

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.



Synodality demands conversion

not business as usual

Sandra Ann Inbaraj

KUALA LUMPUR: “Every new step in the life of the Church is a return to the source,” reminded Archbishop Julian Leow at the 2025 Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly (PMPA), quoting the Synod Final Document. He urged the Church to live its mission with authenticity and courage: “We must be prophetic. Renewal begins with us — otherwise we will be like empty gongs.”

The PMPA, themed *Walking Together Towards a Synodal and Prophetic Church – A People for Missionary Discipleship*, drew 100 clergy, religious, and lay leaders from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and the Dioceses of Penang and Malacca Johore from August 26-27. The gathering was not just another entry in the Church’s calendar — it marked a decisive step in Malaysia’s synodal journey, one that points directly to the Malaysia

Pastoral Convention (MPC) in 2026.

Facilitator Dr Christina Kheng, a Singaporean theologian and consultant to the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific, led the process. With her wide experience in global synodal processes, she described synodality as “a communal and spiritual self-examination of the whole Church — the biggest step since Vatican II.”

She traced its roots from the early Church to Vatican II’s vision of the People of God, stressing that baptism is the foundation of Christian identity. Every baptised person, she said, is co-responsible for the life and mission of the Church, called to place their gifts at the service of both Church and society.

To situate her input in the Malaysian context, Sr Margarete Sta Maria, Daryl Tan, Fr Fabian Dicom, and Archbishop Julian were each invited to offer responses after her sessions, highlighting the lived realities and pastoral challenges faced locally.

During the Conversation in the Spirit, participants prayed, reflected, and shared on the four pastoral priorities chosen by the Malaysian Bishops — Family, Church, Ecology, and Society. These conversations built on the fruits of the Diocesan Assemblies and the Regional

Pastoral Assemblies (RPA) held in 2024, ensuring continuity and a widening circle of discernment.

At every level, one clear message has echoed strongly: the need for a conversion of relationships. This means:

- walking with others, not rushing ahead of them,
- listening attentively to all voices, especially youth, women, migrants, and the marginalised,
- moving beyond clericalism and exclusivity towards co-responsibility and inclusivity.

As Msgr Jude Miranda, chairman of the Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Team, reminded the participants: “The Church cannot simply repeat what has been done before. We are summoned to live in a new way — as one People of God, walking together.”

The PMPA is part of a larger, three-stage journey of discernment for the Malaysian Church: beginning with the diocesan assemblies, moving to the RPAs across the regions, and now to the Peninsular level. All these steps converge toward MPC 2026, which is envisioned as a moment of renewal, unity, and recommitment to mission.

But unless renewal takes flesh in our parishes and dioceses now, MPC 2026 risks becoming a grand conference with fine words but little consequence.

The call to synodality is not about holding more assemblies or writing thicker reports. It is about conversion — of hearts, of relationships, of structures. It demands courage to confront uncomfortable truths — that clericalism still stifles lay voices, that young people drift because they do not feel heard, that migrants and the poor too often remain at the Church’s margins.

If synodality is to mean anything, it must reshape how decisions are made, how ministries are shared, and how the Church positions itself in Malaysian society. The prophetic Church Archbishop Julian spoke of will not emerge from caution or nostalgia, but from authenticity, inclusivity, and a willingness to be stretched by the Gospel.

The PMPA was a step forward. The real test begins now — whether the Malaysian Church will walk the talk, or retreat into the safety of “business as usual.” The choice is clear: either renewal becomes our lived reality, or we risk becoming, in the archbishop’s stark words, ‘nothing more than empty gongs’.



ESTABLISHED 1994

Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre
5, Jalan Robertson, 50150, KL
Tel / Whatsapp: 03-20268291

Jointly published by the
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur,
Diocese of Malacca Johore,
Diocese of Penang and
Diocese of Keningau

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As Malaysians, we find ourselves once again confronted with troubling headlines. Reports of bullying in schools and universities remind us that cruelty and violence are alive in places that should be safe havens. At the same time, a controversy over incorrectly hung national flags has reignited questions about patriotism and nationalism. And, sadly, racism has once again reared its ugly head, with blame being cast broadly on one community because of the actions of a few.

It is heartbreaking that these issues come to the fore just as we are preparing to celebrate our 62nd Malaysia Day — a day meant to celebrate unity, shared identity, and the coming together of diverse peoples to form one nation. Instead of joy, we are faced with the sobering reality of divisions that threaten the very fabric of our society.

The question we must ask ourselves is this: What does it mean to be Malaysian? Is patriotism measured merely by waving a flag correctly, or is it expressed in the respect and love we show for one another as fellow citizens? Is nationalism about protecting the pride of one's own race, or is it about seeking the flourishing of every community under the same banner?

True patriotism is not loud slogans or symbolic gestures. It is lived out daily in the small but powerful acts of kindness, respect, and integrity that affirm the dignity of every person. True nationalism is not built on suspicion or fear of the "other," but on the recognition that diversity is our greatest strength.

Bullying, whether in schools, workplaces, or online, often stems from insecurity and prejudice. It thrives when empathy is absent, and when differences are used as weapons instead of bridges. The misplaced flags — while at first glance a minor error — have become a lightning rod for misplaced anger, exposing how fragile our sense of identity can be when we fail to ground it in understanding and forgiveness.

Racism, perhaps the most corrosive of all,



reduces a person to skin colour, language, or culture, stripping away the shared humanity we all possess. It is not only unjust, but also profoundly un-Malaysian. If we allow it to fester, it erodes the very foundations of harmony and progress that this nation has struggled to build.

Malaysia Day should remind us that this country was not built by one race, religion, or culture alone. It was born out of sacrifice, dialogue, and compromise. It thrives only when we hold one another's hands, not when we point fingers.

Yes, we can decorate our homes and buildings with dozens of flags, but what really matters more is whether we exemplify the values it represents: unity, respect, justice, and hope.

As Malaysians, we must ask ourselves: are we raising flags only on poles, or are we raising them in our hearts? Are we teaching our children to love this land by rejecting hate and division, or are we quietly allowing prejudices to grow unchecked?

This Malaysia Day is not about waving flags or shouting slogans; it is about substance. Bullying will not end with punishment alone — it ends when we build cultures of empathy in our

schools, workplaces, and homes. An incorrectly hung flag should not spark outrage, but reflection: have we done enough to teach and live out what it truly means to honour our nation? Racism must be confronted head-on, not only in official statements but in the quiet choices we make daily — the words we use, the attitudes we nurture, and the way we treat those different from us.

Malaysia will not be saved by politicians alone. It will not be healed by policies alone. It will be renewed when ordinary citizens — you and I — choose to live differently: with open hearts, with courage, and with the deep conviction that the other is not a threat, but a brother or sister with whom we share this soil.

At 62 years, Malaysia is still young. Mistakes will be made, tempers will flare, and divisions will surface. But this nation's story is not one of despair — it is one of hope. Each generation is given the chance to rise above fear and prejudice, to rediscover the spirit of unity that gave birth to this country.

Let us not only wave our flag higher — let us lift one another higher. For only then will we truly honour the land we call home.

Patricia Pereira

Staying the course with Christ

Today's Gospel is probably one of the most difficult to take in. This is evident when Jesus says that no one can be his disciples unless we hate our families and friends and our own lives. If we read it literally, then what Jesus asks of us in this Gospel passage would be difficult to carry out. The question is, however, is that what Jesus really meant?

We know from the Ten Commandments that God asks us to honour our father and mother. This commandment ranks quite high in the order of the Commandments and this tells us that God meant it not to be taken lightly. After all, our life comes from God through our parents and since they brought us into this world, it would be fitting to honour them. If we take the words of Jesus literally, wouldn't that contradict what God has given us the Ten Commandments? We know that Jesus is God the Son and that God the Father and God the Son should not and cannot possibly contradict one another. How then do we resolve this quandary?

If we look at it from the etymological aspect, the Greek word that was used in the Gospel is *μισέω* (*miseō*). The basic meaning is to hate, detest, abhor or to love less, prefer less. However, to love less by comparison is likely what Jesus means here — He is using hyperbolic language to emphasize that our love for Him must be so great that our attachment to family seems like "hate" in comparison. In a sense, we need to detach ourselves from something lesser for something greater. This is not to say that we completely abandon everyone and everything, otherwise the

Ten Commandments will be meaningless.

To be a true disciple of Christ, our love for God must take precedence over our love for everyone and everything. What is created can never fulfil the emptiness that is in us. No matter how many things we have and how many people we have who love us, it will be never compare to the love of God. Our hearts are made by God and for God, and only in him do we find the ultimate fulfilment of our thirst for love.

This leads us to the second part of the Gospel. At first glance, it may seem unrelated to the first passage but if we look closer, it is the whole process of helping us to become disciples of Christ. Christ tells us to ensure that we have enough materials to complete our work so that we don't become abandoned projects. Isn't this similar to our journey of becoming disciples of Jesus?

I believe that many of us have firsthand experience of an encounter with God and his love and mercy and because of this encounter, we are filled with fire and zeal to do God's work. However, in many cases, that initial fire and zeal will burn out and soon we find ourselves not having any more passion. In the words of a Malay idiom: "Hangat hangat tahi ayam."

If we do not keep the fire and zeal burning within us, however many encounters that we have and however intense that initial fire and zeal was, we will find ourselves becoming cold. This is because we are constantly affected by what we have around us. In other words, the very things that we are attached to will, in some ways,

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Readings: *Wisdom 9:13-18;*

Philemon 9-10, 12-17;

Gospel: Luke 14:25-33

divert our attention from our journey to become disciples of Christ.

As long as we prefer created things to God, we will find that, for every endeavour that we want to do for God, we will never be able to fully complete it. This is not to say that everything that we do for God will end up being abandoned but think about how many times we say things like "I want to spend more time in prayer" or "I want to spend more time reading the Bible or spiritual books" How far do we go before we start to falter and give it up completely? After a short while, we become distracted by the things around us, especially social media, and what we set out to do in the first place will end up being abandoned.

Ultimately, what is most important is the command of Christ to carry our cross and come after Him. Carrying our crosses is not just about suffering, but it is also about detachment from all created things. When we detach ourselves, we seem to lose everything that we hold dear, but we must always remember that we are only pilgrims on this earth and our final destination is Heaven. Let us do everything that we can so that this journey will not end up being an abandoned one.

KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

September

- 11 National Unity Forum
- 12 Sri Seronok Board Meeting
- 12 Catholic Health Care Asia (online meeting)
- 13 *Laudato Si'* Action Plan
- 14-19 Clergy Annual Retreat
- 20 AGM – Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Taoism

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

September

- 4-7 Leadership Programme – Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang
- 7-12 Clergy Annual Retreat – MAJODI Centre
- 14 Tamil Mass – Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai
- 19 Canossian Sisters 120th Anniversary Mass – Sacred Heart Chapel, Melaka

St Mary's Cathedral marks 142 years of grace and growth

Evelyn Jock

SANDAKAN: Established in 1883, St Mary's Cathedral — proudly known as the mother church of the Diocese of Sandakan, celebrated its 142nd anniversary with gratitude and joy. From its humble beginnings as a modest structure, the cathedral has grown into a vibrant spiritual home deeply rooted in discipleship, unity, and faith.

The celebration began with a bilingual Thanksgiving Mass in Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin on August 17, presided over by Bishop Julius D. Gitom, together with concelebrants Fr David Garaman and Fr Mitchelly Kiun.

In his homily, Fr David reflected on the theme of synodality, emphasising the Church's call for members to walk together in faith as one body. He also highlighted the significance of the Jubilee Year: Pilgrims of Hope, which invites the faithful to participate actively in the life of the Church and to journey forward with renewed hope as witnesses of God's love. The chosen theme, *The Joy of Love*, was a reminder that joy within families must radiate outward, fostering love and unity in the wider community.

Fr David expressed gratitude to all who contributed to the anniversary celebrations, particularly those who prepared spiritually through the nine-day Rosary novena leading up to the Feast of the Assumption and the parish feast day.

Bishop Julius, in his anniversary reflection, reaffirmed the theme *The Joy of Love*,



The statue of St Mary carried in procession.

reminding the faithful that genuine joy and love are divine gifts freely given by God. He encouraged the community to give thanks not only for blessings but also for struggles, through which the Church has continually encountered God's abiding love. He called on parishioners to rejoice in this love and to carry forward the mission begun by their forefathers, building a Church rooted in faith, hope, and love.

After Mass, the celebration continued at the parish hall, beginning with the traditional three beats of the gong to mark the festivities. The lively gathering featured stalls offering local food, homemade crafts, and religious books, along with stage performances includ-

ing songs by the Catholic Teachers Guild and dance presentations by children.

The Parish Creation and Justice Ministry also enriched the day by promoting environmental awareness. Activities included recycling projects, puzzle games, a children's colouring competition, and a hands-on workshop on making eco-bags from used t-shirts. The ministry also presented biodiversity posters to the parish, underscoring the Church's ecological mission.

The 142nd anniversary was a true reflection of faith, culture, and community — a celebration of God's grace through generations and a joyful witness to unity and love in the Diocese of Sandakan.



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #237



The Pilgrim Cross is currently at CDM Skudai. Next stop is Church of St Henry, Batu Pahat. The Chinese Language and Culture Council meeting in Kluang, Parish Pastoral Assembly at the Church of St Theresa, Melaka and Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly 2025 in Kuala Lumpur have just ended. Endless flag issues. We were taught the specifics, the way to raise and lower, and even letting it rest on our shoulder and not touch the ground. Why these slip-ups? Why the racial slant to people's oversights? *Merdeka* is accepting one another's strengths and weaknesses. **Nearer to us: Jolts Felt.** Segamat, Kluang and the southern states were jolted by tremors.

The former CJ admitted that political leaders are the biggest threat to the Malaysian Constitution. Attempts to interfere have been noted. A retired army major, D Swami commented in his memoir *Exigent Circumstances- A Soldier's Journey Down the Road Less Travelled*: "A nation that cannot value all who serve, equally and without question, is a nation still at war with itself." Bullying, unregistered schools and deaths on the road continues.

Taking Ownership Times: Slowly and committedly parishioners, and a number of parishes, have introduced tithing. Some call it 'parish subscription', others refer to it as 'planned giving'.

1. Planned Giving is voluntary, that is giving out of love and gratitude to God, the Giver;

systematic, that is giving a predetermined portion of one's income; scriptural Gn.28:22.

2. What do people say?
a) Misconceptions and false beliefs among many:

- (i) that there isn't enough for everyone...
- (ii) that our world is a world of scarcity, with limited resources...
- (iii) that we must survive, save ourselves, forget others... we come first.

b) Hebrew and Christian Scriptures speak of a "world of plenty..."

- (i) that there is enough for everyone when God's righteousness reigns, when one seeks first the Kingdom of God...
- (ii) that each of us are blessed by God with certain talents, abilities, resources and opportunities...
- (iii) that we are called to nurture and develop for our own good and for the good of the human family.

c) US Bishops' Pastoral Letter 1992 *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. That when we embrace "stewardship as a way of life"

- (i) relationships are influenced by a new spirit of generosity and sharing.
- (ii) time is no longer wasted, but is cherished as a gift to be used wisely.
- (iii) money matters like earning, saving and spending becomes a means to an end.

(iv) Gratitude influences our joy and our lives; we rejoice at our blessings and place our hope in God's providence. Caring becomes a sacred duty.

(v) providing for the Church is more than a weekly obligation; but as a privileged opportunity to give back. When stewards take ownership of their church ministries, outreaches, charities, leadership development, sponsoring bibles, planting churches and mission ad gentes, we see church communities on fire.

