

63rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations



The interior discovery of God's gift

Dear sisters and brothers

Guided and protected by the Risen Jesus, we celebrate on the fourth Sunday of Easter — also called “Good Shepherd Sunday” — the 63rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations. It is an occasion of grace in which we share some reflections on the interior dimension of vocation, understood as the discovery of God’s free gift that blossoms in the depths of our hearts. Let us explore together the truly beautiful path of life along which the Shepherd guides us.

The way of beauty

In the Gospel of John, Jesus describes Himself as the “good shepherd” (ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός) (Jn 10:11). This expression refers to a shepherd who is perfect, authentic and exemplary, inasmuch as he is ready to give his life for his sheep, thus revealing God’s love. He is the Shepherd who draws us to Himself, whose gaze reveals that life is truly beautiful when one follows Him. Neither the eyes of the body nor aesthetic sensibilities alone are sufficient to recognise this beauty; rather, contemplation and interiority are required. Only the one who pauses, listens, prays and welcomes the Shepherd’s gaze can say with confidence: “I trust Him; life with Him can truly be beautiful. I want to walk this path of beauty.” What is most extraordinary is that, in becoming His disciple, one truly becomes “beautiful”; His beauty transforms us. As the theologian Pavel Florenskij wrote, asceticism does not produce a merely “good” person, but a “beautiful” one. [1] Indeed, more than goodness, the distinctive trait of the saint is the luminous spiritual beauty that radiates from his or her life in Christ. In this way, the Christian vocation reveals itself in all its depth as a participation in the life of Jesus, by sharing in His mission and reflecting His beauty.

This interior experience of life, faith and meaning was also that of St Augustine, who, in the third book of the *Confessions*, while acknowledging the sins and errors of his youth,

recognises God as “more inward than my most inward part.” [2] More than self-knowledge, Augustine discovers the beauty of the divine light that guides him in the darkness. Perceiving God’s presence in the innermost recesses of his soul, he came to understand the importance of caring for the interior life as a place of encounter with Christ, which is the way to experience the beauty and goodness of God in our own lives.

Such a relationship is based on prayer and silence, and when cultivated opens us to receive and actively respond to the gift of vocation. It is never an imposition or a one-size-fits-all model to which one merely conforms; instead, it is an adventure of love and happiness. Thus, on the basis of caring for the interior life, we must urgently recommence our vocational ministry and renew our commitment to evangelisation.

In light of this, I invite everyone — in families, parishes and religious communities, as well as bishops, priests, deacons, catechists, educators and all the faithful — to commit themselves more fully to creating conditions that allow this gift to be embraced, nourished, protected and accompanied, so that it may bear abundant fruit. Only when our surroundings are illumined by living faith, sustained by constant prayer and enriched by fraternal accompaniment can God’s call blossom and mature, becoming a path of happiness and salvation for individuals and for the world. By embarking on the path that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, shows us, we come to know more deeply both ourselves and the God who calls us.

Mutual awareness

“The Lord of life knows us and enlightens our hearts with his loving gaze.” [3] Indeed, every vocation begins with the awareness and experience of a God who is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:16). He knows us profoundly; He has counted the hairs of our head (cf. Mt 10:30) and has envisaged for each person a unique path of holiness and service. Yet this awareness must always be re-

ciprocally. We are invited to know God through prayer, listening to the Word, the Sacraments, the life of the Church and works of charity for our brothers and sisters. Like the young Samuel, who unexpectedly heard the voice of the Lord during the night and learned to recognise it with the help of Eli (cf. 1 Sam 3:1–10), we too must create a space for interior silence in order to hear what the Lord desires for our happiness. This is not a matter of lofty ideas or scholarly learning, but of a personal encounter that transforms one’s life. [4] God dwells in our hearts. A vocation entails an intimate dialogue with the One who calls and invites us to respond, despite the deafening noise of the world, with true joy and generosity.

Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas — “Do not go outside yourself. Return within yourself. Truth dwells in the inner person.” [5] Once again, St Augustine reminds us how important it is to learn to pause and to create space for interior silence, so that we may hear the voice of Jesus Christ.

