prevailing narrative often highlights Indians being brought to Malaya primarily to work in rubber estates, many were also actively involved in road works, telecommunications, clerical services, teaching, commerce, finance,

and other fields," he explained. Some even thrived as merchants and business operators, shaping the local economy in lasting ways. With a smile, he adds, "And not all Indians in Malaya were brought here by the British," hinting at the rich and complex stories that continue to ripple through the parish's heritage.

Many families arrived in Malaya during the British colonial era, including Louis Thivy J.P., a plantation owner who in 1929 became the first Indian appointed to the Perak State Council. His son, John Aloysius Thivy — a lawyer and parishioner of LOL — later founded the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). In 1948, as the Indian Government's Representative in Malaya, John accompanied the ashes of Mahatma Gandhi on their journey through Malaya for public homage, with the urn resting in Ipoh's Town Hall before being returned to Singapore.

Gandhi's universal witness was later affirmed by Pope St John Paul II, who in 1986 honoured him at Raj Ghat as a "hero of humanity" and an "apostle of non-violence," reminding the world of Gandhi's plea to "conquer hate by love, untruth by truth, violence by suffering."

This is the very purpose of the LOL Heritage Gallery. Like Gandhi's legacy of truth and



Host baker and cutters from India.

non-violence, its artefacts bear witness to faith, sacrifice, and resilience — voices from the past that still speak today. As the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church reminded in 2001, "Even if many artefacts no longer carry out a specific Church function, they continue to transmit a message that the Christian communities, living in past epochs, have wanted to hand on to posterity." Entitled The Pastoral Function of Ecclesiastical Museums, the letter affirmed that such collections allow the faithful to "relive spiritually the history of a specific Church community that still exists."

In this way, the Heritage Gallery of LOL does more than preserve relics of the past — it safeguards the living memory of a community



whose story continues to inspire, instruct, and bear witness to faith across generations.

Alexandar expressed his gratitude to the clergy, parish staff, and all who have supported the Heritage Gallery in diverse ways—through research, cataloguing, curation, restoration, funding, or simply by sharing stories and memories. "Their dedication continues to breathe life into this Heritage Gallery," he said.

The gallery is open to visitors by appointment only. Admission is free, though donations are welcome to help sustain its preservation and future development. Those who may have old photographs or documents related to LOL, Ipoh, are encouraged to contact the parish office at 05-527 9349 or email lol@lolipoh.org

Blessing Malaysia with faith, hope and love

We have entered a period of celebrations in Malaysia for Merdeka Day (August 31) and then Malaysia Day (September 16). As always it brings forth a great celebratory and joyous occasion of remembering the past, commemorating the present and envisioning the future.

This time our joy was made more exuberant with a gold and a silver medal win at the Badminton World Championships in Paris. A big *Terima Kasih* to Chen Tang Jie-Toh Ee Wei (mixed doubles) and Pearly Tan-M. Thinaah (women's doubles) for their wonderful gifts to our beloved *tanah air yang tercinta*.

Let us take a moment to reflect on how we as Christians and churches, can do more to bring about unity, harmony, peace and prosperity to our cherished nation.

The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob received a covenantal promise from God that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12: 1-3 ESV. Cf. Gen 18:18; 22:18; to Isaac in Gen 26:4 and to Jacob in Gen 28:14).

Today, as children of Abraham by faith (Rom 4), how can we be a blessing to Malaysia? Pursuant to that goal perhaps three words – faith, hope and love – can direct our thoughts and actions so that we may be, by God's grace, a blessing to Malaysia.

These three words – faith, hope and love – come from St Paul as he commended the believers in Jesus Christ in the city of

Thessalonica in Macedonia for their "work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thes 1:3). The Thessalonian Christians were faithful believers in the Good News and lived lives worthy of their calling as witnesses to their beliefs and in their daily walk as Christians.

The first blessing is to live out our work of faith. The Bible tells us that faith means believing in God as the great exemplar of faith Abraham did (Rom 4: 3) when God called him to leave his homeland and to travel to a land that God had promised to him and his descendents.

Our work of faith in Malaysia is to believe God in all circumstances of our lives so that others can see God in us. The first thing we do is to grow in our faith as Christians and encourage one another to do so.

To grow in our faith is to attend to what we believe and in living out those beliefs in our daily lives wherever we are and in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. We are to live faithful lives so that people can see who and what we believe in.

While doing so, let us urge and encourage our fellow Malaysians of different religions to be the best example of their respective religious beliefs whether one is a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Christian, a Hindu, a Sikh, a



Growing in Christ

TAN KONG BENG

Taoist or a people of other belief systems, for the unity and harmony of Malaysia.

A second way to bless Malaysia is to have steadfast hope. Human hope does imply an element of uncertainty. We are hopeful that all will turn out for the better. But we are not assured of it.

However, biblical hope is a confidence in God who will fulfil His promises to us. It is a hope that is founded in God and because of that, we trust God in His steadfastness love and faithfulness towards us as

the psalmist has informed us in the Psalms (e.g. Ps 35:5-6; 117:2 and 130:7).

So then because of who God is, we have steadfastness of hope; a certainty that there is a future full of hope for ourselves, our children and our children's children despite the occasional divisive noise that seems to go against the peace and harmony we have in Malaysia.

To bless Malaysians with an assurance of hope let us sow seeds of hope each day. What would be a seed of hope that you can sow each day? Perhaps you could gather over *teh tarik* or a dinner with your neighbours, friends or colleagues and see what seeds of hope you could come up with. As Christians, may the Holy Spirit show us how each seed of hope, however small, may grow into trees of unity and

fruitfulness for all in Malaysia.

Finally, the third blessing is that of love. Our Lord Jesus was once asked for a summary of the law (i.e. the Torah) and He replied that it was to love God with all our heart, soul and mind (i.e. with our whole being) and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matt 22: 36-39).