A Thought For The Week:

Two school-going friends, near Toronto had a crazy idea. They rounded up three goats from the neighbourhood and painted the numbers 1, 2 and 4 on their sides, and released the goats inside their school building. The next morning, when the school authorities upon entering, smelled something and saw goat droppings everywhere. A search was immediately conducted and very soon, the three goats were found. But the authorities were worried, where was goat No. 3? Classes were cancelled. All were mobilised to look for goat no.3. They never found it. *The lesson from goat no.3:* An absence of something is always larger than the presence of many other things.

What's Next?

Coming next? Special Needs Children **Parents Support Group** learning cooking

and preparing them for simple employable jobs;

Catholic Men's Support Group begins Focus on the Word.

Mandarin ME weekend on October 24-26 at the Good Shepherd Seminary;

Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue visits underway, planning interreligious prayer for peace in September.

Regenerate Creation is the focus of Creation Justice's Protec 2.0.

QnQ! Q asks: What do I do when I am feeling uncomfortable?

"You have to be willing to STOP & FIX. Deep practice requires a willingness to do what many of us find uncomfortable: to admit to our errors, and focus on them."

Daniel Coyle

Without admission, no breakthrough or break with is possible. Without deliberate behaviour adjustments, no shift in habits and outcome is attainable.

Holy Spirit@work: "I wish not merely to be called Christian, but also to be Christian." **St Ignatius of Antioch**

Something to tickle you: Never blame people in life. Good people give you happiness; bad people give you experiences; worst people give you a lesson; the best people give you memories.

Bernard Paul

Bishop Bernard Paul

Celebrating the Assumption through the Magnificat

Majella Gomes

PETALING JAYA: The Church of the Assumption came alive with prayer and reflection during its nine-day novena leading up to the Feast of Our Lady of the Assumption on August 15. Themed “*Mary, Mother of Hope*,” the celebration drew the faithful for the Rosary, Novena, Chaplet, and Mass each evening. Guest priests reflected on verses of the Magnificat, offering insights on hope, mercy, and God’s promises.

The novena opened with Fr Dominic Tan on *Hope*, from “My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.” He described hope as the desire for heaven and eternal life, nurtured through trust in the Holy Spirit. Quoting Pope Benedict XVI — “Those who have hope live and love differently” — he urged the faithful to acknowledge their need for a Saviour, to say ‘yes’ to God, and to live in faith. Mary’s Assumption, he said, assures us that by doing so, we too may share eternal life.

On the second day, Fr Jonathan

Rao reflected on *God’s Favour* from “He looks on His servant in her nothingness. Henceforth all ages will call me blessed.” Mary, he said, is the beacon of hope who brought Christ to humanity. God’s favour was revealed in His choice of Mary as *Theotokos*, despite her humble status. As our intercessor, she presents our needs to God. He urged the faithful to imitate her humility, obedience, prayer, purity, and charity.

Fr Lawrence Andrew, SJ, next preached on *God’s Power and Holiness* from “The Almighty works marvels for me; holy is His name.” He reminded the faithful that “sad faces are not the Christian way,” encouraging joy in recognising God’s marvels in daily life. True happiness, he said, frees us from addictions and pride, enabling us to meet God with humility.

Day 4 saw Fr Leonard Lexson speak on *God’s Mercy* from “His mercy is from age to age, on those who fear Him.” God’s mercy, he said, is everlasting and freely given, calling the faithful to trust Him and extend mercy to others.



Archbishop Julian Leow and Fr Leonard Lexson during the feast day Mass.

On Day 5, during a concelebrated Mass with Frs Bonaventure Rayappan, Dominic Tan, and Leonard Lexson, Fr Bonaventure preached on *God’s Authority* from “He puts forth His arm in strength, and scatters the proud-hearted.” God’s authority, he said, is the supreme guide for life. Mary, the first Apostle, lived under this authority and calls us to do the same. “We are pilgrims of hope,” he reminded, “our permanent home is heaven.”

Days 6 and 7 explored the theme *God is Just. On Reversal of Fortune*, Fr Leonard reflected on “He casts the

mighty from their thrones, and raises the lowly.” Human justice, he said, is flawed, but God’s justice overturns worldly values. Mary, chosen in humility, embodied this reversal. He urged the faithful to uplift the poor and stand with the marginalised.

On *Social Justice*, Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis reflected on “He fills the starving with good things, sends the rich away empty.” Justice, he said, requires compassion and conversion. “Hope is our anchor, and justice is the Gospel in action.” Every Catholic must help those in need and be a voice for the voiceless.

On Day 8, Carmelite friar Fr Chin Sin Wee preached on *God’s Unfailing Protection* from “He protects Israel His servant, remembering His mercy.” Sharing his journey of conversion, he reminded the faithful that the Assumption points to the soul’s true dwelling with God. “Every apparition,” he said, “is an invitation to walk in praise toward the Kingdom.”

Archbishop Julian Leow concluded the novena with *The Fulfilment of God’s Promises* from “The mercy promised to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.” He reminded that God’s promises never fail, but challenged the faithful to reflect Christ in their lives. “The Church is for those who recognise their need for God,” he said, urging humility, forgiveness, and gratitude.

The celebration ended with a candlelight procession through the streets of Petaling Jaya, the statue of the Blessed Virgin carried in reverence, accompanied by flower girls, altar servers, clergy, Archbishop Julian, and the faithful singing hymns of praise.

Mentakab parish celebrates feast with focus on Mary

MENTAKAB: The Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help marked its 62nd parish feast with five days of solemn and meaningful celebrations from August 13 to 17, drawing pa-

rishioners and pilgrims from near and far.

The celebration opened with three days of Novena and Mass.

On Day 1, Fr Xavier Andrew from

Seremban presided and preached on the theme *Mary’s Obedience to God*, with parish priest Fr Terrance Thomas as concelebrant. Reflecting on Luke 1:38, he reminded the faithful of Mary’s humble surrender: “I am the Lord’s servant.”

Day 2 focused on *Mary’s Role in God’s Plan of Love*. Fr George Harrison from Shah Alam presided, together with Fr Terrance and visiting priest Fr Ruban.

Day 3 carried the same theme, offering parishioners further time for reflection and prayer.

The feast reached its high point on Day 4, August 16, with a morning Mass, Novena prayers throughout the day, and an evening feast day Mass followed by a candlelight

procession. The main Mass themed *With Mary, We Are Pilgrims of Hope*, celebrated by Fr Clement Lim of Bentong and concelebrated by Fr Terrance, drew close to 400 faithful.

In his multilingual homily (English, Bahasa Malaysia, and Mandarin), Fr Clement reminded parishioners that following Christ means taking up one’s cross, as Mary did when she accepted God’s plan with unwavering faith.

“Be child-like in humility, depending on God,” Fr Clement said. “Mary journeyed from Nazareth to Bethlehem, to Egypt, and finally to Jerusalem, always with hope and perseverance. We too are called to run the race of faith with the same trust and commitment.” He also

called on the congregation to pray for the Church and the nation, reminding them that as disciples of Christ, “We are one Body of Christ, walking in faith, hope, and love.”

After the Mass, the faithful participated in a 30-minute candlelight procession through nearby roads and concluding with benediction in the church.

Parish priest, Fr Terrance expressed his gratitude to Fr Clement Lim and all the guest preachers for journeying with the parish community. He also commended parishioners for their wholehearted involvement in preparing for the celebration and welcomed pilgrims who had come to share in the occasion. **Bernard Anthony**



The faithful walking in procession behind the statue of Our Lady.

Prison fellowship marks 40 years of hope and healing

CHERAS: The Catholic Prison Fellowship Association (CPFA) marked its 40th anniversary with a Prison Ministry Mass at the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA), the designated Pilgrimage Church for 2025. About 130 participants, including volunteers, new recruits, family members, and pilgrims, gathered under the theme *Companions of Hope and Healing*.

The day began with everyone participating in the Stations of the Cross within the church grounds.

Following the Stations, all reassembled in the Portiuncula Chapel for the veneration of six first-class relics cherished by the parish:

At 11.00am, the faithful gathered in the church for Holy Mass, presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow and concelebrated by the CPFA’s Ecclesiastical Assistant, Fr George Packiasamy.

In his stirring homily, Archbishop Julian reminded all that prison ministry is not about bringing Christ to the incarcerated but about encountering Christ who is already there. He urged volunteers to shift their focus from themselves to the people they serve, saying, “If there are no prisoners, no sick people in hospitals, no homeless on the streets, then we would have no opportunity to be generous.”

His Grace called for gratitude towards those in need, stressing that they provide us with the chance to be more compassionate and generous with our time and talents.

Archbishop Julian also offered a personal reflection, sharing that he had written in his diary to bring his mother along for this Prison Ministry Mass. Although she had passed away just a month earlier, he recalled how prison ministry was close to her



The members praying the Stations of the Cross at the Church of St Francis of Assisi.

heart and how much joy she found in singing and sharing the Word with the incarcerated. He dedicated his thanks to all volunteers for continuing this mission with faith and love.

Following the homily, all members were invited forward for commissioning, reaffirming their shared commitment to the Prison Ministry.

After Mass, a convivial lunch offered an opportunity for fellowship

- volunteers, CPFA members, and their families mingled, sharing stories, hopes, and encouragement as one community in mission.

At 2.00pm, we reconvened in the Portiuncula Chapel for a spiritual formation led by Fr George. His reflection drew upon the example of St Maximilian Kolbe, highlighting his simple, prayerful life and ultimate sacrifice as a call to help prisoners

rediscover their dignity and God’s love. The formation was followed by a quiet and reverent Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, during which all gathered in prayerful adoration.

To conclude the commemoration, we shared teatime at 4.00pm, enjoying light refreshments and fellowship - a fitting close to a day steeped in prayer, mission, and community. **Audrey Freeman**

Permanent married deacons reflect on call to service

Deacon Dr Leslie Petrus

JOHOR BAHRU: The permanent married deacons of the Malacca Johore diocese gathered for a full-day study session with Bishop Bernard Paul on August 16 at the MAJODI Centre.

The study day with the bishop is an annual gathering where the deacons review and reflect on their vocation, discerning how they can serve God's people more effectively as ordained ministers of charity.

The day of reflection began with an hour of adoration, guided by Bishop Bernard, who invited the deacons to look back on their journey since ordination with thanksgiving. The bishop also encouraged them to share their impressions of the diaconate at the time of ordination and how those views had since evolved.

Initially, many had perceived the diaconate as simply fulfilling church requirements or acting as "mini-priests." Over time, however, they discovered its true nature as a flexible and dynamic vocation, uniquely called to fill gaps in the life of the Church. This clearer understanding of their identity — as children of God and servants of Christ — has shaped their ministry in new ways.

As married men with families, secular jobs,



The deacons, in the presence of the congregation, solemnly renewing their diaconal vows

and parish responsibilities, the deacons acknowledged the challenges of balancing these commitments. Yet, they testified to the grace of God at work in their lives. "The vocation of a permanent married working deacon is distinct from that of a priest," they reflected. "We stand with one foot in the world, experiencing the life of the laity, and the other within the hierarchy of the Church."

The study day also highlighted the growing awareness among both clergy and laity of the role of permanent deacons, though misunderstandings remain. Their ministry, they

stressed, is not a stepping stone to priesthood nor a solution to clergy shortages. Instead, permanent deacons are icons of "Christ the Servant," entrusted with a unique charism.

Their threefold ministry includes service at the altar — assisting at Mass, presiding at baptisms, weddings, funerals and Eucharistic adoration — together with proclaiming the Gospel, preaching, and leading faith formation. Beyond liturgical duties, they are called to live their vocation of marriage faithfully, witnessing Christ's love in the workplace, bridging priests and laity, and reaching out to

the peripheries.

Deacons also play vital roles in chapels, mission centres, hospitals, prisons, and in multi-religious and multicultural outreach. Their professional skills and lived experiences equip them to contribute in areas such as marriage tribunals, family life ministries, social missions, and collaboration with NGOs.

Recognising the need for continuous renewal, the deacons emphasised the importance of ongoing theological formation to better serve the Church and society. "Our strength comes from the altar, the Word, and the Eucharist," they affirmed, "enabling us to be ministers of service, helping the poor and responding to today's social needs."

The gathering concluded with prayers that other dioceses in Malaysia will also recognise the distinct vocation and contributions of permanent married deacons in the local Church.

The formation programme ended with a sunset Eucharistic celebration at 5.00pm at the Church of St Joseph, Plentong, where the deacons, in the presence of the congregation, solemnly renewed their diaconal vows.

Bishop Bernard was joined at the celebration by Fr Adrian Francis, diocesan director of Permanent Deacons, and parish priest, Fr Matthew Bun.



Walking in faith and fun for parish centre

PORT DICKSON: The Church of the Immaculate Conception (CICPD) came alive with colour, creativity, and camaraderie on August 16, as nearly 100 participants took part in the Fun and Fancy Dress Walk. More than a festive gathering, the event marked the launch of fundraising efforts for the parish's Lighthouse Centre, with proceeds directed to its Building Fund.

The morning began at dawn with cheerful arrivals, warm greetings, and an opening prayer that set a hopeful tone. A lively Zumba session soon had young and old energised and ready for the walk ahead. As participants took to the streets, the atmosphere turned into a moving carnival of costumes — superheroes, fairy-tale figures, and imaginative handmade outfits brought smiles to onlookers and showcased the community's creativity.

The highlight came with the costume parade, where children, youths, families, and even religious figures proudly displayed their attire to applause and admiration. Parents and children walking hand-in-hand, friends side by side, and faith leaders joining in with playful spirit reflected the unity and joy that bind the community.

Yet, beyond the laughter and colour, every step carried a deeper purpose — supporting the construction of the Lighthouse Centre, envisioned as a beacon of faith and community for generations to

come. The new pastoral and administrative building will house catechism classrooms, ministry meeting rooms, an administrative office, priests' residence, a welcoming hall for parish and fellowship events, and new washrooms. Like a lighthouse guiding ships, this centre is hoped to shine His light for years to come, strengthening the parish's mission of faith and service.

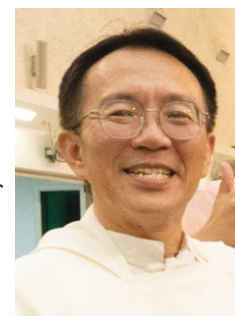
Organisers shared their gratitude for the strong turnout, noting that this was only the first of many fundraising initiatives planned. Behind the scenes, volunteers and committee members worked tirelessly to ensure the event's success — from route safety and registration to refreshments and lively activities. Their dedication mirrored the shared vision of building something lasting together.

Closing the event, committee members expressed heartfelt thanks to all who contributed: "This was not just about costumes or exercise — it was about walking together in faith, in joy, and in purpose. The Lighthouse Centre will stand as a legacy of what we can achieve when united."

As participants dispersed after a morning filled with prayer, laughter, and goodwill, it was clear the Fun & Fancy Dress Walk had achieved far more than its fundraising target. It lifted spirits, strengthened bonds, and set a hopeful beginning for the Lighthouse Centre's journey ahead. Val Gregory

Fr Joseph Heng celebrates 25 years of priesthood

KRUBONG, Malaka: The parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe (OLG) joyfully marked a milestone on August 7, celebrating the 25th sacerdotal anniversary of its parish priest, Fr Joseph Heng. The celebration began with the recitation of the Rosary, followed by a solemn Mass presided over by Fr Joseph and joined by bishops and clergy as concelebrants.