Dear young people, listen to this voice! Listen to the voice of the Lord who invites you to a full and fruitful life, calling you to put your talents to use (cf. Mt 25:14–30) and to unite your limitations and weaknesses with the glorious cross of Christ. Make time, then, for Eucharistic adoration; meditate faithfully on the Word of God, so that you may put it into practice each day; and participate actively and fully in the sacramental and ecclesial life of the Church. In this way, you will come to know the Lord. Through the intimacy of His friendship, you will discover how to give of yourselves, whether through marriage, the priesthood, the permanent diaconate, or consecrated life. Every vocation is an immeasurable gift for the Church and for those who receive it with joy. To know the Lord means above all learning to entrust oneself to Him and to His providence, which is abundant in every vocation.

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Trusting the call

• Continued from the Front Page

Trust

Knowledge leads to confidence, a mindset that arises from faith and is essential both for welcoming one's vocation and for persevering in it. Indeed, life reveals itself as a continual act of trusting in the Lord and abandoning ourselves to Him, even when His plans unsettle our own.

Let us consider St Joseph, who, despite the mysterious and unexpected pregnancy of the Virgin, trusted the divine message revealed in a dream and welcomed Mary and her child with an obedient heart (cf. Mt 1:18-25; 2:13-15). Joseph of Nazareth is an example of complete trust in God's designs. He trusted even when everything around him seemed shrouded in darkness and uncertainty, when events appeared to diverge from his own plans. He trusted and abandoned himself to God, certain about the goodness and fidelity of the Lord. "In every situation, Joseph declared his own 'fiat', like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane." [6]

As the Jubilee of Hope reminded us, it is necessary to cultivate firm and steadfast trust in God's promises, without ever yielding to despair. We must overcome fears and doubts, confident that the Lord of history — both of the world and of our own personal story — is risen. He does not abandon us in our darkest hours, but comes to dispel every shadow with His light. Through the light and strength of His Spirit, even amid trials and crises, we can see our vocation

grow and mature, reflecting ever more fully the beauty of the One who has called us — a beauty shaped by fidelity and trust, despite our wounds and failures.

Maturation

Indeed, a vocation is not a fixed point, but a dynamic process of maturation sustained by intimacy with our Lord. To grow in one's vocation means being with Jesus, allowing the Holy Spirit to act in our hearts and in the circumstances of life, and reinterpreting everything in light of this gift.

Like the vine and the branches (cf. Jn 15:1-8), our whole lives must be rooted in a strong and vital bond with the Lord, so that we may more wholeheartedly respond to his call through our trials and necessary "pruning." The "places" where God's will is most manifest, and where we experience His infinite love, are often the authentic, fraternal bonds we establish throughout our lives. How precious it is to have a true spiritual guide to accompany us in the discovery and growth of our vocation! How important it is to discern and test the promptings of the Holy Spirit, so that a vocation can be brought to fruition in all its beauty!

A vocation, therefore, is not an immediate possession — something "given" once and for all. Instead, it is a path that unfolds much like life itself. The gift we have received must not only be protected but also nourished by a daily relationship with God in order to grow and bear fruit. "This is helpful, since it situates our whole life in



relation to the God who loves us. It makes us realise that nothing is the result of pure chance but that everything in our lives can become a way of responding to the Lord, who has a wonderful plan for us." [7]

Dear brothers and sisters, dear young people, I encourage you to cultivate your personal relationship with God through daily prayer and meditation on the Word. Pause, listen and entrust yourselves. In this way, the gift of your vocation will mature, bringing you happiness and yielding abundant fruit for the Church and the world.

May the Virgin Mary, model of the interior acceptance of divine gifts and expert in prayerful listening, always accompany you on this journey!

Leone PP. XIV

From the Vatican, March 16, 2026

[1] "Asceticism produces not a 'good' or 'kind' man but a beautiful one, and the distinguishing feature of the saintly ascetics is not their 'kindness,' which even people of the flesh, and very sinful ones, can possess, but spiritual beauty, the blinding beauty of a radiant, light-bearing person, a beauty wholly inaccessible to the man of flesh" (P. Florenskij, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, Princeton 1997, 72).

[2] St Augustine, *Confessions*, III, 6, 11: CSEL 33, 53.

[3] Apostolic Letter *A Fidelity that Generates the Future* (December 8, 2025), 5.

[4] cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (December 25, 2005), 1.

[5] St Augustine, *On True Religion*, XXXIX, 72: CCSL 32, 234.

[6] Francis, Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* (December 8, 2020), 3.

[7] Francis, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (March 25, 2019), 248.