Love is best seen in loving actions that show love first in the vertical dimension in loving God and also in the horizontal dimension of loving others as ourselves.

By loving our fellow Malaysians as ourselves, it is a labour of love by God's grace. It may be to show loving kindness to the 5 Ls – the Lost, the Little, the Last, the Least and the Lonely amongst us. It may be the widows, the orphans, the poor, the forgotten people in our midst, the bullied, the displaced persons and the refugees, the oppressed and persecuted, others facing anxiety and mental health issues and still many more others around us who need us to be alongside them and to be their loving friend.

And so we pray: O Lord God, help us to be a blessing to all the people in Malaysia as we in Christ Jesus work out our faith, show steadfastness of hope and engage in a labour of love each day. Amen.

After many years in Christian service, **Tan Kong Beng** is seeking a new season of vocation and life lived in God's ways. He worships and serves in Subang Jaya Gospel Centre.



GETTING SIDETRACKED

Agnes Ong

Come Monday, September 15, our family will be sitting in the pews of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur, celebrating my mum's 40th-day memorial.

It feels deeply ironic that just a month after my article *My Room in the Father's House*, was published (HERALD, July 7), God chose to welcome her from her temporary mortal lodgings into His eternal dwelling.

My mum, Catherine, passed away suddenly in my home, from a blood clot in the brain that led to a haemorrhage. I found her unresponsive on the floor near the kitchen when I went to get a drink of water, slightly past the Divine Mercy hour.

In my maddened grief, I didn't think to dial 999. Instead, I frantically speed-dialled my best friend, hysterically sobbing for help with my mum. It was she who alerted the first responders.

A fortnight later, my neighbour told me she could hear my wails and screams that afternoon, piercing through locked doors.

The funny business of comfort

Looking back dazedly on the past month, I can now, with some distance, appreciate the few moments of levity that surfaced during my mum's wake, her funeral, and the days that followed.

At the time, I did not view them as such. Grief and raw emotions clouded everything. But hindsight has a way of softening the sting of careless words and dulling the edge of anger and pain, despite

the lingering grief.

I believe this stems from the fact that some people – regardless of age and gender – may not be good or comfortable at comforting someone in the depths of grief.

And perhaps, their words were also coloured by fear: the fear that their loved ones might one day repeat the same missteps that my brother and I made with our mum. It may also stem from fear of their own unfinished business.

For instance, during the wake, one remarked that my mum's make-up looked "awful." As her daughter, knowing how much my mum took pride in her appearance, the comment struck painfully close to home.

Another, almost casually, observed that it was "good" so many parishioners and some priests came to pay their respects, as though attendance alone measured her faith.

Many also came up to tell me that my mum would "visit" me within the seven days before moving on to the next plane, and advised that I should have someone stay with me in case I became frightened. One even told me to stop crying, warning that if I continued, my mum would not be able to pass peacefully from this world to the next.

I hadn't thought I would be afraid until their words suggested that I should be, that I might even fear my own mum returning to visit me. In grief's raw state, such remarks linger, especially in the lonely stillness of the night.

I am thankful, though, for my friend's steady voice amid the clamour of negativity. He told me simply that all those notions

were bosh and that my mum was already merrily on her way to her next destination, Heaven. Knowing my intrepid mum's love for travel, his reassurance cut through the noise and offered me a measure of peace.

In another instance, a BEC member noted my family situation. At the time, her words felt heavy and misplaced, layering judgment onto fresh grief. Looking back now, I realise they came from her own convictions that, in her way, she felt compelled to voice, even if the moment was not right for me.

On the Sunday immediately after we had interred my mum's remains, while I was weeping quietly in a corner of the church, a lady who knew her approached me to ask for my mum's rosary. In a daze, I told her "No" bluntly. Later, when confiding in my brother and close friends, they reassured me that I had done the right thing.

For my mum's life of faith was deeply anchored in prayer, and especially in the resilient power of the Rosary. She recited it daily, and even more diligently when there was a family crisis. She also remained faithful to the 3.00pm Divine Mercy prayers, reciting the Chaplet almost every day.

Over the years, she collected beautiful rosaries from her pilgrimages to holy sites such as Jerusalem, Fatima, Loreto, and Lourdes. Each was more than a souvenir or trinket; they were her only means of protection and defence for herself, her family, and her friends. She keeps a rosary with her in almost every bag she has, including the bag she carries everywhere daily with her.

For me, her rosaries remain a living testament to the depth and beauty of her spiritual life.

A book and a string of beads

A faith-filled life, sustained by a book and a string of beads

Grief is unpredictable. It magnifies careless remarks and makes silence feel heavy. But it also sharpens the memory of what truly matters.

My mum's life was not defined by how others spoke of her in passing, but by the steadfast rhythm of her prayers, her unwavering trust in God, and the quiet strength of her love.

While some people's words stung or fell short, my mum's faith itself was the truest comfort left behind. Her daily prayers, her devotion to the Rosary and the Divine Mercy, and the quiet example she set through her pilgrimages, prayers and services, remain a steadying presence for me.

While going through my mum's personal effects, I discovered scraps of paper and notebooks filled with her daily reflections: quotes that touched her, biblical passages she had copied with care, and prayers she had written out in her own hand.

Each line I read pierced grief afresh, yet I am also astounded by the depth of her unceasing faith and resilience, sustained by just two things: one book – the Bible – which she read daily, her lifetime of jottings in the margins of the pages, and a simple string of beads we call the rosary.

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



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Becoming a practising mystic

I teach a course on the renowned mystic John of the Cross. Since this is never a required course for any student, I usually begin the first class by asking each student why he or she is interested in this course. The answers vary widely: "I am taking this course because my spiritual director told me to take it." "I've always been curious about mysticism." "I'm majoring in whatever is taught on Tuesday evenings!" One night, however, a woman gave this answer: "I'm taking this course because I'm a practising mystic". That raised some eyebrows. Really? A practising mystic?