Second, the fellowship of the clergy is essential, sharing both the burdens and joys of pastoral ministry, reminding priests they are never alone in their vocation.

Third, despite the challenges facing the priesthood today—including the constant threat of spiritual worldliness — God remains faithful, sustaining those who heed His call.

The occasion drew 67 clergy and religious, including Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of the Diocese of Penang, as well as Bishop Philip Huang Chao-Ming and Bishop Emeritus James Liu Tan-Kuei from the Diocese of Hualien, Taiwan.

During his homily, Fr Joseph reflected on a quarter-century of priestly life, expressing gratitude for the personal relationship with Christ that has grown through the Word of God, pastoral service, the celebration of the sacraments, and daily prayer. Drawing inspiration from Jesus' words, "I call you friends," he shared three guiding principles that have shaped his journey:

First, both clergy and lay faithful are called to cultivate a deep, intimate encounter with the Lord, offering themselves fully to be gradually transformed into the image of the Good Shepherd.

Fr Joseph extended heartfelt thanks to all who attended, particularly those devoted to nurturing vocations and guiding young hearts to listen to God's call. "I am truly blessed to live out this divine vocation and to share God's joy and hope among His people," he said.

Cardinal Sebastian, in his address, acknowledged the support of the parish community, the late Bishop James Chan, and Fr John Yu during Fr Joseph's seminary formation. He also expressed gratitude to the bishops of Taiwan for shaping many Malaysian priests, contributing to the growth of the Church at home.

The anniversary celebration continued with fellowship at the parish compound, where parishioners and guests were treated to performances by various ministries in the parish hall, making the day a joyous occasion of faith, gratitude, and community.



Fr Joseph Heng with his parishioners.

Penang Vincentians strengthened in mission

Lucia Lai

PENANG: Sixty-one members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP), from across the Diocese of Penang, gathered at the YMCA from August 8–10, for a weekend of formation organised by the Diocesan Council of Penang. The programme carried the theme *Celebrating, Listening, Walking Together in a Spirit of Communion, Participation and Mission*.

The formation began on Friday afternoon with a talk by diocesan spiritual adviser, Msgr Jude Miranda, titled *Called to Serve in the Mission of Christ (Vincentian Vocation)*. He reminded participants to keep God at the centre of their lives, emphasising that the Vincentian vocation must be missionary and not stationary. “Understand your destiny in Christ. Serving the Lord is a divine assignment,” he stressed. His session concluded with testimonies from three full-time missionaries of Kasih House of Mission, who shared their personal call stories.

The second session, *Walking with the Poor – Encountering Christ in Service*, was delivered by Fr Raymond Raj, parish priest of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. He explored biblical and Catholic foundations on service to the poor, definitions of poverty, and practical ways to respond. Fr Raymond highlighted the Hebrew word ‘anawim’, meaning “little ones” overwhelmed by want, and explained the five types of poverty: absolute, relative, situational, generational, and urban/rural.

The second day opened with Fr Fabian Dicom presenting *Beacons of Hope – To Bear the Seeds of Hope*. Linking each point with Scripture and Church documents, he



Msgr Jude Miranda with the members of the Society of St Vincent De Paul from the Diocese of Penang.

reminded Vincentians that when visiting the poor, they bring companionship and assurance. He cautioned against hope that does not intercede or intervene, calling it “spiritual self-interest” or a “hollow promise.”

Next, Fr Michael Raymond, OFM, Cap, parish priest of the Church of the Divine Mercy, spoke on *Renew in Spirit, Rooted in Service*. He described conversion as a process involving the mind, heart, and behaviour, often marked by restlessness, resistance, surrender, and eventual commitment. He emphasised experiencing God’s mercy as a transformative force that changes perspectives and actions.

The afternoon featured testimonies. Betty Kow, president of Christ the King Conference, shared how she opened her home to migrant workers during the pandemic, offering them space to pray, rehearse for weddings, and build community. Another moving testimony came from Joseph Arokeim of Kedah, who shared how SSVP support enabled him to rise

from poverty, earn a university degree, and secure stable employment as a teacher.

Former national president Watson Peters then led an engaging session on *Visioning and Planning as a Vincentian Leader*. Through interactive dialogue, he highlighted distinctions between equality and equity, servant and authoritarian leadership, and managers and leaders. “Equality gives everyone the same resources,” he said, “but equity recognises individual needs and addresses them accordingly.” He also challenged members to rethink leadership selection, urging discernment of character, competence, and compassion over mere charisma.

After an intense day, members enjoyed leadership-themed games led by Mary Williams under the title *Redefining Jesus’ Leadership*. The activities encouraged teamwork and reflection on cooperation in problem-solving.

That evening, a session on *Healing, Forgiveness and Renewal* was held by Msgr

Jude, assisted by his Shalom Team and lay preacher Jude Antoine, who spoke on spiritual obstacles — obsession, possession, and oppression — that block God’s mercy, reminding members of their free will in resisting evil. The session concluded with healing prayers before the Blessed Sacrament, where many experienced renewal and some were “slain in the Spirit.”

On Sunday morning, Fr Oliver Tham, OFM, presented the final session, *Being Salt and Light – Vincentians in the World*. Using everyday metaphors, he reminded members that Christ enhances ministry as salt and enables vision as light. He urged Vincentians to maintain zeal and authenticity in service: “We need to be seen and to see people’s suffering,” he said.

The weekend concluded with the Eucharistic Celebration, presided by Msgr Jude. Participants left renewed in spirit and inspired to continue their Vincentian mission with greater zeal, wisdom, and compassion.

Safeguarding: A legal and moral responsibility

JOHOR BAHRU: The Professional Standards Office (PSO) of the Malacca Johore Diocese (MJD) conducted a workshop on Safeguarding Minors at the MAJODI Centre, bringing together 22 catechists, ministry leaders, and parish representatives from across the diocese.

The workshop, part of the PSO’s continuing mission to foster a culture of safeguarding within the Church, aimed to strengthen participants’ understanding of child protection principles and responsibilities in line with both Church and national mandates.

The programme opened with a welcome address and an introduction to the role of the Professional Standards Office, before mov-

ing onto a series of expert-led sessions.

The first session, delivered by Associate Professor Anne Vergis, Head of Law at the University of Reading Malaysia, addressed the foundational principles of safeguarding from both global and national perspectives. She highlighted the urgent need for public awareness and policy reform in light of international developments and local case studies, stressing that abuse can occur across all sectors and communities. Prof Vergis underscored the role of individuals and organisations in recognising warning signs, responding appropriately, and building safe environments for children and vulnerable persons.

The second presentation given by Dr Cindy Niap, psychiatrist and Senior

Lecturer at Monash University Malaysia, who spoke on the medical and psychological impact of abuse on victims and perpetrators. Drawing from clinical practice, she explained how trauma manifests across life stages, affecting mental health, social behaviour, and physical wellbeing. Dr Niap stressed the importance of early intervention, reducing stigma around psychological support, and promoting cross-sector collaboration to prevent long-term harm.

After lunch, Deacon Anthony Chua — practising Advocate & Solicitor and Bishop’s Delegate for the PSO-MJD, provided an in-depth explanation of Malaysia’s legislative framework for child protection. He outlined the key provisions of the Child Act 2001, the Sexual Offences Against

Children Act 2017, and mandatory reporting requirements, highlighting their application across educational, religious, familial, and institutional settings. He reminded participants that safeguarding is not only a moral duty but also a legal responsibility for all adults, particularly those in positions of trust.

Deacon Anthony also guided participants through internal parish procedures for safeguarding, including documentation, escalation protocols, confidentiality, and follow-through. He emphasised the importance of equipping local church structures to act as first responders, complementing statutory processes while offering care and protection to those affected.

The workshop concluded with an open Q&A session, where participants discussed practical applications of the day’s insights and reaffirmed their commitment to building safer parish communities.

Established in 2017 by Bishop Bernard Paul, the Professional Standards Office brings together legal, health, and pastoral professionals to strengthen safeguarding policy, training, and accountability. It continues to play a key role in advancing child protection efforts in the diocese and beyond, responding to the global call for stronger mechanisms to protect children and vulnerable persons.

This latest workshop marks another milestone in the diocese’s ongoing journey to uphold the safety, dignity, and well-being of all individuals entrusted to the care of the Church. A similar workshop was conducted in Tamil.



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One of the participants sharing his insight on the sessions.

Faith in action at Risen Christ church

Stephanie Cheong

PENANG: Caritas Risen Christ Catholic Church (RC), together with the Ministry of Hospitality RC, carried out a corporal work of mercy by bringing parishioners of all ages together to serve those in need. A total of 33 volunteers, ranging from 6 to 80 years old, joined parish priest, Friar Esmond Chua, OFM, in moulding 1,166 pieces of soap on August 9.

The morning was a testament to the power of community, as participants moved through each stage of the soap-making process — cutting, melting, moulding, unmoulding, and packing. Though the work required focus, the atmosphere was filled with fun and laughter, reflecting the spirit of joy that underpinned their mission of service.

The soaps, lovingly crafted by hand, will be distributed to undocumented migrants and refugees at the Belantek Immigration Detention Centre in Sik, Kedah. This vital act of charity was made possible through collaboration with Caritas Penang and Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). Dr Sashi, representing



Volunteers pouring the soap into the mould.

MSF, received the soaps from Friar Esmond for onward distribution.

The project was supported by generous donors who sponsored raw materials, additional soap moulds, as well as breakfast and lunch for the volunteers. Organisers expressed deep gratitude to all who con-

tributed, noting that the success of the initiative was rooted in the selfless giving of time, resources, and energy.

“May God bless you and your families abundantly for your continued support and service,” the parish community shared in thanksgiving.



Tree-planting affirms SHJ's eco commitment

KUALA LUMPUR: The SHJ Creation Ministry of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SHJ), organised a tree-planting activity on August 16 in memory of loved ones.

Seven parishioners from different age groups participated in the programme, which began with a short prayer before seeds of local fruit trees were planted. Organisers said the initiative aimed to encourage appreciation of local fruits, which provide health benefits while promoting sustainability.

The parish was officially recognised as an ecological parish on March 18, 2025, underscoring its commitment to caring for the environment as part of faith and parish life.

With concerns over pollution and deforestation, the ministry stressed the importance of protecting nature by planting more trees for the benefit of future generations. **Evelyn Thomas**

Letters to Editor

Call for transparency on Lenten Campaign funds

Dear Editor,

I wish to raise a concern that has been troubling many parishioners. Each year, we contribute generously to the Lenten Campaign, trusting that the funds will be channelled to charitable purposes. Yet, there is no published report in *HERALD* or any communication to parishes on how these funds are spent.

In the absence of such transparency, questions naturally arise — especially when we hear of frequent overseas trips by the director of the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) and his staff. Are these trips in any way funded by the Lenten Campaign? While one learning, exposure, or immersion trip may be understandable, repeated visits to the same destination raise doubts about necessity and stewardship.

There is also concern about the image being projected. The unnecessary flamboyance — matching jackets and coordinated shirts or tops for different occasions, coupled with the newly refurbished AOHD office at Cahayasuara, which must have cost a substantial sum — sends the wrong message. A simpler, more modest office would have sufficed. Has AOHD lost sight of its core mission? What message are we sending to the poor and the needy when so much is spent on appearances rather than service?

The faithful have a right to know how their contributions are utilised. Transparency and accountability are not optional; they are essential to maintaining trust. I urge the Catholic Welfare Services/AOHD or the archbishop's office to publish a detailed report on the disbursement of Lenten Campaign funds and to clarify these matters for the faithful.

Solomon Gideon Chong
Kuala Lumpur

Response from AOHD

In response to the concerns raised by Solomon Gideon Chong, I wish to clarify the following:

The process of collecting and remitting the Lenten Campaign Funds from parishes to AOHD usually takes several months. As such, a complete and accurate account of each year's Lenten Campaign Collection is only available for audit by the third quarter of the year.

The full breakdown is typically presented to the clergy in November and subsequently uploaded to the AOHD website by December. It is then shared with all parishes during the annual Lenten Campaign Roadshow, held across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur in January–February of the following year.

These roadshows provide parishioners the opportunity to ask questions about the projects and ministries supported by the funds. More often than not, the ministry coordinators themselves are present to directly address these queries.

Throughout its 40-year history, the Lenten Campaign has consistently upheld transparency regarding the funds collected and their allocation. Today, in the digital age, this information is even more accessible online at: <https://aohd.org/how-your-donation-helps/>

With regard to overseas trips, I am grateful for the opportunity to set the record straight.

In line with AOHD's terms of reference and the constitution established by Catholic Welfare Services (CWS), the accounts and works undertaken using Lenten Campaign funds are presented and accounted for annually. These funds are primarily channelled towards the formation of communities and projects of each Ministry, directly impacting and empowering the communities they serve. Only 10 per cent of the collection is allocated

for administrative costs such as salaries.

It is important to note that all overseas trips undertaken by AOHD are funded separately. Our general policy requires staff to cover at least 70 per cent of their travel expenses personally, with any shortfall subsidised by private donors specifically designated for that purpose. Furthermore, all international trips are subject to rigorous scrutiny regarding their purpose and expected outcomes. This discernment process often takes several months before receiving the archbishop's consent. Such a process ensures that each trip aligns with our broader mission and remains Spirit-led.

This year, as director, I have undertaken only two international trips. The first was to Singapore, together with Archbishop Julian Leow, to learn from our neighbours and to attend the Humanitarian Forum and Fair — a biennial gathering where regional organisations network, share knowledge, and strengthen collaboration in humanitarian stewardship. The event proved fruitful, not only in terms of learning but also in fostering stronger ties with organisations that directly support and benefit our local communities.

The second trip was to Myanmar, in response to the devastating earthquake. Within a week of the disaster, a team was deployed to Mandalay to provide emergency relief — including temporary shelters, thousands of daily meals, mobile medical clinics, hygiene packs, and clean water. The team also offered counselling to the afflicted and worked closely with people of different faiths to reach as many affected individuals as possible. Our mission there lasted ten days and embodied our commitment to Catholic Social Teaching: to reach out across borders, religions, and nationalities in service of those most in need.

Though this work may not have been reported in the *HERALD* and did not use

Lenten Campaign funds, I firmly believe it was worth every moment of our time and effort, for in helping our neighbours we remain faithful to the mission entrusted to us.

AOHD has continually evolved over its 30-plus years of history under different administrations. While today we may have “matching uniforms” or a different office, we have never lost sight of our core mission. Outward changes do not diminish the daily reality of the countless families, the marginalised, and the poor whom we encounter and serve. Their needs remain the same, and they continue to seek assistance — regardless of how we may look on the outside.

We may not always be able to publish their stories, reveal their identities, or meet every expectation to account for where every cent has gone or why certain individuals were helped. But know this: AOHD has always strived to respond to those most in need, meeting them in their humanity. We do not judge them by appearances. Instead, we seek to accept them in faith, love, and the Christian charity that has defined us from the very beginning.

As Scripture reminds us in John 7:24: “Do not judge according to appearances, but judge with righteous judgment.” This verse reflects our guiding values — that outward appearances can be misleading, and true judgment requires deeper understanding and righteous discernment. It is this spirit that continues to inspire and shape our work.

“For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” — 1 Samuel 16:7

Gary Liew (Dr)
Director
Archdiocesan Office for Human
Development



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Perjalanan Salib inspires renewal at St John the Baptist parish

Rufina Maria

SUNGAI SIPUT: The Church of St John the Baptist, was blessed to host the *Perjalanan Salib* from August 4 to 17. For two weeks, the community entered into a sacred time of prayer, reflection, and renewed faith, gathering around the Salib in many meaningful ways.