From Yes to Mission!

On July 14, 2024, Handrie Lim, CSsR from Dalat, Sarawak and I, Nicholas Martin, CSsR from Kota Bahru, Kelantan made a life-changing commitment to live as Redemptorists by making the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. We were invested with the religious habit and we can now use the post-nominal "C.Ss.R." after our names. These signify how we have freely chosen to share Christ's mission to bring plentiful redemption to all people.

While our journeys began with our families and parishes in Malaysia — our Redemptorist missionary journey took

us to Singapore and the Philippines, and now Australia where we are doing our theological studies. While adapting to diverse cultures is demanding, it is essential in shaping us as missionaries.

Do you feel a call to join us and to share Christ's mission? Some people can be afraid to take the first step. However, we trust in God who called us and we count on the intercession of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. We continue forward in hope and gratitude — we would not have it any other way. And we pray that more from Malaysia will feel and respond to this call. **Nicholas Narin Martin, CSsR**

Is God calling you to seek Him in the secret inner room of your soul?

"...now we are telling you that you yourself are his dwelling and his secret inner room and hiding place. There is reason for you to be elated and joyful in seeing that all your good and hope is so close as to be within you, or better, that you cannot be without him."

—St John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle* 1, 7

For more information on the Discalced Carmelite Friars, please write to carmelitefriars.my@gmail.com



Bro Nicholas (left) with the Redemptorist community in Ipoh: Frs Paul Kee, Eugene Fernandez, Patrick Massang, Philip Lai. Sitting: Bro Handrie Lim, and Fr Joe Stephen.

A vocation of love, lived together



Christopher and Connie Cheah professing their vows.

Monica Steffani

On Saturday, April 11, the Church of St Joseph, Batu Gajah, Perak, witnessed a deeply moving and grace-filled moment as Christopher and Connie Cheah made their Perpetual Profession as members of the Holy Family Institute (HFI).

The sacred celebration, witnessed by Cardinal Sebastian Francis and Fr Francis Andrew, marked not only a milestone in the couple's journey, but also a powerful reminder that vocation within the Church takes many forms — including the sacred calling of marriage.

In a world where vocation is often associated solely with priesthood or religious life, the witness of Christopher and Connie highlights a profound truth: marriage itself is a sacred calling. Their lifelong commitment reflects a deep desire to live out their married life in fidelity to the Gospel, inspired by the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

A vocation within marriage

The Holy Family Institute is a secular institute within the Catholic Church, founded on the spirituality of the Holy Family of Nazareth. As part of the wider Pauline Family established by Blessed Fr James Alberione, it offers a unique vocation for lay people — including married couples, widows and widowers — to consecrate themselves to God while remaining in the world.

Members commit themselves to the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, lived according to their state of life. For married couples, this means deepening their love and fidelity within marriage, while striving for holiness through the ordinary rhythms of daily life.

It is a vocation that affirms that sanctity is not reserved for the few, but is possible within the



Cardinal Sebastian Francis presenting the certificate of Perpetual Profession to Christopher and Connie Cheah witnessed by Fr Francis Andrew.

home, within relationships, and within the responsibilities of everyday living.

A journey of discernment and fidelity

The path to perpetual profession is marked by prayer, discernment and gradual formation. For Christopher and Connie, this journey unfolded over nearly a decade.

They began their postulancy in December 2015, entering a period of initial discernment. This was followed by their admission into the novitiate in May 2017, a deeper stage of spiritual preparation. Their First Profession of Vows took place in Canfield, Ohio, in September 2019, and in the years that followed, they faithfully renewed their vows as they continued to grow in their vocation.

Now, through their Perpetual Profession, they have offered their lives fully to God — not apart from their marriage, but through it.

Reflecting on their journey, they shared, “We felt so blessed being called and chosen to devote

our lives to love God and live our lives by following the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth.”

A witness for the Church

Their “yes” stands as a gentle yet powerful witness that vocation is not limited to a particular path, but is ultimately about responding to God's call with love and fidelity.

In living out their vocation as husband and wife within the Holy Family Institute, Christopher and Connie remind us that marriage too is a path to holiness — where love, sacrifice and trust in God can transform ordinary lives into extraordinary testimonies of grace. Their witness is a quiet invitation to married couples to recognise their own vocation as a path to holiness.