Can someone be a practising mystic?

That depends upon how you understand mystical experience. If you equate mystical experience with the extraordinary, with supernatural phenomena (religious visions, religious ecstasies, radically altered states of consciousness, or the miraculous appearance of Jesus, Mary, an angel, or a saint) then you cannot be a practising mystic.

While such extraordinary phenomena can, in fact, be mystical experience (and indeed do mark the experience of some classical mystics), normal mystical experience is not characterised by any extraordinary religious phenomena. Indeed, it generally distrusts anything extraordinary and asks that it be discerned with extra scrutiny.

Normal mystical experience, most mysti-

cism, does not draw on the extraordinary. To the contrary, it draws on what is precisely the very ground of normality. What's meant by this?

A renowned contemporary mystic, British Carmelite Ruth Burrows, defines mystical experience this way. Mystical experience is being touched by God in a way that is beyond what we can articulate, picture, or even consciously feel. It is something we know more than think.

In essence, an ineffable God touches us in an ineffable way; a God beyond concepts, touches us in a way that cannot be put into concepts; a God beyond language touches us in a way that can never be adequately put into words; and a God who is source of all being, touches us at the very source of our own being, so that we know, intuitively, both who we are and how we stand before God.

This may sound rather abstract, but it's not, as Ruth Burrows explains, using her own story.

In her autobiography, *Before the Living God*, Ruth Burrows (who died in 2023) shares the story of how, just as she was finishing her initial education and making plans for university, a mystical experience marked her and radically changed her life.

At that time in her life, she was not particularly serious about her faith. The practise of her faith was more rote than fervorous,

but she was on a retreat with a number of other young women her age. One of the things she was asked to do on that retreat was to sit in a chapel in silence for an hour several times a day. Those hours of silence wore heavily on her and she dreaded them.

However, one day, during one of those hours, sitting in silence, she had (what she later calls) a mystical experience. There were no supernatural visions, no religious ecstasy, no appearances of angels, but only a moment of extraordinarily graced clarity; a moment within which she knew herself clearly for the first time, beyond what she could think, put into concepts, or articulate. It was a moment where, stripped of all pretence, stripped of all ideology, stripped of all false self-images, stripped of all posturing to others, emotionally and morally naked, she just knew - knew who she was and how she stood before God and others.

Her mystical moment was a moment of complete sincerity, a moment without wax, as the Latin roots of that word suggest (*sine* - without and *cere* - wax). Like all mystics, she struggled to put into words something which is largely ineffable, but which branded her soul in a way that radically changed her life.

Given that definition of mysticism, we are all invited to be practising mystics, that is, we are all invited in the silence of our

hearts, or perhaps in an experience of being lifted up in soul or crushed in soul, to stand or kneel before God in complete sincerity, without wax, morally naked, stripped of all pretence, stripped of all that's false, so that in that moment we can know in truth who we are and how we stand before God, others, and our true selves. We need to pray for that clarity and make that an explicit intention in our prayer.

How do we do that? We do that by trying, very intentionally in prayer, to centre ourselves in sincerity and nakedness of soul, by asking God to see through all that's false in us so that we can know how we are known by God.

Dag Hammarskjöld, in his prayer, used to ask God, "allow me in clarity of mind to mirror life and in purity of heart mould it, and to have a conscious self-scrutiny that sets me on a path towards mirroring the greatness of life."

To ask that in prayer is to be a practising mystic.

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

Our Mother of Sorrows at the foot of the Cross

From the moment of Annunciation until today, she is very close to Jesus, our Saviour and Redeemer, in fulfilling God's plan of salvation. In a unique manner, she participates in both the sorrows and glories of our Lord Jesus Christ because of her full collaboration and total involvement in the divine plan of God.

Like her son Jesus, she too bore much suffering. According to tradition, Mary suffered seven sorrows in her life:

- (1) the prophecy of Simeon,
- (2) the flight into Egypt,
- (3) the loss of the child Jesus in the Temple,
- (4) the encounter with Jesus carrying the Cross,
- (5) the standing at the foot of the Cross and the crucifixion,
- (6) the reception of the body of Jesus in her arms, and
- (7) the burial of Jesus.

This devotion dates back to the 14th century as Mary, Our Mother of Sorrows, appeared to St Bridget of Sweden and revealed this rosary prayer to her. It is prayed similarly to the rosary, but instead of meditating on five mysteries, you meditate on the seven sorrows. And instead of praying 10 Hail Marys in between each mystery, you pray seven Hail Marys in between each sorrow. The feast of Our Mother of Sorrows invites us to reflect on Mary's sorrows and how they relate to our lives.

Our Mother of Sorrows is a relatable figure, as sorrow and grief are emotions that are common to the human condition, and our Mother shares in that experience with us. She walks with us on our journey to God and understands our struggles and pains. As she mourned for her Son who died on the cross, she sorrows with us as we deal with the struggles of sin, and the events that come with mortal life that are beyond our control, like illness, accidents, and death. The Mother

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of God is the compassionate intercessor who intercedes to God for us, as she knows the pain that can come with human existence.

The word "compassion" comes from Latin, *compassio*, meaning "to suffer together with" (*cum* = with, *passio* = to suffer). Mary suffers for Jesus, and she also suffers with Jesus, for the passion of Christ is a full participation of all the sufferings of human beings. The passion of Christ deeply wounded her Immaculate Heart, because she loved her Son more than herself. She not only bore the pain of her Son but also united with Him in accepting the will of His Father, to give new life to human beings. This really reveals how profound her compassion is for her son, Jesus and for each one of us, her children. Her compassion is filled with faith, love, and hope in God.