Before its arrival, Sr Jennyfer Joseph, FDCC, offered a short but profound sharing on the meaning and significance of the *Salib*. Her words prepared our hearts to welcome it not just as a symbol, but as a reminder of our Christian calling to live faithfully in Christ. The *Salib* was then received with reverence from the previous parish, marking the beginning of our own parish's journey with the Cross. Together, we began with a paraliturgy, dedicating our time of prayer and reflection as one community united in Christ.

The following days were filled with moving moments of devotion. During the veneration of the Cross, parishioners expressed their reverence in different ways. Some knelt, others stood in silent prayer, while some kissed the Cross. Each gesture spoke of a deep, personal encounter with the Lord. On Fridays, the Stations of the Resurrection reminded us that the story of the Cross leads to victory in the Risen Lord. On Sundays,



Parishioners spending time in prayer before the Salib.

before Mass, the Divine Mercy Chaplet was prayed with a special intention for the care of creation, reminding us of our duty to safeguard the common home entrusted to us.

During one of the weekday masses, our parish priest, Fr Mark Michael, invited the congregation to reflect: "Do you truly know what this Cross means? It is the way of Jesus. Anyone who does good and serves the Lord will face struggles." His words encouraged us to see the Cross not only as a sign of devotion, but as a way of life. For those who sometimes feel weary or discouraged in their service to the Lord, this was a source

of comfort and strength. His reminder assured us that every trial carried for Christ has meaning and draws us closer to Him.

Fr Mark further emphasised, "This Cross is not only for asking God for things we want, but for seeking a deeper change within ourselves, to grow spiritually and strengthen our faith." This call to inner transformation challenged us to examine how often we bring our petitions before God, and how rarely we ask for the grace to be made holy and steadfast in faith.

The *Salib* also travelled from home to home among the Basic Ecclesial Commu-

nities (BECs). Families gathered in prayer, and before the rosary began, each person lit a candle as a symbol of offering their prayers to the Risen Christ. These evenings were filled with warmth and unity, where families entrusted their intentions to the Lord through Mary. What touched many deeply was the presence of those who rarely attend church, joining wholeheartedly in this journey. Their participation was a beautiful reminder of how powerfully the Cross draws people together. At the same time, it called us to remember that while the Cross is a profound sign of faith, the Eucharist at Mass remains the source and summit of our Christian life.

The two weeks concluded with a commissioning Mass. In the final procession, the *Salib* was carried and sent forth with love and gratitude. After Mass, it was handed over to the next parish, the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Ipoh.

The *Perjalanan Salib* at St John the Baptist was more than just an event. It was truly a journey of renewal.

Through prayer in families, care for creation, unity in society, and life within the Church, we encountered the living Christ in our midst. As the *Salib* continues its pilgrimage, we remain united in faith, journeying together in hope as we prepare for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026.

Interfaith encounter at Masjid Jamek Cina Muslim

KLANG: The Subang Jaya Interfaith Council recently made a special visit to the Masjid Jamek Cina Muslim in Klang. The group of 15 visitors included Christians, Buddhists, Bahá'ís, Sikhs, and Muslims from other mosques in Subang Jaya — a first-time experience for many of them.

At first glance, the mosque's architecture resembled that of a Chinese temple, with its pagoda-style structures — a striking contrast to the domes typically associated with mosques. Welcoming the visitors were two Sarawakian converts to Islam, Abdul Qayyum and Fara Hamimi, who guided the group on a tour of the mosque after ensuring everyone was properly attired.

Inside, the visitors discovered a compact yet beautifully designed space, with Chinese-inspired decorative panels and a courtyard that reflected the cultural blend. The mosque can accommodate up to 500 worshippers in its main prayer hall.

They also learned that the Sultan of Selangor had played a key role in shaping the mosque's colour scheme and design, drawing inspiration from his visits to China. Such a design makes the mosque especially relatable to non-Malay



The visitors in front of Masjid Jamek Cina Muslim in Klang.

converts to Islam, much like the mosques found in Xinjiang and Urumqi, where Chinese Muslims form a significant community.

The visit offered a glimpse of how Islam in Malaysia can embrace inculturation, opening doors for greater understanding and appreciation across faiths and cultures. **Angeline Lesslar**

Churches illuminate faith at Singapore Night Festival

SINGAPORE: Catholic churches in downtown Singapore took part in a special night festival organised by the national heritage agency as a means of showcasing the faith.

The Singapore Night Festival is an arts and culture festival that has been held annually in the historically and culturally rich Bras Basah-Bugis area since 2008. It showcases artworks and performances by local and international artists, as well as light installations.

Over the years, the three historic Catholic churches in the area — the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, St Joseph's Church and the Church of Sts Peter and Paul — have taken part in this initiative as a means of sharing the faith.

This year, the cathedral and St Joseph's Church continued to take part in the event, which was launched on August 22 and ended on September 6.

Rector Fr Jude David told the congregation at the cathedral's lunchtime Mass on Aug 22 that the cathedral is participating in this government-organised event as it is "our means of continuing to do the work of evangelisation". This is because "as non-Christians come into the cathedral to look around and join the activities here, we also pray that by meeting the community, they also meet Christ."

The two churches organised concerts, heritage tours and the sale of religious items for visitors on the evenings of Aug 22, 23, 29 and 30.

On Aug 22, visitors to the cathedral — Christians as well as non-Christians — were treated to sacred music on the organ and violin. The next evening, they enjoyed choral music by the Cathedral Choir of the Risen Christ. The 50-strong choir sang songs in various languages, ranging from traditional sacred pieces to more modern ones.

Over at St Joseph's Church, visitors en-



Hues of colour at St Joseph's Church.

joyed choral music on Aug 22 and a performance by a guitar duo on Aug 23. The façade of the church was also bathed in various hues of light as part of a light installation display.

The initiatives by the churches appear to have borne fruit.

Janice Liew, 35, who attends an Evangelical church, and who attended the concert by the Cathedral Choir of the Risen Christ, said: "I felt it was very nice of the church to welcome anyone to listen to their music, even if they might not be Catholic, because there might be some choral lovers who are not Catholic." **Christopher Khoo (the writer is a Singapore-based freelance journalist and educator).**



Pope's theme for 2026 World Day of Peace

VATICAN: The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development released a statement on August 26 offering details about Pope Leo XIV's chosen theme for the 2026 World Day of Peace.

Peace be with you all: Towards an 'unarmed and disarming' peace is the theme for the annual celebration dedicated to universal peace, held on January 1, the liturgical Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God.

The theme, noted the press release, "invites humanity to reject the logic of violence and war, and

to embrace an authentic peace based on love and justice."

On the evening of his election to the papacy on May 8, 2025, and on several other occasions since then, Pope Leo XIV appealed for peace with a characteristic phrase—"unarmed and disarming"—to characterise the type of peace he hopes for the world.

"This peace must be unarmed, that is, not based on fear, threats or weapons," noted the press release. "And it must be disarming, capable of resolving conflicts, opening

hearts and generating mutual trust, empathy and hope."

"It is not enough to call for peace," it said. "We must embody it in a way of life that rejects every form of violence, whether it be visible or systemic."

Separately, the Vatican Publishing House (LEV) released a new book that gathers the first public addresses of Pope Leo XIV, with their strong undertone of peace.

And Let There Be Peace! Words to the Church and the World will hit bookshelves in English, Italian, and

Spanish on August 27.

A press release recalled the Pope's use of the binomial "unarmed and disarming," noting that it was first written by French monk Charles-Marie Christian de Chergé, O.C.S.O.

The Abbot of the Abbey of Our Lady of Atlas in Tibhirine was martyred in 1996 alongside his six brother monks at the Cistercian Abbey in Algeria.

As the press release noted, Cardinal Robert Prevost was elected Pope on May 8, the liturgical memorial of the Martyrs of Algeria.

Summarising the book's contents, the communique said Pope Leo has transmitted several of his priorities, which include "the primacy of God, the communion of the Church, and the search for peace."

"His already numerous appeals for reconciliation are directed not only to politics but to the heart of every person," read the communique, citing the Pope: "Peace begins with each one of us: in the way we look at others, listen to others and speak about others." **Devin Watkins, Vatican News**

Thai bishops set synodality path to 2028

BANGKOK: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand (CBCT) has taken a decisive step in embracing synodality, aligning its pastoral direction with the universal Church's implementation phase of the Synod on Synodality.

Drawing on the *Pathways for the Implementation Phase of the Synod*—a key interpretive and operational document issued by the Vatican's General Secretariat earlier this year—Thai Catholic leadership has embarked on a structured journey of discernment, participation, and action through 2028.

Earlier this year, the Vatican released the *Pathways for the Implementation Phase of the Synod*, offering a shared framework that outlines objectives, clarifies the roles of bishops, synodal teams, and ecclesial bodies, and recommends tools such as communal discernment to guide local Churches in sustaining momentum toward the Ecclesial Assembly in Rome in



Delegates participate in discussions during the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand's national meeting on the implementation of synodality for 2025–2028. (LiCas News photo/CBCT)

October 2028.

In Thailand, the CBCT initiated its implementation efforts with a national meeting in August. Participants included vicars general from all eleven dioceses and leaders of the four principal episcopal offices.

The gathering opened with a lecture titled *Pathways for the*

Implementation of the Synod, which offered theological and practical guidance on understanding and enacting the Vatican's implementation framework.

Fr Suwat Luangsaard, CBCT Deputy Secretary-General, presented the *Guidelines for the Implementation of Synod 2025–2028*, which

outline tasks and responsibilities across the CBCT's central agencies and dioceses.

He stressed the need to translate summary documents into real outcomes that animate the daily life of the Church, stating that the guidelines suggest "how to engage with the Synod's Final Document... and offer advice on methods and tools that can help shape the path during the implementation phase."

To ensure broad participation, the CBCT has established a Synod Operations Committee. Each diocese will form its own committee—comprising clergy, religious communities, lay associations, and ecclesial movements—to contextualise synodal principles locally.

These diocesan committees are currently being recruited and are expected to report to the national CBCT committee and, through national channels, to continental and global levels.

"Each local Church has its own

path, but it does not walk alone... We will accompany its progress and conclude it, validating its results," said Fr Suwat.

He added that "this committee will work in line with the Synodal Paths guidelines to translate the Synod's ideas into concrete practice within the diocese and evaluate their performance."

By embedding synodal structures and practices—such as inclusion, shared discernment, and co-responsibility—in everyday pastoral ministry, the CBCT seeks to ensure that synodality moves from theory into tangible, transformative ecclesial practice.

The CBCT's efforts reflect the broader ecclesial call to cultivate a synodal Church rooted in communion, participation, and mission, as envisioned by Pope Francis and articulated in the *Pathways* document. **Chainarong Monthienvichienchai, LiCAS News**

They destroyed our church, but not our faith

HAKHA, Myanmar: "They destroyed the walls of the church, but not the faith. Our faith remains strong," said Msgr Lucius Hre Kung, Bishop of Hakha, during a recent visit to the ruins of Christ the King Church in Falam, Chin State, which was destroyed by Burmese army airstrikes in April.

The church, consecrated in November 2023 and serving about 1,000 Catholics, was caught in fighting between the Chinland Defence Force (CDF) and the military junta. After the CDF seized Falam, the army bombed the area, leaving the new church in ruins.

Only now, months later, was the bishop able to visit the site, assess the damage, and comfort the local population. "It was a very beautiful church, and the parish was happy to take care of it. I hope it can be rebuilt soon. I look with sadness at pictures of priests of the diocese being ordained there," said Fr Paulinus G.K. Shing, a local priest.

"In this moment of trial, we remain anchored in prayer with Christ and Mary, who give us strength and hope for peace," Bishop Hre Kung said, as he comforted displaced families and urged the faithful to rebuild.

The attack was part of wider destruction in Chin State, where at least 107 religious sites, including 67 churches, have been bombed since 2021, according to the Chin Human Rights Organisation. Another airstrike damaged the Sacred Heart Church in Mindat, which was to become the cathedral of the newly created Diocese of Mindat, erected in January 2024.

Meanwhile, in central Myanmar's Taungngu Diocese—an area under junta control—the government has announced plans to demolish Sacred Heart Cathedral and 19 Buddhist temples for excavations of the ancient city of Toungoo-Ketumati. Priests and parishioners have appealed to the bishops' conference to intervene and preserve the cathedral. **Fides**

Over 70 priests in DR Congo plead for peace



Refugees shelter in Bulengo displaced persons camp near Goma, DRC. (ANSA)

KINSHASA: Despite recent progress toward peace between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda, tensions remain high. Seventy-six priests of the Diocese of Bunia issued a statement warning that "ongoing violence is endangering our province."

Bunia, the capital of Ituri in eastern DRC, has been under siege since May 2021 and continues to suffer attacks by armed groups. On the night of Aug 19–20, armed men entered the "Propédétique St

Kizito" oratory, desecrated the tabernacle, broke windows, and threatened priests. Earlier, nearly 50 people were killed and 40 youths kidnapped in Komanda on July 26, while another parish was targeted in Lope on July 21.

The priests stressed that insecurity is forcing people to flee their homes, while law enforcement's failure is "often concealed by terms like provocation and retaliation to mask incompetence and complicity." They accused security forces

of colluding with militias, committing murders, illegal arrests, and looting.

The clergy also denounced "slander and threats" by military leaders, who accuse the Church of sheltering militants. Rejecting this, they said the Church's prophetic role has made it a target of orchestrated attacks. They added that the state of emergency has "seriously failed to impose peace. Instead, armed groups have multiplied in numbers and weapons." **Vatican News**

Breaking the cycle of abuse

In recent months, Malaysia has been shaken by several tragic bullying cases, some ending in the untimely deaths of young victims. These incidents have sparked national outrage and forced society to confront a painful reality — that bullying is not merely “child’s play” or a passing phase, but a deeply damaging act that leaves scars on the mind, body, and soul. Psychiatrist and psychotherapist **PROF XAVIER V. PEREIRA** sheds light on the hidden trauma behind bullying, drawing from real-life cases to explain its impact across schools, families, and workplaces, while calling for greater awareness, empathy, and preventive action.



John (not his real name), was just 15 when he sought help at the psychiatric department of a public hospital where I once worked, seeking help for a pain no child should bear. He had been relentlessly tormented — physically and verbally — by a group of older boys at school. Each night, his mind replayed the abuse in nightmares; by day, intrusive flashbacks jolted him back to the trauma. Morning arrivals at school sent panic ripping through him, triggered simply by his mother’s car drawing close and at times he refused to step into the school compound. Bullied beyond what most might imagine, John’s suffering culminated in a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), not just from bullying, but from deep trauma.

Bullying – definitions

According to the Oxford Dictionary, bullying is defined as the act of seeking to harm, intimidate, or coerce someone perceived as vulnerable. The Anti-Bullying Alliance expands this further, describing it as the repetitive and intentional hurting of one person or group by another, where there is an imbalance of power. Bullying can take many forms — physical, verbal, or psychological — and it may occur face-to-face or online.

Verbal bullying includes name-calling, cruel jokes, unwelcome teasing, and the betrayal of confidences by spreading secrets. Physical bullying ranges from pushing, pinching, hitting, and spitting, to damaging a victim’s belongings. In every case, the core feature remains the same: a misuse of power, where the bully dominates and the victim is left vulnerable.

Bullying is not confined to schools alone. It has been reported across families, institutions of higher learning, workplaces, and even within religious settings, reminding us that it is a pervasive social problem that can arise in any community.

Bullying in Schools

Bullying in schools is a long-standing problem, but in Malaysia, it has recently taken a deadly turn. High-profile cases — some ending in the tragic suicides of young victims — have exposed the brutal reality that bullying is not “kids being kids,” but a serious threat to life and mental health. What once happened in classrooms and playgrounds now spills into the digital space, with cyberbullying on social media, messaging apps, and online platforms tormenting children around the clock.

The triggers are often cruelly simple — differences in race, religion, sexuality, body size, abilities, or disabilities. Boys are more likely to face physical violence, while girls are subjected to insidious psychological abuse. Such behaviour thrives in unstructured school environments where adult supervision is weak or absent, leaving vulnerable students unprotected.

The consequences are devastating. Victims are left battling anxiety, depression, and PTSD. For some, the weight of fear and hopelessness becomes unbearable, pushing them toward self-harm or suicide. Yet, many remain silent — terrified that speaking up will

only invite harsher punishment from their tormentors.

This is a crisis that cannot be ignored. Schools must be more than places of learning — they must be safe havens. Teachers cannot afford to dismiss complaints or delay action; every report of bullying must be treated as urgent. Safe spaces, access to counselling, and proactive measures to protect victims are not optional but essential. Anything less is a failure that risks more young lives.

Bullying in Families

Jane (not her real name) wept as she recounted the physical, verbal, and psychological abuse she endured at the hands of her spouse. When she turned to her mother for help, she was told to accept the abuse as something “normal” in marriage. Refusing to let the cycle continue, Jane eventually made the difficult decision to separate from her spouse in order to protect herself.

Bullying within families is more common than many care to admit. It can manifest in spousal relationships, between siblings, or in the parent-child dynamic. Domestic violence, a severe form of family bullying, has long scarred countless lives. In Malaysia, the Domestic Violence Act — born out of tireless advocacy by the Joint Action Group of NGOs — was a critical step in protecting women

and raising awareness. One-stop centres established at public hospitals now offer abused women comprehensive support, from medical care to legal assistance.

Child abuse is another grave form of family bullying. Beyond physical, verbal, and psychological harm, there have been disturbing reports of sexual abuse, often involving older male relatives exploiting vulnerable adolescents. In Malaysia, victims are attended to by multidisciplinary teams that include paediatricians, psychiatrists, social workers, and police officers. Child and adolescent wards in public hospitals provide safety, while thorough medical and psychological assessments help ensure victims receive proper care.

Even discipline within families can cross into abuse. The often-quoted verse, “Spare the rod and spoil the child” (Proverbs 13:24), has been widely debated. Many parents, in the name of discipline, have crossed boundaries, inflicting physical punishment that leaves long-term scars. Contemporary research

consistently shows that corporal punishment increases the risk of anxiety, depression, and aggression. Indeed, some of my adult patients who struggle with mental health issues trace their suffering back to severe beatings in childhood.

There are alternatives. Positive parenting practices, adopted in many countries, offer constructive ways to guide children. By combining firmness with empathy, parents can discipline without abuse — using strategies that instruct, support, and nurture rather than harm. Such approaches build resilience and trust, and most importantly, break the cycle of violence within families.

Bullying in the Workplace

Over the years, I have treated many patients who came forward after being harassed or bullied in the workplace. Their suffering often went beyond ordinary stress—many developed anxiety, depression, and in some cases, trauma severe enough to result in PTSD.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) underscored this reality when it chose Mental Health in the Workplace as the theme for World Mental Health Day in 2024, recognising how harassment, bullying, and toxic work environments are major contributors to poor mental health.

Rani (not her real name) is one such patient. Her ordeal began when a new manager was appointed, who singled her out and harassed her without reason. The relentless stress took its toll: she developed sleep problems, and clinical assessments revealed high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. I had to prescribe medication and recommend medical leave in the hope that she could recover.

Unfortunately, my attempts to report such workplace harassment to human resources departments have rarely resulted in meaningful action. Too often, victims are left unprotected, while the toxic culture persists. This reveals a systemic gap: more must be done to safeguard employees and hold perpetrators accountable.

Research supports what we see in practice. Psychosocial risk factors — such as high job demands, unclear roles, constant pressure, role conflict, and poor organisational structures—are strongly linked to bullying and harassment in the workplace (*Feijó FR et al., PubMed, 2019*).

Tackling these issues is not optional; it is essential if we are to create healthier, safer, and more dignified work environments. Addressing workplace bullying requires systemic change. Clear policies, effective reporting mechanisms, and a culture of accountability must be implemented alongside employee education and support systems. Only then can workplaces begin to shift from being sources of stress and trauma to environments that safeguard mental health and human dignity.

Exploring Prevention

Bullying is often interpersonal, taking place in social settings where relationships are constantly tested. Prevention must begin early, with a strong focus on developing individuals and nurturing healthy relationships from childhood. Values such as respect, empathy, and care for the vulnerable need to be instilled in the young and reinforced as they grow. Positive peer groups, such as youth communities, also provide safe spaces where individuals can belong and thrive in supportive environments.

Elders, particularly parents and teachers, serve as powerful role models. When they model respectful, non-abusive behaviour, they shape how children and adolescents approach relationships, helping to break the cycle of harm.

Research shows that personality factors play a role in bullying. Those with antisocial tendencies may disregard the rights of others, displaying cruelty that can begin as conduct disorder in children. Early detection of such patterns creates opportunities for timely intervention and rehabilitation before behaviours become entrenched.

Both victims and perpetrators carry heavy emotional burdens. Stress, when unmanaged, can manifest as aggression or violence. Stress awareness and management, therefore, are not only vital for victims’ healing but also for preventing bullying behaviours in potential aggressors.

Bullying is more than a clash between victim and aggressor — it reflects the values of society. How we raise our children, treat one another, and respond to pain or wrongdoing defines the culture we build. Breaking the cycle demands more than condemnation; it requires early education, strong role models, timely intervention, and practical support for those at risk.

Ultimately, the path forward is about shaping a culture where empathy replaces indifference, respect silences ridicule, and healing overcomes hostility. The work begins in families, classrooms, and communities, where simple acts of kindness tip the balance. Only by standing together — parents, schools, institutions, and society at large — can we protect the vulnerable, transform aggressors, and create a world rooted in dignity and compassion.



Pope's prayer intention for September

Interdependence: Creation as God's sacred web of life

This September, the Pope's intention invites us to reflect and pray on a theme that is both ancient and urgent: "For our relationship with all of creation. Let us pray that, inspired by Saint Francis, we might experience our interdependence with all creatures who are loved by God and worthy of love and respect."

At first glance, "interdependence" may sound like a soft, poetic word. Yet, when we take it seriously, it shakes the very foundations of how we see ourselves, others, and the world. Interdependence is not an optional spirituality. It is the very truth of our existence: that we cannot live without air, water, soil, seeds, animals, communities, cultures, and ultimately God who holds all life together.

A Biblical and Franciscan Vision

The Scriptures testify to this reality again and again. In Genesis, God places human beings in the garden to "work it and care for it." (Gen 2:15), not to dominate or exploit. The psalmist sings: "All creatures look to you to give them food in due season. When you open your hand, they are filled with good things" (Ps 104:27-28). St Paul goes even further, proclaiming that the whole of creation is "groaning in labour pains" (Rom 8:22), longing for the same redemption promised to humanity. Saint Francis of Assisi, lived this vision radically. He called the sun his brother, the moon his sister, and even death "sister death." Francis saw that life was not a pyramid with humans at the top but a circle of kinship with God at the centre. To be Christian is not only to love God and neighbour, but also to live with reverence toward all that God loves - which is everything.

The Prophetic Cry of *Laudato Si'*

Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* gave new urgency to this vision. He warned of the illusion of autonomy: "We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us" (LS 67). He insists that everything is connected: "It cannot



PRAYER
PRISM

Fr Fabian Dicom

be emphasised enough how everything is interconnected" (LS 138).

The Pope does not only invite us to care for creation because it benefits us. He insists that every creature has its own dignity: "Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another" (LS 42). This is a revolutionary way of seeing: the forest is not just timber, the river is not just water supply, the bird is not just decoration. They are our relatives, loved by God, part of our common destiny.

This is why interdependence is not just ecological — it is deeply spiritual. To sin against creation is to sin against our own body, our neighbour, and against God.

The Asian Wisdom of Interbeing

Asian cultures have long spoken of this interconnectedness. In Buddhist thought, there is the idea of "interbeing" — that nothing exists by itself alone, everything exists in relationship. Indigenous communities across Asia see the land, rivers, and forests as sacred kin. Creation is the great web of life, and we are but a thread among threads, woven together with all that exists.

This resonates with the Christian vision. We are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion." (LS 220) To harm the rainforest in Borneo or the corals in Sabah is not just an environmental issue - it is wounding the Body of Christ in a mysterious but real way.

The Malaysian Dimension: Our Home, Our Responsibility

For Malaysians, this intention strikes



(Wikimedia Commons/Lambert de Hondt)

especially close to home. We live in one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet, blessed with rainforests, rivers, mountains, and seas that the world envies. Yet, we are also one of the most vulnerable to climate impacts.

- Floods are now a regular threat, displacing thousands every year - from the Klang Valley to Kelantan.
- Deforestation in Sarawak and Sabah has destroyed ecosystems and disrupted the lives of indigenous peoples, many of whom are fighting to protect ancestral lands.
- Haze from forest burning continues to choke our air, showing how our fates are bound with neighbouring countries.
- Rising sea levels threaten coastal communities in places like Selangor and Sabah, putting fisherfolk at risk.

These are not distant problems - they affect our daily bread, our water, our homes. Interdependence is not abstract; it is as concrete as the food on our tables and the floods in our streets.

And yet, there are also signs of hope. Communities in Sarawak are restoring mangroves. Young people across Malaysia are mobilising for climate justice. Interfaith groups are coming together to clean rivers and plant trees. Migrants and locals stood shoulder-to-shoulder in flood relief. In these moments, we glimpse what true interdependence looks like.

Faith as the Energy for Transformation

So, what does this mean for our faith? Too often, we reduce religion to rituals and personal morality. But Pope Francis reminds us: to follow Christ is to embrace his mission of life in abundance for all (Jn 10:10). That includes the earth itself. The Letter to the Colossians proclaims: "In him all things hold together" (Col 1:17). Not just humans - all things. To be Christian is to be a disciple of interconnected love. This is why Pope Francis calls ecological

conversion not an optional devotion but a fundamental dimension of faith. Without it, we are not living the Gospel fully.

A Prophetic Challenge to the Church

If this is true, then the Church must live it. Our credibility is at stake. How can we celebrate the Eucharist, the bread of life, while wasting food? How can we proclaim God as Creator while investing in industries that ravage the land?

Parishes must become schools of interdependence:

- running on renewable energy,
- cultivating parish gardens,
- reducing waste at feasts and events,
- standing with migrant workers and indigenous peoples displaced by climate disasters.

Faith without ecological witness is hypocrisy.

A Prophetic Call for Malaysia

To live interdependence today means to resist destructive systems. It means asking uncomfortable questions:

- Can we continue to consume as if the earth were limitless?
- Can development mean destroying forests and displacing the poor?
- Can we claim to worship God while polluting the rivers that give life to His creatures?

This is not just about lifestyle changes, though those are important. It is about conversion of structures, policies, and economies. It is about creating a Malaysia where the indigenous are respected as guardians of the land, where flood preparedness is a national priority, where renewable energy is pursued with urgency, and where faith communities stand at the forefront of ecological justice.

Conclusion: A New Way of Being Church

The Pope's prayer intention this month is not a pious afterthought. It is a radical invitation: to become a Church that lives interdependence. A Church where care for creation is not a side ministry but part of every Mass, every catechism class, every parish activity.

Malaysia has a unique role to play. With our multicultural, multireligious society, we can model to the world how faiths come together for creation. With our biodiversity, we can protect treasures of life that sustain the planet. With our wounds, we can show that resilience and solidarity are possible.

Let us hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor as one. Let us learn again to say with Saint Francis: "Praise be to you, my Lord, through Sister Water, Brother Wind, Mother Earth." And let us dare to live as if this interdependence were truly the centre of our faith - because it is.

Fr Fabian Dicom is the National Director of Caritas Malaysia



File pic: (Left) Caritas members helping to clean a church after a flood. (Right) Members picking up trash along the streets.

The gentle giant of education

Remembering Dato' A.R. Peter

The nation bid farewell to one of its finest educators, a man whose towering presence was matched only by his humility and compassion. Dato' Anthony Reynolds Peter — known affectionately as Dato' A.R. Peter — was called home to the Lord on August 23, at the age of 87.

To his students, colleagues, and the countless communities he touched, he was more than a teacher. He was a mentor, a father figure, a disciplinarian with a soft heart, and above all, a man who believed that education was about shaping lives, not just passing examinations.

Early life and formation

Born on February 22, 1938, in Slim River, Perak, Peter's upbringing was steeped in values of discipline and perseverance. His father, an estate supervisor, worked hard to provide his children with the best education possible.

Young Peter attended St Michael's Institution, Ipoh, a school run by the Christian Brothers. Life in the hostel instilled resilience and a sense of camaraderie. "We went to school with a purpose: we wanted to do well. Life with the Brothers was good training for discipline, and there was no racial segregation," he recalled.

Later, moving out of the hostel into a shophouse with friends, he learned to care for himself. "We walked to school rain or shine, carrying our books in baskets that lasted five years. We took pride in our things, so we could pass them down to our siblings." School was immensely enjoyable, he said, because the entire community was united. Sports Day, for example, was a festival where everyone had a part to play.

After sitting for his Cambridge exams, Peter taught briefly in his hometown of Slim River and later in Bruas. "We rented rooms above a shophouse, and even the headmaster lived with us. We slept on mats, bathed at the well, and became like family. I treasure those days — life was so different."

In 1959, he left for Brinsford Lodge, England, to train as a teacher — a transformative experience in a multicultural setting. It was there that he met his future wife, Datin Theresa Jane, his steadfast partner in life and vocation.

A life-long passion for teaching

Post-training, his first posting was to Pontian Kecil in 1960. "Most of the teachers were bachelors. We shared rooms regardless of race. The students were very good, and many became notables," he recalled with pride.

From there, he went on to Kuala Selangor, then to La Salle Klang, where he

earned a history degree while raising a young family. "Life was difficult, but my wife pushed me. We were aiming for honours because it made a difference in salary."

At ACS Klang in the 1980s, Peter faced one of his greatest challenges: transforming what many called a gangster-infested school. Through discipline, compassion, and sheer presence, he turned ACS into "A Caring School." He and his wife gave extra classes at home — she teaching girls art, and he sending them home after. "We spent all our time in school," he explained. "When you spend time with students, they open up. In the classroom, it's all business."

He pioneered Report Card Day, expanded co-curricular activities, and fostered charity work, embedding social responsibility in students. Many remember him greeting them decades later by name, always asking about their families — a mark of genuine, enduring care.

Though firm, his humanity was unmistakable. Students recall walking into his office with trepidation, only to be met with his signature greeting: "Young man, what did you do this time?" Even the sting of his rotan carried lessons of character, responsibility, and respect.

Teachers, too, adored him. At Wesley Methodist School, where he served after government retirement, he constantly reminded them, "We are family." For those far from home, his compassion made school feel like home. "He was more than a boss — he was a true leader," said one teacher.