Mary, Mother of God, was indeed blessed



**Virgin of all virgins best,
Listen to my fond request:
Let me share thy grief divine.
(From the Stabat Mater)**

among women. She was "poor in spirit," "meek," "righteous," "merciful," and a "peacemaker" (Mt 5:3-10), but it was her mourning that brought blessing to the Saviour when nothing else could. Like her, the sorrow that we experience at the loss of our loved ones is the very testimony we have to the love that lies in our hearts because love never dies. Mary's suffering eased her Son's pain. And if she had to do it all over again, we can conclude, she wouldn't change a thing. She wouldn't avoid watching her Son suffer, just so she wouldn't have to suffer herself. Mary was humbled by being chosen for the singular honour of Mother of God. But she was

grateful to be there when God needed her most. By meditating on Christ's passion and Mary's sorrow, we bring soothing comfort to them both, just as surely as if we stood there with them at Calvary. We ourselves become

blessed because we are a blessing to them.

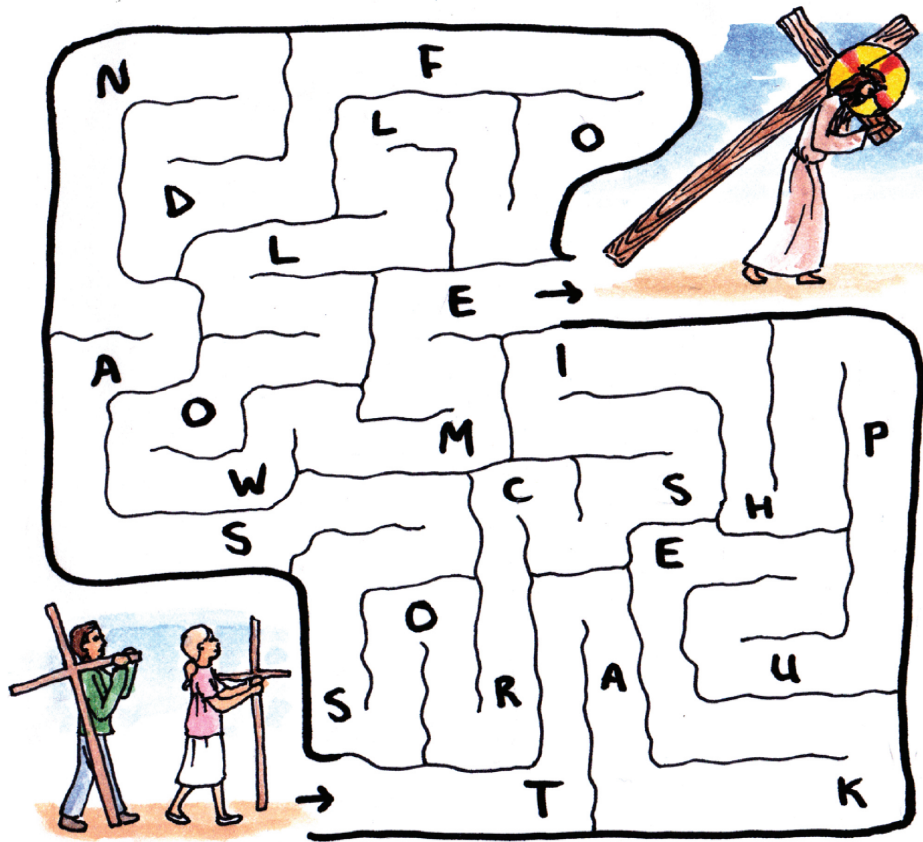
Today, many are experiencing the loss of loved ones through war and violence. Innocent women and children are the victims of such injustices, not forgetting the cry of creation.

As Christians, we are called to share in the passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, so let us draw strength and courage from our Mother of Sorrows, to embrace our daily crosses with hope and to witness our true love of God and our neighbours in bringing God's kingdom of love, peace, joy, justice, and fellowship amidst hatred, conflicts, violence, depression, sadness, injustice, and self-centredness.

Our Mother, with her glorious intercession, is helping us to understand the mystery of the cross and the hope it brings. The sorrows of our life on earth will also be turned into joy if we, like Mary, Our Mother of Sorrows, persevere in faith and love. Our pilgrimage of faith has been inseparably linked to Mary ever since Jesus' dying on the Cross gave her to us as our Mother, saying "Behold your Mother!" (Jn. 19:27). These words serve as a testament bequeathing to the world a mother. For sure, everyone, especially the suffering and those most in need, will come to know the closeness of Mary, the most affectionate of mothers, who never abandons her children and who, for the people of God, is "a sign of certain hope and comfort" (SNC 21). O Mother of Sorrows, pray for us, your children, to be compassionate like you. With Mary, we are Pilgrims of Hope. **Sr Margarete Sta Maria, FdCC**

(The Canossian Sisters have a special devotion to Mary, Mother of Sorrows, as a reminder to reflect often on her and her sorrows, which always lead us to the contemplation of the Greatest Love, Jesus Crucified)