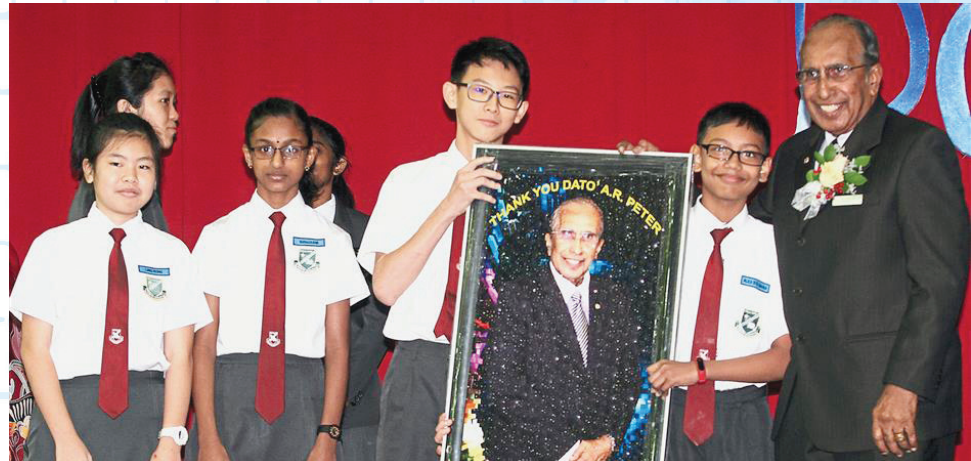
In his seventies, when many slowed down, Peter rose at 4.30am to travel from Klang to Kuala Lumpur, leading Stella Maris Secondary School with undimmed energy. He introduced the annual school concert, a showcase of talent and unity under the school motto: Care, Share, Love, and Serve.

His 2018 retirement was a regal farewell. He inspected a guard of honour formed by every uniformed unit. In the packed auditorium, tributes flowed — from students, the Board, and Archbishop Julian Leow. The choir sang, Form Ones recited poetry, and gifts of gratitude were presented. In his speech, he urged: "Be the best that you can be, in whatever you choose to do."

Finally, the school sent him off in an open-top AMG. Students and teachers lined the path, many in tears, waving goodbye to their beloved principal. It was a farewell befitting a life of dedication.

His philosophy of education

For Peter, teaching was never just a job; it was his calling. He once shared, "It's my passion: teaching... the joy is seeing children doing well. I always tell them, some of you will become captains of industry and leaders of the country. You are not



studying just for you but also for others."

He believed in the sacred trust between teacher, student, and parent. "I'll be the happiest when tuition classes are banned. Then bonds will strengthen between teachers, students, and parents. If you trust your children and teach them, they will be responsible. And regardless of colour, each child can be successful."

Even in later years, he urged teachers to persevere under pressure, parents to play their part, and children to be guided with love and supervision.

Honours, recognition and tributes

For his service, he was named Tokoh Guru Selangor (1994) and Tokoh Guru Kebangsaan (1995) — the nation's highest honour for teachers. Even at 80, he was celebrated again for his lifelong devotion. Yet, he often said his greatest joy was not titles, but watching his students grow into leaders and responsible citizens.

Tributes poured in from all quarters. Among those paying tribute was fellow educator Datuk A. Vaithilingam, who had known him since 1970. He hailed him as "an excellent principal of ACS Secondary until he retired from government service," and added that Peter's years as principal of Methodist College were equally commendable. "He was supportive of my involvement in sports and co-curricular activities. His contributions to educational development in the country are much appreciated."

Raja Singham, Founder and Managing Director of the BAC Education Group, remembered him as "an icon in the education industry and instrumental in transforming the schools he ran post-retirement. He was tireless in his efforts to support the development of sports, instil discipline, and push for academic achievements. I am confident that if we had more principals and leaders like him today, we would not be seeing the bullying incidents so prevalent now. Educational institutions need courageous leaders like him — people committed to giving our children the best possible future."

Students remembered the sting of

his rotan, softened by his fatherly heart. Colleagues called him a leader who made them feel like family. Community leaders honoured him as a man of integrity, vision, and service.

One tribute perhaps said it best: "We lost a special human being today. While it is fine to mourn his passing, his legacy will live through every one of us — perhaps even another generation. He would not want us to be sad, but to rejoice in the brotherhood and camaraderie he helped to foster with the many teachers and colleagues of one mind."

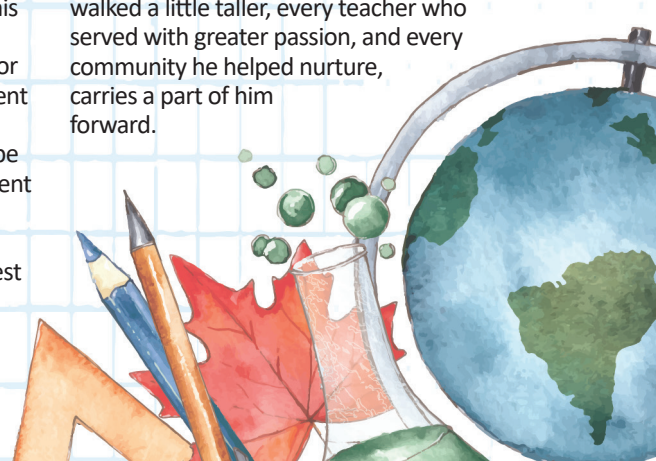
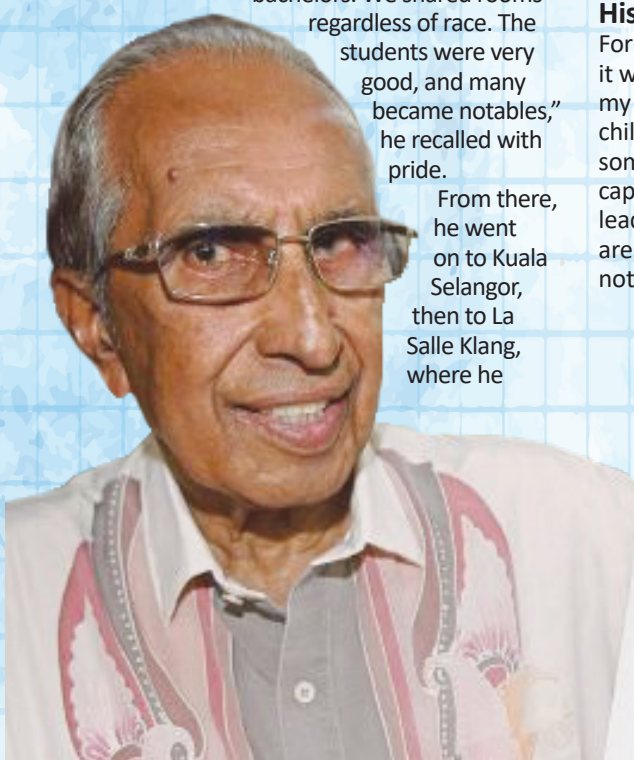
Another reflection captured the essence of what he taught, both inside and outside the classroom: "Life is precious — never to be taken for granted. Our hearts are often carved by pain and hardship, yet it is through those very experiences that we learn how to live, love, and forgive. Sir showed us that discipline was not about punishment, but about shaping us into stronger, better people. His life was a lesson in itself — one that will continue to guide us long after his passing."

His legacy lives on

Dato' A.R. Peter leaves behind his beloved wife, Datin Theresa, their three children, two grandchildren, and four siblings. But more than that, he leaves behind generations of Malaysians carrying his lessons within them.

His was a life fully surrendered in service — to God, to education, to community, and to the nation. He stood firm as a pillar of education, radiated wisdom with grace and became a guiding light that continues to inspire long after his journey on earth has ended.

In truth, his legacy is not written only in awards, accolades, or school records, but in the lives he touched. Every student who walked a little taller, every teacher who served with greater passion, and every community he helped nurture, carries a part of him forward.



Every Wednesday, as the sun dips behind the coconut trees and the kampung settles into its twilight rhythm of barking dogs, distant motorcycles, and the occasional waft of Sarawak laksa from someone's kitchen — I find myself in an unlikely upper room of sorts — a weekly Bible class in Kampung Quop, a Bidayuh heartland of Anglican Christians, where I live.

We gather: a Canadian and an American, both Anglicans, local faithful also Anglicans, and me, the lone Catholic. We're a small band of about 10 novices trying to make sense of Christian scripture — not always sure of ourselves, though, but united in our hunger for the Word.

Being the only Catholic among the group of Anglicans is not exactly like being Daniel in the lion's den — but I do keep my Catechism close. Over time, I've learned that it's less about debating doctrines and more about living the Gospel together, like in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

From time to time, our study inevitably encounters the divisive hard hitters of Church History: Martin Luther and the Reformation, the theology of the Catholic Eucharist, the structure of the Anglican liturgy, the contested question of biblical authenticity, and enduring debates on apostolic authority and the magisterium.

These are delicate waters. I tread them carefully, like walking barefoot across gravel. When "transubstantiation" comes up, I don't reach for grandiose Latin terms. I am prompted to share as one who has knelt before the tabernacle, not as an ecclesiastic but as a son before his Father's table.

When our discussions turn to the different collections of Scripture — why the Protestant Bible contains 66 books while the Catholic canon holds 73 — I point out that the early Church also prayed with and



Joe's Jottings
JOSEPH MASILAMANY

The Gospel according to Kampung Quop

drew wisdom from writings like *Tobit* and *Sirach*. These Books and others are not treated as mere appendices, but as food for the journey of faith.

There's a sort of unspoken code in our group: we don't try to "convert" each other, but we do try to convert our hearts. And sometimes, we convert leftovers into a potluck supper for fellowship. That, too, is holy!

Great commissioning

The Gospel event that has most stayed with us is the story of Jesus' commissioning the 72. Two by two, He sent them out, not just as a historical titbit buried in Luke's Gospel, but as a living pattern still played out in our lives.

Truly, this little meeting in our *kampung*, in Harold the Canadian's living room - or sometimes at Reids Grove, the American's residence — reminds us that we too are gathered here as part of that same commissioning.

Luke didn't name the town where Jesus commissioned the 72. Was it Bethany? Bethphage, Capernaum or Kampung Quop?

Perhaps the Holy Spirit left it intentionally open, so that every humble gathering — from the hills of Judea to a sleepy *kampung* in Borneo — might feel themselves "sent forth" by the Lord, beyond the bounds of geography.

Are we not still being sent out into our families, our communities, into the quiet

corners of doubt and pain within ourselves — with a Gospel not of division, but of mercy and hope?

Ours is not a gathering of scholars, but *kampung* novices, each armed with a dog-eared Bible. Some lean on the grand King James version, some, the clear-cut New International, another, the precise English Standard, and another the breezy New Living Translation.

At times, I wonder what the Holy Spirit makes of the *rojak* Bible-mix we hold in our hands.

Perhaps He weeps with joy, or perhaps He smiles, watching us wrestle with footnotes, discuss translations, and stumble over tongue-twisters like *exegesis* and *hermeneutics*. Oops, we'll come to these when we hit a blank wall.

No, no. Maybe not. Perhaps, by this time, the Holy Spirit chuckles to Himself — "There they go again, turning love letters into law books."

We may not always agree on everything — from the Deuterocanonical books to which version of the Bible is appropriate for sacred liturgy — the Jerusalem Bible or the King James version? But we do agree on this: Christ is among us.

Encounter

Once we discussed how Jesus, a Jew, crossed into Samaritan territory and sat at the well with a woman whose people had long been at odds with His own. That scene from John's Gospel is the perfect picture of what Christian dialogue and interfaith

outreach should look like.

Not avoidance. Not an argument. But "encounter". He asked her for water and gave her the "Living Water" in return. Remember "Synod on Synodality?" Come together, discourse, listen, share, and serve one another.

So each Wednesday, we return. Not because we need to prove a point, but because the Word is alive — and because we see Jesus in our Anglican-ness, in our Catholic-ness, united as the Church, in the One Body of Christ.

Call it ecumenism — but for us, it simply means coming together without waving denominational flags, just a loose band of Christians building bridges of faith with one another.

And as we raise our songs of praise, sometimes in tune, or out of tune — we imagine the Holy Spirit nudging the Father, and saying: "Look at this little band of disciples: no stained glass, no lofty choir, but plenty of heart."

Finally, our favourite hymn, "I Love This Family of God", comes alive as Sally Brown's fingers fly over the frets, concluding our Bible night on a jolly note with a concluding prayer by Marlyn Madrod.

Borneo-based journo, Joseph Masilamany writes with a deft hand blending human interest and interfaith narratives with the earthy charm of kampung flavour, giving every story its homegrown heartbeat. josephmasilamany6505@gmail.com. Mobile: 011-25160892.

Leaving a legacy of faith

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith" (1 Timothy 5:8).

Our lives are unique and precious, and our legacies reflect the love we shared and the positive impact we aim to leave behind.

As Catholics, we are called to live each moment with eternity in mind. Our faith teaches us that life is a sacred gift, entrusted to us by God, and that we are stewards — not owners — of all we possess. From our families to our finances, our homes to our hopes, everything we have is meant to be used for God's glory and the good of others. One of the most loving and spiritually responsible acts we can undertake is to prepare a will — an earthly document that reflects heavenly values.

For most of us, preparing a will can be a daunting task, and for some, it may even be taboo, which is why it is often not a priority.

Decades ago, when my husband was seriously ill in the hospital and reality hit home that he had barely days to live, well-meaning friends crafted a last testament and will for him to sign with a nurse and a family friend as witnesses. He also had not named any beneficiaries for his Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and this too was done on his deathbed.

Though it did involve getting a grant of probate even with a will, I cannot imagine the horror some families face when their loved ones pass away suddenly and leave behind a trail of uncertainty for their families.

We always think that it will never happen

to us, but when fate intervenes, it is those left behind who suffer the most.

I've seen families being involved in acrimonious battles when insurance policies or EPF nominations, deeds and titles are not updated, and the ensuing trauma for the families involved, especially young children.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that charity begins at home. Preparing a will is a profound act of charity toward our loved ones. It spares them confusion, conflict, and unnecessary hardship during a time of grief. It offers clarity, direction, and peace. In essence, it is a final gift — a way of saying, "I have cared for you in life, and I continue to care for you in death."

This act of foresight reflects the virtue of prudence, one of the cardinal virtues. It anticipates future needs and makes provisions that honour both justice and mercy. It ensures that our loved ones are provided for, that our wishes are respected, and that our legacy is one of order, compassion, and faithfulness.

Our social teaching emphasises that while private property is a right, it is also a responsibility. We are called to use our resources not only for our own benefit but for the good of others, especially the poor and vulnerable. A will offers a unique opportunity to live out this teaching even after we've passed on.

Many Catholics choose to include charitable bequests in their wills — donations to their parish, Catholic schools, pro-life ministries, or missionary efforts. This is a powerful way to continue participating

in the Church's mission of evangelisation, education, and service. It's a way of saying, "My faith shaped my life, and it will shape my legacy."

Scripture tells us, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith" (1 Timothy 5:8). Providing for one's family is not merely a legal obligation — it is a spiritual one. A will allows us to ensure that our spouse, children, and other dependents are cared for in a manner that reflects our love and values.

For parents, this may include naming guardians for minor children — entrusting them to individuals who will raise them in the faith. For adult children, it may involve thoughtful distribution of assets that avoids favouritism and fosters unity. For elderly relatives, it may mean setting aside resources for their care. These decisions, made prayerfully and with discernment, are acts of love that echo the heart of Christ.

While the legal preparation of a will is important, we are also called to prepare spiritually for death. The Church encourages us to live each day in readiness, with hearts turned toward God. This includes receiving the sacraments regularly, especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist, and making peace with those we may have wronged.

When preparing a will, it's wise to seek both legal and spiritual counsel. An attorney or financial advisor can help ensure that your will is legally sound and ethically aligned with your values. A priest or spiritual director can offer guidance on how to incorporate your faith into your decisions.

In the West, many dioceses and parishes offer workshops or resources on Catholic estate planning, including how to support Church ministries through bequests. These resources can help you make informed choices that reflect your commitment to stewardship and discipleship. I am not sure if this is available in our Malaysian dioceses/parishes.

Ultimately, a will is more than a legal document — it is a testament of hope. It reflects our belief in the resurrection, in the communion of saints, and in the eternal life promised by Christ. It acknowledges that while we leave behind our earthly possessions, we journey toward a heavenly inheritance that far surpasses anything we can imagine.

By preparing a will, we affirm that our lives — and our deaths — are part of a greater story. We entrust our loved ones to God's care, and we do our part to leave behind a legacy of love, faith, and peace.

Regina William is an ex-journalist turned head of communications, now full-time grandmother to three children aged between six and three, crisscrossing the globe to play the role. She can be reached at regina.william1223@gmail.com



From the Other Side
REGINA WILLIAM



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Mourning our unfinished symphony

There are parts of scripture that should come with a warning label, the kind they sometimes flash at the end of a movie which reads: No animals were harmed.

One such text is a story in the Book of Judges (11,29-39). It's the story of a king named Jephthah who is at war and makes a promise to God that if God lets him win the war, he will sacrifice as a burnt offering to God, the first person he meets when he gets back home. God lets him win the war and Jephthah returns home and the first person he meets is his own daughter, who is in the bloom of youth. On seeing her, he deeply regrets his vow. However, his daughter agrees to let herself be offered as a burnt offering, but she asks for one thing first, to be given two months to go to the mountains "to mourn my virginity with my companions." Her father grants her the favour and she goes off with her companions to mourn the fact that she will die a virgin. She returns and is sacrificed as a burnt offering to God.

Taken literally, this is simply an awful story – a foolish promise made to God, a God who accepts such a vow and grants a favour because of it, child sacrifice, an undertow of callous patriarchy.

But that's not what this story is about. No one dies in this story. It's not to be

taken literally, but as a metaphor, and its message is not about God granting favours in exchange for human sacrifice. Its real message has to do with the young woman in the story, with her asking for the chance to mourn the fact that she will die a virgin, her life in some deep way incomplete.

What's she asking for? What does it mean to mourn one's virginity? How does one mourn this?

What lies inside this metaphor is the fact that every one of us, woman or man, married or celibate, long life or short life, will ultimately die a virgin, without having had the full symphony.

In its more literal modality, we see this played out in someone who has never married, is single, has never had a partner with whom he or she became one flesh, and who will die in that state. Like Jephthah's daughter, he or she will die a virgin. Sometimes when leading a retreat for priests or nuns, I will ask them this question: Have you ever mourned your celibacy? Have you ever grieved the fact that you will go through life without sexual intimacy, without children, without being a grandparent?

But there are less literal modalities of this. The "virginity" that Jephthah's daughter needs to mourn is something we all need to mourn, even if we have

sexual intimacy, children, and grandchildren.

I was once at a faculty gathering where a number of priests on faculty were discussing celibacy when a colleague, a happily married woman, challenged us with these words: You celibates feel too sorry for yourselves. Do you know what's worse than sleeping alone? Sleeping alone when you're not sleeping alone. Sexual intimacy, even at its best, doesn't take away your aloneness.

She's right. No one gets the full symphony. Karl Rahner once replied to a friend who had written to him lamenting that, while he was in a good marriage, he still felt deeply alone in many ways. Rahner advised him not to blame his wife nor his marriage for his loneliness, but rather to learn to accept that "here in this life there is no finished symphony." All of us will die with some unfulfilled dreams; none of us will find full, abiding, ecstatic embrace this side of eternity.

However, we can still live happy, full lives despite this absence. But there's a condition, the one Jephthah's daughter expresses, namely, we need to mourn our incompleteness so that we can die at peace with our partial symphony.

If we do not recognise that incompleteness and mourn it, our non-acceptance will work in stealth to colour our lives

with disappointment, anger, and depression. Worse still, if we cannot make peace with the fact that life cannot give us the full symphony, we will have an unconscious propensity to be too hard on others (our marriage partners, our families, our friends, our churches, and life itself) because they cannot measure up and give us the full symphony.

And how might we mourn our incompleteness? We mourn in our own way, but all mourning begins with recognising what's lost, what's been taken from us. So, we begin mourning our "virginity" by recognizing and accepting what Rahner told his friend, that here, in this life, there is no finished symphony.

How do we mourn that? Some might take it to spiritual direction, psychological therapy, or some ritual practice, but all of us must consciously take it to prayer and then, like Jephthah's daughter, spend some months in the mountains giving free range to our tears.

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During the Jubilee Year of Hope, there have been many Jubilee events for specific groups of people. Not much was earlier made known of the Jubilee of Consolation, scheduled for September 15, 2025. It is dedicated to offering solace and spiritual support to those who are suffering or in distress. Individuals from all walks of life, particularly those who have experienced loss and grief, hardship, or emotional turmoil, are invited to come together in a spirit of healing and hope. The occasion aims to provide a space for reflection, prayer, and communal support, emphasising the Church's mission of compassion and mercy.

This will take place in Rome, of course – but the Jubilee is also being celebrated in different parts of the world, including at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur. Thankfully, it happens to be a special holiday just before Malaysia Day and so it allows people to come at leisure to spend some time for prayer and reflection in a community setting. We will have the Rosary and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Mass, followed by moments of contemplative prayer and silence interspaced with Taize chants before the Blessed Sacrament. All this is to foster a sense of peace and renewal among the faithful, who will each come with their own experiences of pain and suffering. There are no guarantees of instantaneous healing or relief, but instead, we know that being in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord will give all a sense of renewed hope and



As I was Contemplating

FR GERARD THERAVIAM

Suffering and Consolation

"Every man has his own share in the Redemption. Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the Redemption was accomplished. He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed. In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ." (Pope St John Paul II - Apostolic Letter on Redemptive Suffering, *Salvifici Doloris* 1984 SD 19).

trust – to come and rest awhile and arise once more to take up our crosses in the footsteps of Jesus. Indeed, we trust in the promise of the beatitude "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted". (Matthew 5:4)

Perhaps an apt scripture for this Jubilee is 2 Corinthians 1:3-5:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

Just as we recognise God as the source of all comfort, we are also called in turn to be agents of God's comfort. We are comforted not just for our own sakes but so that we may become comforters of others! It is not just about receiving but

also continuing the cycle of comfort by giving of ourselves.

We are also reminded that we share in the sufferings of Christ Himself, even in our own sufferings, just as we share in the comfort He gives us. Elsewhere in Colossians 1:24, Paul introduces the concept of *redemptive suffering*. *I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.* Paul, while not saying that the sufferings of Christ were defective or insufficient, gives us the inspiration to give meaning to our suffering by uniting it with that of Christ on the Cross as well as the sufferings of all who suffer.

Pope St John Paul II interprets this verse by suggesting that human suffering, when united with Christ's Passion, can share in the redemptive work of Christ for the sake of others. It's not about adding to Christ's already completed work, but about personal participation in the salvific process for the Church and the world. Our suffering gains meaning

when we see it in relation to the suffering of Christ for the world. It allows us to be in solidarity with others who suffer too. Thus, our sufferings are not empty and meaningless.

St Paul saw that the suffering we undergo can lead to the salvation of others. "Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10).

Ultimately, our sufferings are not forever – we need to look beyond towards eternity!

In Romans 8:18 he also tells us, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed for us".

St Paul also goes further. At the risk of sounding masochistic, he states: *We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame.* (Romans 5:3-5)

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, may we strive forth to take up our crosses daily with hope and love! As we do so, we do so in solidarity with all who suffer in any way – and with Christ himself. May we recognise the Lord in our midst – "I, I am he who consoles you." (Isaiah 51:12)

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

Little Catholics' corner

WORD SEARCH

Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple (Luke 14: 27)

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

PEACE
 FINISH
 JESUS
 CARRY
 ENOUGH
 CROWDS
 WAR
 COST
 TRAVELING
 COMPLETE
 DISCIPLE
 FOLLOW
 TOWER
 CROSS
 BUILD
 ESTIMATE
 LARGE
 MONEY
 KING
 THOUSAND



Dear children,

In today's Gospel reading Jesus says, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even His own life, he cannot be My disciple."

You probably thought that God doesn't want us to hate anyone, right?

Well, He doesn't! What Jesus was saying was that we should love God more than we love the people closest to us.



He means that we should be ready to do what God wants even if that means losing our family or best friends.

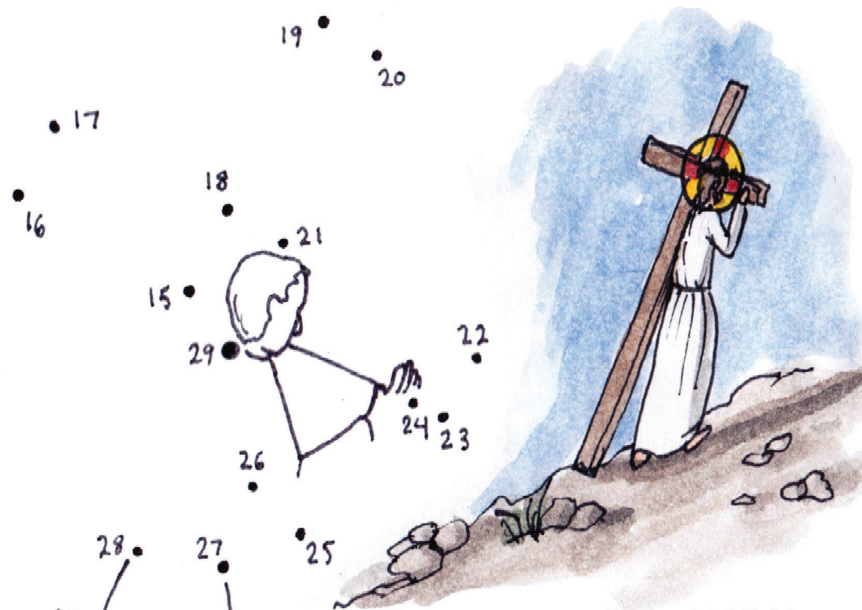
Normally God wants us to stay close to the people we love but what if you had to choose between doing the right thing or keeping your friends?

Are you ready to give up anything or anyone that would stop you from loving God?

Love
 Aunty Eliz

And whoever does not carry their cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:27).

Let's Colour



Luke 14.25-33

What do you have to do to be Jesus' disciple?

Connect the dots to find out, starting at the star beside the number 1. Then you can colour the picture in.



Faith Alive 2.0:

Rooted in Christ, growing in community



Stanley Sebastian

MELAKA: Forty-four vibrant and faith-filled youth from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Kuala Lumpur, recently gathered for the second annual youth camp, *Faith Alive 2.0*, held at the historic Good Shepherd Seminary (GSS) in Melaka. Spanning four days and three nights, the camp carried the profound theme from John 20:29: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” This year’s edition continues the parish’s mission to reinvigorate youth-centred spiritual formation and fellowship.

Unlike its predecessor, this year’s camp was designed to place Jesus Christ firmly at the centre of each youth’s journey. Half of the participants were returning campers, many anticipating a deeper and more meaningful experience. The group departed Kuala Lumpur with high hopes, and although the night journey to Malacca was long and tiring, the serene grounds of the decades-old seminary greeted them with tranquillity, offering a peaceful night’s rest before the programme began.

The second day marked the formal beginning of the camp. Eight months of planning led by a dedicated team — comprising returning participants now preparing for Confirmation — culminated in the creation of a striking camp logo and the Latin motto *In Deo Speramus* (*In God*



The youth after the session with Dr James Tour.

We Trust). The organising team, under the guidance of two committed catechists, walked participants through the meaning behind the logo and its symbols. The youth were then divided into seven groups, each named after a Blessed Pope, encouraging participants to explore the lives of these spiritual giants and draw inspiration from their witness.

After an initial task and a short break, the teams reconvened to present their research and reflections. The collaboration and insights shared revealed the depth of understanding already taking shape.

The afternoon led the youth into a spiritually immersive 14 Stations of the Cross around the seminary grounds. Shaded by majestic banyan trees and wrapped in nature’s stillness, the walk invited deep reflection on the centrality of Jesus in their lives. The environment added profound texture to this prayerful journey, inviting an experience of both reverence and personal contemplation.

This spiritual intensity gave way to a spirited and much-anticipated Captain Ball Tournament, where all seven groups



Fr Gerard Theraviam speaking to the youth before the Mass.

and a team formed by the facilitators competed with joyful energy. The finals were cheered on by none other than Fr Gerard Steve Theraviam, the parish priest, who arrived just in time to witness the action and lend his encouragement.

That evening, Fr Gerard led a moving session titled *The Resurrected Christ and Me*. It focused on understanding the relevance of the Resurrection on a personal level — not merely as a Church celebration but as a life-transforming encounter. The tone set by this session served as a spiritual preparation for the next day’s highlight.

One of the most anticipated moments of the camp came in the form of a Zoom call with Dr James Tour, an internationally recognised scientist and devout Christian. Dr Tour is known for ground-breaking research in synthetic chemistry and nanotechnology and has been named among the “Top 50 Most Influential Scientists in the World.”

In his engaging presentation, Dr Tour shared his personal journey of faith and science, offering insights into his pioneering work — including nanocars, graphene technology, and his critiques of

origin-of-life theories. He also provided compelling evidence supporting the Resurrection of Christ. Youth as young as 13 asked thoughtful and profound questions during the live Q&A session, showing the depth of engagement. Fr Gerard participated in the session as well, and the conversation resonated powerfully with all involved.

Following a group Zoom photo and a short break, the participants presented their reflections on Dr Tour’s talk, guided by catechists and facilitators. This rare opportunity to interact with a leading Christian scientist made a significant impact, reinforcing the compatibility of faith and intellect.

A beautiful youth-animated Mass followed, celebrated in the seminary chapel. Fr. Gerard offered an enriching homily on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, highlighting the deep spiritual value of attending Mass physically, as opposed to online. This sacred celebration allowed the youth to experience a more personal relationship with Christ in the sacrament.



During one of the group activities.

• Continued on Page 17

Be beacons of Hope

• Continued from page 16

On the final day, T-shirts and prizes were distributed to recognise participation and team spirit. A special treat awaited as the youth joined the Infant Jesus Sisters for Mass and lunch. Witnessing the joy of the elderly sisters and the young people in conversation was a reminder of the intergenerational bond within the Church — a moment of grace and unity rarely experienced in everyday parish life.

Before returning to Kuala Lumpur, the group made a pilgrimage stop at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Port Dickson, one of the designated Jubilee Churches in the archdiocese. Greeted warmly by Fr Edwin Peter, the youth completed their rosary walk and venerated a relic of the True Cross — an experience that brought their camp journey to a fitting, sacred conclusion.

The success of Faith Alive 2.0 would not have been possible without Fr Gerard's steadfast spiritual and pastoral support. His presence throughout the camp — both as a guide and a participant — truly shaped the atmosphere and depth of the experience.

Special appreciation also goes to the many parents who contributed in big and small ways, through prayer, logistics, and constant encouragement. The joy on the youths' faces was a living testimony that hearts were touched, faith was stirred, and lives were changed.