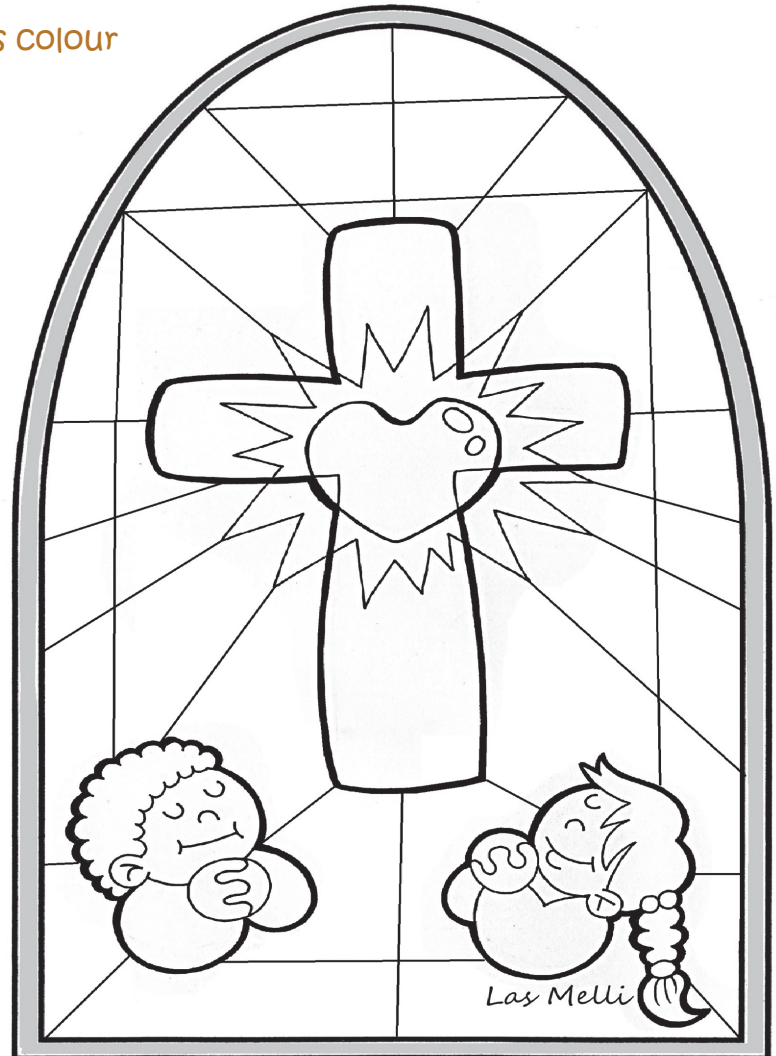
Little Catholics' corner



For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

(John 3:17)

Let's colour



Use the letters that you pass going through the maze to fill in the blanks:

Jesus tells the apostles, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and

answer: take up his cross and follow Me

For God so
 ♥♥ the ⚡
 that He ↑
 His one and
 only 👦, that
 whoever
 ★★ in Him
 shall not 🕊️
 but have
 Eternal
 Life
 (John 3:16)

What did Jesus tell us in the Gospel's reading today? Use the code to find out!

- 👦 = Son
- ⚡ = world
- ★★ = believes
- ♥♥ = loved
- 🕊️ = perish
- ↑ = gave

Hello, children of God!

I've got another Bible verse to share, and if you know it, let us read the verse below aloud, together, okay?

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." - John 3:16

This really is a great verse to know. God really does love the world. The WHOLE world. The good, the bad, the rich, the poor, the young, the old, the sick, the healthy, the angry, and the joyful. God loves us all.

He loves those who love Him, and He loves those who hate Him.

If you ever think that maybe God doesn't love you, just think about this part.

God loved you so much that He gave up His own Son for you.

God knew we needed a perfect sacrifice, and He knew His Son Jesus was the only one who could be that sacrifice.

Children, we don't have to be perfect, or grown up, or super smart, we just must believe in God, put our faith and trust in Him, and love Him. God loves YOU. YOU love God.

Love
 Aunty Eliz



How a parish play about

CARLO ACUTIS

inspired love for the Eucharist

AUSTRALIA: Children from a Catholic parish in Sydney put together an original play about the life of Blessed Carlo

Acutis that has inspired Eucharistic devotion among the kids and families in the community.

Fr Epeli Qimaqima, parish priest of St Joachim Parish, said that the play sparked lasting spiritual transformation and “brought the parish together in more ways than one.”

“It was not writing a play for the sake of having a play,” Qimaqima said. “But I had been pondering as parish priest how we can catechise the family in this day and age.”

The play, *Highway to Heaven*, was performed Oct 12, 2024, the feast day of Blessed Carlo Acutis. Written and directed by Anna Harrison of Sydney Catholic Youth, it featured children ages 7 to 15 dramatising the life of the Italian teenager known for his love of the Eucharist and his computer skills.

“My initial idea was to have the play of the story of Fatima,” Qimaqima said. “But the children ... in the parish kept on asking me about Carlo Acutis. ... They felt so familiar with him because of his age, and they knew everything about him.”

The children said they connected with Acutis because he was “so like them in every way,” enjoying soccer, swimming, and video games. But what struck them most was his devotion to the Eucharist.

“Because of our Adoration Chapel, I think they could see a link,” Qimaqima said.

The production engaged children in every aspect — from acting and set changes to managing props. And the impact went far beyond the performance.

In the months following the play, Qimaqima noticed children and their parents spending time in the parish’s perpetual adoration chapel.



Gabriel Rovero (left) played young Carlo Acutis and Christopher La Rosa (right) played teenage Carlo Acutis in their parish’s play about Carlo Acutis.

“They’ve grown together learning about Carlo Acutis and his life,” he said.

One young participant now stops to pray in the chapel on his way home from school. Parents also began attending weekday Masses and meeting each other outside of church.

“I hear that they are meeting outside of the parish to have coffee, talk about what they’re going through,” Qimaqima said. “I think some of the parents grew to really discover new things about their own children during the rehearsals. Because many of them told me, ‘I never knew my child could

do this.’”

The day of the play included a parish-wide celebration, Mass, and a barbecue.

“We had a big day here for the children finishing with Mass at the end of the day and then a barbecue and ice cream, lots of ice cream,” Qimaqima said. “It was a lot of



In the months following the play, Fr Epeli Qimaqima, parish priest of St Joachim Parish, noticed children and their parents spending time in the parish’s perpetual adoration chapel. (CNA photo/St Joachim Parish, Sydney, Australia)



Australian pilgrims during their pilgrimage to Italy in front of Carlo Acutis’ tomb. (CNA photo/St Joachim Parish, Sydney, Australia)

fun for the adults to see children so happy.”

Pilgrimage to Rome takes unexpected turn

Fourteen children and their parents later joined Qimaqima and other parishioners on a pilgrimage to Italy for Acutis’ canonisation Mass, originally scheduled for April.

The group had just set foot in St Peter’s Square when they learned Pope Francis had died and the canonisation was postponed.

“We didn’t believe it,” said 13-year-old Christopher La Rosa, who portrayed Acutis in the play. “We had to wait until the death bell had rung and then we believed it.”

Instead of a canonisation, the group attended the pope’s funeral.

Thirteen-year-old Sophie Tawadros added, “I’m really grateful that we got the opportunity to go to the pope’s funeral and really say goodbye because he has been the pope for as long as I have been alive, I think, and he is the only pope that I have ever known.”

The change of plans made our pilgrimage experience a much deeper encounter with God,” Qimaqima said.

Prayers at Carlo’s tomb

The group also visited Assisi to pray at Acutis’ tomb.

“I always wanted to see his body because he is one of our family’s favourite saints,” 11-year-old Antonia Mallet said.

“He has taught us that [the Eucharist] is actually Jesus’ body, not just a piece of plain bread, that it actually does turn into Jesus’ body,” she added.

Acutis “really inspires me how to offer up suffering for the pope’s intentions and for all of the holy souls in purgatory,” Mallet said.

La Rosa said that at Acutis’ tomb, he asked the young Blessed to intercede “to bring me closer to God and to protect me from all worldly distractions and to focus on heavenly ones.”

“He has inspired me to share the Gospel with more people,” he added.

The cast is now rehearsing “Highway to Heaven” again for two October performances, marking Acutis’ first feast day as a canonised saint.

Qimaqima said the ripple effects are visible throughout the community. “They’re telling their friends in school about what they’re doing at church. ... so they bring their friends from school. They bring their parents along with them to come to church,” he said.

Lasting friendships have also formed among the children, many of whom attend different schools.

“They leave the phone aside ... They’re sitting in a circle, laughing, telling stories,” Qimaqima said. “It’s marvellous to see what the Lord is doing in the lives of the people that I’m called to serve in this parish.” Courtney Mares, CNA

Be committed to the faith and serve the Lord

SUBANG JAYA: The Church of St Thomas More, USJ, was filled with joy as 52 students from the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe (OLOG), Puchong, received the Sacrament of Confirmation recently.

The celebration was presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow and concelebrated by OLOG parish priest, Fr Raymond Pereira. OLOG extended its gratitude to Msgr Patrick Boudville and the parish community of St Thomas More for the use of their church, as it continues to await the reopening of its own parish.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian captured the hearts of the congregation with a candid yet powerful message. He asked the confirmands if they were truly ready to be confirmed, reminding them that it was not too late to step back. However, he stressed that once they received the Sacrament, they must live out their lives faithfully, embracing the mission of being true disciples of Christ. "You must commit to the faith and serve the

Lord," he urged, encouraging them to see Confirmation not as an ending but as the beginning of a deeper journey with God.

Throughout their preparation, the confirmands were lovingly accompanied by Fr Raymond, who was a constant guide and shepherd. From leading the Confirmation camp to walking with the candidates on their faith journey, Fr Raymond's presence, wisdom, and encouragement deeply impacted the young people, preparing them well for this milestone in their lives. The catechists, too played a vital role, journeying patiently with the students in classes, formation sessions, and faith-sharing moments, ensuring they were ready to embrace the gifts of the Holy Spirit with open hearts.

The celebration was a truly communal one, with families, godparents, and parishioners gathering to support and witness this important step in the lives of the youth. Their joy and pride were visible as the confirmands, dressed reverently, stood



Confirmands with Archbishop Julian Leow and Fr Raymond Pereira.

before the archbishop to receive the sacrament. The liturgy itself was marked by solemnity, beauty, and the gentle stirring of the Spirit, reminding all present of the unity and strength that comes from faith.

As the 52 newly confirmed step forward into a new chapter of their faith, we continue to pray for them — that the gifts of the Holy Spirit may guide, strengthen, and

inspire them to live out their Confirmation promises. May they be a beacons of light and hope in their families, their parish, and their communities, boldly witnessing to Christ in their words and actions. Truly, it was a day of great blessing, not only for the confirmands but for the entire parish community. **Bridget Antoinette Pereira**

TOB CAMP REFLECTIONS

The Theology of the Body (TOB) camp held in my parish recently was an insightful programme that allowed us to learn more about topics which are usually deemed "taboo", for example sex, dating and marriage; as well as some 'modern' topics such as the LGBTQ community and abortion laws.

My friends and I had an enjoyable time at the camp as we discussed how to show love and respect for one another, the four marks of love, and how to be cautious and mindful when dating. We shared a variety of different opinions and advice which helped shape our perspective on the different topics as everyone within the discussion could offer a new idea or outlook on it.

The camp was filled with laughter as well as intuitive learning as we learned through facts that were solidified by many prayers before and after each session. We learned how to be proud Catholics and to always stay true to ourselves even through the world's temptations which try to draw us away from a spiritual life. I had an amazing two days with all of my friends — chatting and taking pictures during all the breaks, as well as learning more about each other through all the discussions.



EVA ALEXIS CHONG

ARCHBISHOP JULIAN LAUNCHES THE STELLA MARIS SPORTS CARNIVAL FOR YOUTH



KUALA LUMPUR: The Stella Maris family of schools — Damansara, Pudu, and Ampang — came together once again for their combined Sports Carnival, held on August 23 at the Universiti Malaya Arena stadium. Following its successful inauguration in 2023, the biennial event returned with greater enthusiasm, uniting students, teachers, parents, and supporters in a day of fellowship and friendly competition.