Faith Alive 2.0 has undeniably raised the bar for future youth camps at the Cathedral. With growing participation and increasing spiritual depth, it stands as a beacon of hope and renewal for the next generation of the Church — rooted in Christ, animated by faith, and alive in the Spirit.

In the afternoon, Fr Gerard and a catechist led a reflective session titled *Prayer & What It Means to Me*. The session delved into The Lord's Prayer, unpacking each line for its theological and personal significance. The intention was to help the youth see the Our Father not as a routine recitation, but as a prayer they could live and internalize. The participants later shared their takeaways, offering heartfelt insights that reflected maturing faith.

The evening concluded with time for fun and fellowship through engaging station games that tested both mind and muscle. Afterwards, participants were led through a quiet time of reflection and spiritual journaling, facilitated by the organising team and accompanied by Fr Gerard.

SHARING FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

"The camp taught me the value of community and faith-based leadership. Leading my group, 'Pope John XXI,' helped me foster teamwork, deepen my faith, and see how God works through people. The support of my teachers and peers made me feel valued and inspired me to grow into someone who uplifts others through faith." **Aman Wassim**

"From my experience at the camp, I learned that it's not just about learning about God, but also about building bonds with others so we can grow together in faith. Many of the activities were both fun and meaningful, allowing us to enjoy the experience with our teammates. Faith Alive is a camp that brings people together, helping those who are new to faith and turning the journey into a lifelong adventure with God alongside new friends." **Sean Chen**

"Faith Alive, another year of making new friends and roommates, Francesco and Frederic. The highlight of this year's camp was the session and Q&A with Dr James Tour, where he explained the Eucharist in relation to science. I'm already looking forward to Faith Alive 2026!" **Rayyale Grasson Raj**

YOUTH CALLED TO LIVE THE GOSPEL

Dr Ivan Filmer

PENANG: Nineteen young men and women received the Sacrament of Confirmation on August 17 at the Church of Divine Mercy (CDM). The sacrament was conferred by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, assisted by parish priest Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap and Deacon Richard Wilson.

The candidates, dressed in red and white to symbolise fire and water — signs of the Holy Spirit — processed into the church at the start of the celebration. After more than ten years of catechetical formation and a Confirmation camp, they were ready to complete their initiation into the Catholic faith. The readings were proclaimed by the candidates, while the youth choir led the congregation in song.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian asked, "Can we build a better world?" He shared that this was the topic he would be speaking about at an upcoming event in Penang which would be attended by the grandson of Nelson Mandela. Recalling John Lennon's song Imagine, the

cardinal invited the faithful to envision a world of peace, harmony, justice, and compassion. Citing Pope St Paul VI, he reminded the congregation that peace is more than the absence of conflict — it is built on compassion, social justice, and a sincere pursuit of truth.

The cardinal emphasised that such a world is only possible through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Reflecting on Pentecost, he reminded the youth that just as the Spirit descended upon the Apostles and emboldened Peter to speak to people from all nations, so too are today's confirmands sent forth. He urged them to live the Gospel in their studies, workplaces, and communities, with special attention to society's most vulnerable — the "widows and orphans" spoken of in Scripture. He cautioned against the reality of evil, urging the youth to remain rooted in the Church for strength and nourishment.

At the end of the Mass, two young women shared testimonies of their decade-long catechetical journey, highlighting the joy and friendships fostered through their formation. Two young



men also spoke about their confirmation camp experience, where they discovered their talents and learned how to navigate social challenges with faith.

The celebration ended with a fellowship pot-bless among families and friends. Each confirmand received a certificate and a souvenir to mark the occasion. The parish expressed pride in presenting 19 new "warriors of the faith" to serve as role models within the community.



LISTEN TO GOD'S VOICE

PETALING JAYA: A joyful celebration filled the Church of St Ignatius on August 23, as 82 young Catholics — including 17 from the Mandarin-speaking community and one from the Bahasa Malaysia community — were sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation. Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the Mass, joined by parish priest Fr Thomas Koo, CDD, as co-celebrant.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian offered a timely reflection for today's digital age. He noted how artificial intelligence can now clone a person's voice so convincingly that "even that person's own mother is not able to tell the difference." If technology can mimic us, he asked, could it also mimic the

voice of God? In a world filled with competing "voices" such as our own selfish desires, opinions, false teachings and constant noise, how can we discern God's true voice and follow Him?

Pointing to Jesus' assurance, "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (Jn 10:27), the archbishop reminded the congregation that God's voice is recognised by its fruits: it leads us to truth, charity, joy and peace.

He encouraged the faithful to learn to listen to God's voice through daily prayer with Scripture, regular participation in the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, and by paying attention to the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

To illustrate the meaning of Confirmation, Archbishop Julian used a vivid analogy. He compared it to taking a flight: after booking our ticket, we still need to confirm it to board the plane and reach our destination. In the same way, the Sacrament of Confirmation enables us to embark on our journey of faith more fully. Without this "confirmation," we risk missing the true path that leads us to our eternal destination with God.

Finally, he reminded the confirmands that they are now sealed with the Holy Spirit and belong exclusively to God. May these 82 newly confirmed young people continue to grow in faith, learning each day to listen to God's voice and to follow wherever He leads them. **Christopher Ng**



Remembering the Algerian Martyrs

ITALY: At the recent Meeting of Friendship Among Peoples in Rimini, Pope Leo XIV invited the Church to remember the witness of the Algerian martyrs — men and women who laid down their lives not in pursuit of glory, but in simple, humble fidelity to Christ and in deep solidarity with the people among whom they lived.

The Pope recalled that their sacrifice shines as a reminder of the Church's vocation: to dwell among all peoples, to break down the walls of mistrust, and to live the Gospel through closeness, fraternity, and service. Mission, he underlined, is not self-promotion or strategy, but the gift of one's life — even to the point of martyrdom — in adoration of Christ and love for others.

The exhibition on the martyrs movingly portrays this reality. Their lives were marked by simplicity and presence, sharing daily joys and struggles with their Muslim neighbours, offering friendship, practical help, and companionship without demanding recognition or success. They embodied the Gospel by remaining where suffering was greatest, even when the cost was their own lives.

This witness is especially captured in the words of Bishop Pierre Claverie, martyred in 1996. Explaining why he chose to remain in Algeria despite constant danger, he said:

"Where is home for us? We are there because of this crucified Messiah. For no other reason, for no other person! ... We are there like at the bedside of a friend, of a sick brother, in silence, holding his hand, wiping his forehead. Because of Jesus — because it is he who suffers, in that violence that spares no one, crucified again in the flesh of thousands of innocents."



The Monks of Tibhirine, Algeria.

His testimony remains a piercing call for the Church to stay close to the Cross. "Where should the Church of Jesus be — if not first of all there?" he asked. He warned that the Church dies when it becomes worldly, when it seeks influence, power, or prestige, when it turns faith into a show instead of a fire of love.

The martyrs of Algeria stand in sharp contrast to such temptations. Their quiet fidelity reminds us of the true essence of the Gospel: to give without counting the cost, to burn with the light of Christ rather than one's own, and to stand alongside the poor and powerless as God himself chose to do.

As Pope Leo recalled, echoing Pope Francis, the option for the poor is not merely sociological or cultural, but profoundly theological. God chose the humble, entering our history as one of them, to reveal his presence where the world least expects it.

The martyrs of Algeria bore witness to this truth until the end, their blood mingling with that of countless Muslims who also fell victim to fundamentalist violence. Their memory is not only a commemoration of the past, but a call to the Church today: to live mission as closeness, fraternity, and self-giving love, even to the point of the Cross.

Vatican News

Gazan Christians remain with those who suffer

GAZA: As violence and destruction escalate in the Gaza Strip, the small Catholic community of the Holy Family Parish continues to embody faith, courage, and hope by staying close to the most vulnerable.

Parish priest Fr Gabriel Romanelli, together with priests of the Institute of the Incarnate Word, religious sisters, and the Missionaries of Charity, has chosen to remain despite the dangers. "We are here for Jesus Christ, to serve Him in the Eucharist, and to serve Him in the person of the poor, the sick, and all who suffer," he said.

The parish compound has become a refuge for the elderly, the sick, and

those with disabilities — offering food, medicine, and companionship. "Seeing the needs of the elderly, of those who are anxious and anguished, we understand that the Lord is calling us to continue serving them. Otherwise, how will they survive?" said Fr Romanelli.

Despite intensified bombings that have brought "more deaths, more destruction, more wounded," the parish has stood as a sign of hope, reminding both Christians and Muslims that compassion is stronger than fear.

Joining the recent appeal of Church leaders in Jerusalem, Fr Romanelli said the community prays "for peace, for the freedom of all those deprived of it, for

the hostages, and for the thousands of sick and wounded who cannot find the care they need."

Amid uncertainty, the parish remains steadfast. "We, with great simplicity and humility, will carry on here," Fr Romanelli said. "It is not easy, but we are in the Lord's hands. We trust that, with the help of many good people in the world, all this will one day stop."

As the only Catholic parish in Gaza, Holy Family continues to witness to the Gospel — not through numbers or power, but through quiet presence, prayer, and service. Even in darkness, their faith shines as a light of solidarity and hope. Vatican News



A religious sister works with young people inside the Holy Family parish compound.

MEMORIAM

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10th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Kathryn Ching Noy Tiang

Departed: 30th August 2015

In remembrance of a lovely wife
and mother's eternal light and love.

Reminiscing your memory
and misses you beyond measure.

Lovingly remembered by:

Husband: Kenneth Aw,
Son: Alwyn Aw, Daughter-in-law: Jennifer Ng,
Grandson: Aaron Aw,
Daughter: Louisa Aw, Son-in-Law: Shaun Tay,
Grandniece: Angeline Chin.

9th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of
Fr Phillips Muthu



Departed on 10th September 2016

Your ministry was characterised by a deep love for the marginalised and a tireless commitment to bringing comfort and hope to those in need.

Your legacy endures in the countless lives you touched, reminding us of the power of kindness and the importance of a life devoted to service.

Your memory continues to inspire and guide us.

NOTICE

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3rd Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



MR PHILIP ANTHONY

Born: 30.9.1960

Departed: 6.9.2022

Though sad, memories of you always bring smiles to our faces. Though painful,

we are still learning to live without you.

Though you are gone, we will always love and cherish you in our hearts.

Deeply missed by family and friends.



TUAN ANTONY SOOSAI (JP)
PENOLONG PENDAFTAR PERKAHWINAN
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR OF MARRIAGE
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012-2883421

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No.1, Jalan 4/52B, 46050 Petaling Jaya
Selangor Darul Ehsan

Early Christian presence unearthed in UAE

ABU DHABI: Archaeologists working on a small island in the Persian Gulf have discovered an artefact attesting to a Christian monastic presence on the island some 1400 years ago.

The site is located on Sir Bani Yas, an island some 110 miles southwest of Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and has been known to archaeologists since 1992.

The evidence discovered is a plaster cross moulded onto a plaque about 10.6 inches long, 6.7 inches wide, and a little less than an inch thick. The artifact is decorated with symbols suggesting the community that lived there belonged to the Church of the East (which began to split when the Church refused the condemnation of Nestorian heresy at the Council of Ephesus in 431 and did not recognise the Council of Chalcedon in 451).

It was found at a site believed to date to seventh and eighth century, first excavated in the early 1990s. The site contains buildings archaeologists have identified as a church and monastic living quarters.

At the time the monastery flourished, it was part of a network stretching across the area of modern-day Gulf states, including Kuwait, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

Maria Magdalena Gajewska, an archaeologist working with the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism, said the artefact was

discovered as part of the first major excavations since the site was first identified, and are the first ever of the monastery's living quarters.

"The site, the monastery, also included the first houses – there are about nine of them, to the north and northwest of the main church," Gajewska said in a video produced by the Abu Dhabi Media Office to publicise the find.

"We currently believe that this is where more senior monks lived and had periods of seclusion, practiced prayer, and mental and spiritual discipline, before reconvening with their brothers at the monastery," Gajewska said.

"This is a very exciting time for us," Gajewska also said, "because in the past, we have always assumed that these houses were part of a dispersed monastic settlement, but we never had concrete proof that they were actually inhabited by Christians."

The discovery of the plaster plaque with the moulded cross in one of the houses is therefore a significant find.

"We now have proof that these houses were indeed part of a Christian settlement," Gajewska said

The chairman of Abu Dhabi's Culture and Tourism Department, Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, called the discovery on Sir Bani Yas "a powerful testament to the UAE's profound and enduring values of coexistence and cultural openness." **CruX**



ST PETER'S CHURCH
A PARISH OF THE ROMAN
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
MALACCA JOHORE

"THE EUCHARIST AS A FORETASTE OF HEAVEN" FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS @ SANTA CRUZ CHAPEL, MALACCA

{ FROM 11TH SEPT – 14TH SEPT 2025 }

Thursday, 11.09.2025

7.00 pm i) Stations of the Cross
ii) Holy Mass in English
iii) Veneration of the Holy Cross
(ends at 11.00 pm)

Friday, 12.09.2025

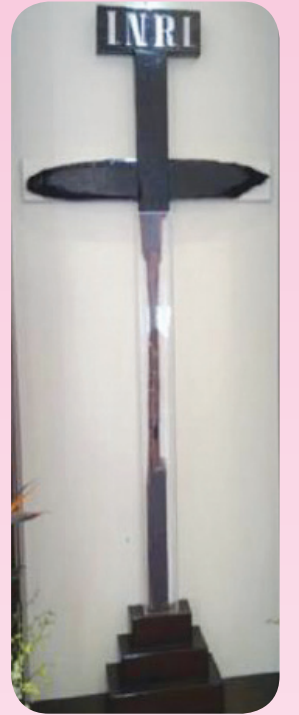
8.00 am : Veneration of the Holy Cross (stops at 6.00pm)
7.00 pm i) Chaplet of Divine Mercy
ii) Holy Mass in Tamil
iii) Veneration of the Holy Cross (ends at 11.00 pm)

Saturday, 13.09.2025

8.00 am i) Veneration of the Holy Cross (stops at 6.00 pm)
7.00 pm i) Eucharistic Adoration with Rosary
ii) Holy Mass in English
iii) Veneration of the Holy Cross (ends at 11.00 pm)

Sunday, 14.09.2025

7.00 am i) Holy Mass in Mandarin
9.00 am i) Holy Mass in English
ii) Veneration of the Holy Cross (ends at 2.00pm)



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TRIDUUM & SOLEMNITY OF St. Pio of Pietrelcina 2025

St. Pio
A SERVANT OF MERCY



HOLY TRIDUUM

Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram

Thursday | **18 September 2025** | 8PM
Theme | **A MAN OF PRAYER**

Friday | **19 September 2025** | 8PM
Theme | **A MAN OF HOPE**

Saturday | **20 September 2025** | 6PM
Theme | **A MAN OF TRUST**

SOLEMNITY OF ST. PIO OF PIETRELCINA

St. Pio's Spirituality Centre, Ulu Tiram

Sunday | **21 September 2025** | 10:30AM
Theme | **GOD'S MERCY AND LOVE**

Divine Mercy Devotion And Healing Prayers | 3PM

PREACHER
Friar Michael Raymond, OFM Cap.
Parish Priest of Divine Mercy,
Penang



Donations and contributions are most welcomed to defray the cost of the celebration of the Feast of St. Pio. Thank you for your generosity.

For directions to the Centre, kindly use Waze, come first to the Sanctuary Memorial Park, Ulu Tiram, and then to St. Pio's Friary & Spirituality Centre.



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