Blessed with fair weather and bright skies, the carnival was officially launched by Archbishop Julian Leow, who released a cage of sparrows into the air — a symbolic gesture of freedom, joy, and new beginnings.

The archbishop commended the schools for nurturing both body and spirit through sports, reminding the community that athletics is not only about competition but also about discipline, teamwork, and unity.

From the youngest primary pupils to the spirited teenagers of the secondary schools, participants gave their best in track and field events. The programme included 100m, 200m, 400m sprints, as well as 4x100m and 4x200m relays. A number of records were broken, showcasing the talent and determination of Stella Maris athletes. Notably, the younger children competed with the same energy and enthusiasm as



their older counterparts, embodying the true spirit of sportsmanship.

The carnival also featured lighter moments of camaraderie, with teachers and staff joining in a friendly telematch, and parents racing alongside teachers in a much-anticipated relay, much to the delight of the students. The opening procession, complete with colourful costumes and creative displays, added vibrancy and set a festive tone to the day.

The event was organised by Yayasan Tan Sri Dominic Vendargon (YTDV), which oversees the three Stella Maris schools. In his address, YTDV Chairman, Brig Gen (Rtd) Dato' Richard Robless gave thanks to the

Lord and described the carnival as "an important milestone in the history of Stella Maris." He added, "The biennial Sports Carnival has the mission to bring all our schools together in a spirit of fellowship, to build our community of schools, our community of people, and to foster solidarity among our students and educators." He also expressed gratitude to Archbishop Julian Leow for his presence and blessing.

The Stella Maris schools, known for their strong sporting tradition, have produced students who have excelled at district, national, and even international levels. This year,

prizes were awarded to outstanding athletes, with Stella Maris Damansara Primary and Secondary emerging as overall champions after securing the highest medal tally.

The day's events were graced by members of the YTDV Council; representatives of the Boards of Governors; principals; the School Campus Director, and invited guests. At the opening prayer, Matthew 5:16 was proclaimed: "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Indeed, the Stella Maris Sports Carnival was a radiant witness of youthful talent, community spirit, and faith lived joyfully in action.

Indian Church mourns death of renowned youth animator

MANGALORE: When news broke on August 29 of the passing of Fr Vincent Francis Monteiro, *pic*, the Church in India felt it had lost not only a priest but a shepherd who had spent his life walking alongside the young and the forgotten. He was 71, and in his final years, he resided quietly at St Juze Vaz Home, Jeppu, Mangalore. But his story is anything but quiet — it is the story of a priest who believed in people, especially the young, and gave them wings to fly.

Born on July 24, 1954, in Angalore, Mangalore, to Raymond and Christine Monteiro, Vincent's life was marked early by faith and service. Ordained a priest on April 22, 1981, he began his ministry at Kirem and St Antony's Charity Home. Those who knew him then would later say he already carried the hallmarks of what would define his vocation: simplicity, deep pastoral care, and an ability to see potential in others even when they could not see it themselves.

His true calling found its home in youth ministry. As national director of the Young Christian Students/Young Students Movement (YCS/YSM) of India (1989–1995), Fr Monteiro spent years on the road, visiting schools and parishes, sitting with young people, listening to



their struggles, and challenging them to live their faith courageously. He believed the youth were not just the future of the Church but its present strength. Thousands of students were touched by his presence, and many today still credit him for giving them a sense of purpose.

In 2004, he carried that same passion to the international stage as Asian Chaplain of YCS, where his warmth and vision bridged cultures and inspired students across the continent. For him, leadership was never about titles but about drawing out the gifts God had planted in each person.

Yet, Fr Monteiro was more than a youth

animator. Back home in the Diocese of Mangalore, he served as parish priest in Pangla, Kinnigoly, and Bendur, and as director of the Pastoral Institute. Wherever he went, he was remembered less for grand gestures and more for the way he made people feel seen, loved, and encouraged. Parishioners recall his simplicity, his gentle humour, and the way he carried himself with quiet dignity.

“His ministry was marked by deep pastoral concern, a spirit of simplicity, and his enduring love for the people of God,” the diocese shared in its condolence message.

On August 31, at St Vincent Ferrer Church, Valencia, the faithful gathered to bid him farewell. Tears were shed, but they were mingled with gratitude — gratitude for a priest who had poured out his life for Christ and His people.

Fr Monteiro leaves behind no monuments, no institutions bearing his name. Instead, his legacy lives on in the countless young people who found their faith awakened, their courage strengthened, and their lives redirected because one priest believed in them. And perhaps that is the greatest testimony of all: that his story continues in theirs.

Matters India



studies in Colombia, Mexico, and the United States before joining the Diocese of Paterson in 2011. Ordained in 2013, he served in several parishes, including St John the Baptist Cathedral, St Mary of the Assumption, St Nicholas, and Sacred Heart and Holy Rosary, before becoming pastor of St Stephen's Parish, Paterson.

Though his earthly journey ended too soon, the gift of his priesthood remains a blessing to the Church he so faithfully served. CNA

Diocese of Paterson bids farewell to Fr Rafael

NEW JERSEY: With hearts heavy in grief, the Diocese of Paterson gathered on September 3 to honour the life and ministry of Fr Rafael Ángel Ciro, a 45-year-old Colombian priest who died by suicide on August 27. Bishop Kevin J. Sweeney presided over the funeral Mass, offering words of comfort to a community shaken by loss.

Speaking with tenderness, Bishop Sweeney reminded mourners that they were not alone in their sorrow: “Jesus, who knows our pain and suffering, is here and comforts us.”

Turning to Fr Rafael's mother, Elena Guarín, and his brother, Jairo, who travelled from Colombia, the bishop spoke with deep affection: “We are with you, with your family in Colombia. We are one family. Doña Elena, the mother of one priest is the mother of all priests. You are also our mother. Thank you for

giving the Church a good and faithful priest. We give thanks for Fr Rafael's priesthood and commend him to God's merciful love.”

The bishop acknowledged the profound grief felt by parishioners, brother priests, and all who loved Fr Rafael, but pointed to the hope that faith offers: “We share the sorrow, but we also share the hope — especially with the people of St Stephen's and the parishes where Fr Rafael gave his life in service.”

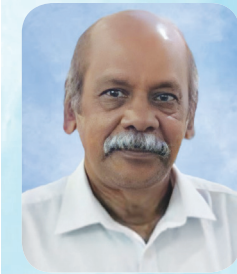
Bishop Sweeney closed with a message of hope for all who struggle silently: “To anyone feeling alone or anxious, you are not alone. God is with you. We are with you. If you are facing difficulties, depression, or emotional pain, we want to walk with you.”

Fr Rafael Ángel Ciro, born on October 29, 1979, in Alejandria, Colombia, pursued philosophy and theological

MEMORIAM

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40th Day Memorial In Loving Memory of



Mr. Selvam
s/o Amirdhasamy
6 July 1948 – 1 August 2025

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”
2 Timothy 4:7

Deeply loved and treasured by Wife, Children, Grandchildren & Relatives.

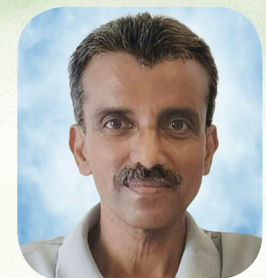


Finian L. Sta Maria
1934 - 1996

Grant him eternal rest, O Lord & let the perpetual light shine upon him.

May his soul find a peaceful journey into your loving embrace with your mercy & grace.

40th Day Memorial of Our Beloved Appa



Cyril Nathan A/L K. Jeganathan
20 March 1959 - 25 July 2025

Forty days have passed. It feels so long knowing you are gone forever, yet your presence still lingers with us. In heaven you rest, no worries, no pain, but in our hearts you will always remain.

May you rest peacefully in the arms of the Lord, who formed you from the dust of the earth.

Forever loved by Benji, children, wife, brothers & sisters, friends and loved ones.

3rd Anniversary In Loving Memory of



A. Franklin Netto
27.01.1947 – 17.09.2022

“I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.”
(Philippians 4:13)

Deeply missed by his family and siblings.

7th Anniversary In Loving Memory of Anthony Fong



14.1.1964 – 16.9.2018

Your life was a blessing, Your memory a treasure, You are loved beyond words, And missed beyond measure.

Deeply missed and cherished by Beloved wife, Melrose and daughter, Felicity.

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One million trees planted in Bangladesh

DHAKA: The Catholic Church in Bangladesh has planted one million trees nationwide, answering Pope Francis's call in *Laudato Si'* to care for creation. The initiative, launched by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) on August 14, 2020, has since grown into an interfaith movement involving Catholics, Protestants, and non-Christians alike.

Bangladesh, one of the world's most climate-vulnerable nations, faces devastating floods, cyclones, river erosion, and landslides. Recognising this urgent reality, the Church has paired environmental action with social outreach, from tree planting and reducing plastic use to supporting migrants, farmers, and poor communities.

"Planting trees remains one of the most powerful actions we can take to combat climate change," said Fr Tushar James Gomes, assistant secretary general of the CBCB. "*Laudato Si'* has awakened people to see that protecting nature is not optional but essential."

The Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace has been at the forefront of translating and promoting *Laudato Si'* in Bengali, organising awareness programmes and training sessions. Holy Cross Father Liton H. Gomes noted that both Christians and non-Christians have embraced the encyclical's message, participating in eco-friendly projects and interfaith



Catholic bishops planting a tree at the premises of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh in Dhaka, Aug 14, 2020. (CNA photo/Sumon Corraya)

workshops.

The campaign has also borne fruit —literally. Cooperatives, schools, and parish groups report that hundreds of trees are thriving, while dioceses like Rajshahi have planted thousands of palm trees to reduce lightning-related deaths. "If the trees survive, the world survives," said Fr Sagor Corraya, who spearheaded local planting drives.

The impact extends beyond the Church. Muslim leaders, including mosque imams, have voiced support for the initiative, affirming shared values of caring for the earth and the poor. "This is not just a Christian effort—it's a human responsibility," said Mazharul Islam, Khatib of Kawranbazar Mosque. CNA



HOLY LAND

John 11:25-26 - Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die."

DEPARTURES

2025

14D CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM PILGRIMAGE

FR GILBERT JAMES, OFM

17 DEC

2026

HISTORICAL

PILGRIMAGE

06 FEB

29 MAY

20 SEP

09 OCT

27 NOV

18 DEC



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建堂135周年庆

Feast Day 主保瞻礼

Date 日期	Time 时间	Event 庆典	Venue 地点
25/9/2025 (Thurs.四)	8.00pm	Mass (E) 英语弥撒 Mass (C) 华语弥撒	Church 圣堂 PAC Hall 庞神父礼堂

26/9/2025 (Fri.五)	11.00am	Mass (E) 英语弥撒 Anointing of the Sick 傅油	Church 圣堂
	8.00pm	Mass (E) 英语弥撒 Mass (C) 华语弥撒 Mass (T) 淡米尔语弥撒	Church 圣堂 PAC Hall 庞神父礼堂 SFX Hall 圣方济各礼堂

Feast Day 主保瞻礼

Date 日期	Time 时间	Event 庆典	Venue 地点
27/9/2025 (Sat.六)	5.00pm	Mass (E& C) followed by Procession & Benediction 双语弥撒后游行&圣体降福	Church & PAC Hall 圣堂及庞神父礼堂

28/9/2025 (Sun.日)	9.00am	Mass (E& C) 双语弥撒	Church & PAC hall 圣堂及庞神父礼堂
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