As the Church celebrates Vocation Sunday, their witness invites us all to reflect: not simply on what we are called to do, but on who we are called to become.

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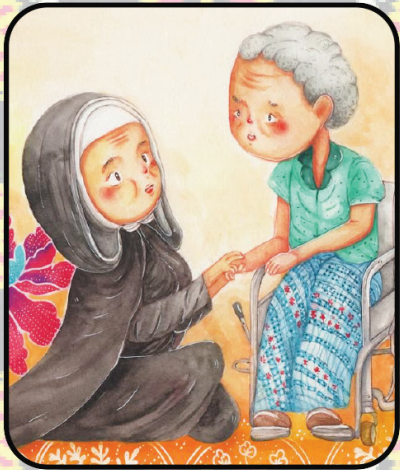
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"My little ones, never forget that the poor are Our Lord; in caring for the poor say to yourself: 'This is for my Jesus.... what a great grace!'".

St. Jeanne Jugan



Come & See



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Called from the margins

My journey of faith

Fr Brywinedren Godon

Reflecting on my vocation, I often recall Nathanael's question in John 1:46: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" He spoke out of doubt when told that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. Nazareth was a humble and insignificant place, far from what one might expect of the Messiah's origin. In many ways, I too once shared that doubt.

I was raised as a Catholic in a small and remote village — Kampung Laboi in Maraba. With only a handful of families, even visiting priests were surprised that a church existed there. Because of the distance from our main parish, St Valentine Church Beaufort, a small church was built to serve our community.

Life was simple, and priestly visits were rare. I still remember our old bamboo church, modest, yet alive with faith. Everything began to change when a young priest, Fr Gilbert Lasius, was assigned to the parish.

Fr Gilbert worked tirelessly with the people of St Joseph Laboi to build a new church. Together, we cleared land, laid foundations, and even built a bridge. At that time, my brother Brymen and I were waiting for our STPM and SPM results, and we spent our afternoons helping with the construction.

Back then, I saw priests almost like angels, distant and extraordinary. But through Fr Gilbert's simplicity and closeness, my perception began to change.

When the new church was completed, we eagerly asked him to celebrate Mass before its formal blessing, and he agreed. During that



first Mass, he said, "How beautiful it would be if a priest were to come from St Joseph Laboi."

I remember wondering quietly, "We are just ordinary villagers... how could a priest come from a place like this?"

At the time, I did not dwell on those words. I continued my studies and hoped to become a teacher, like many in my family. Although my STPM results in 2009 were not outstanding, I qualified for my dream university, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.

My plan was simple: become a teacher, get married, and live a modest but happy life.

But God had other plans.

I was not called for the UPSI interview, and the disappointment was deep. I later enrolled at Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam in a course I did not love, and eventually worked in several private companies, searching, though I did not fully realise it then, for something more.

One day, while home in the village, my father said, "There's a vocation seminar in Bundu Tuhan. Sign up and go." I agreed, though without serious intention.

At the seminar, I felt out of place among participants who seemed more prayerful and certain. I thought, "I don't belong here." If I could, I would have left immediately.

But God's plan is always beautiful.

At my lowest moment, I met an old friend, Wilson Francis, then a seminarian in Kuching. His sharing became a turning point. That night, I prayed sincerely, "Lord, if You want me, take me."

During the interview, Fr Bonaventure Unting simply said, "Your age is just right. Your qualifications are sufficient. Go and try

in Kota Kinabalu this February." And so, my seminary journey began.

Even then, I doubted I would last. I faced many challenges — lack of Confirmation, financial burdens, and personal struggles. Yet it was here that I encountered God's grace. With the support of my family and guidance from Fr. Wilfred Atin, I prepared for Confirmation at Sacred Heart Cathedral Kota Kinabalu.

During the Easter Vigil in 2018, I received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Archbishop John Wong Soo Kau. From that moment, I experienced deeply that God was walking with me.

For me, Jesus is not just a figure of faith, He is truly my Friend.

A fellow seminarian once told me, "I really like how you speak about Jesus. It feels like you're talking about your friend."

And I would simply laugh and reply, "He is my Friend!"

Seminary life was not easy. There were academic struggles, community challenges, spiritual dryness, financial hardship, and painful moments during the COVID season, including being detained and brought to court, as well as the loss of my beloved mother. Yet, through all these, I was formed.

Out of 21 aspirants who began in 2017, I was the only one who completed the full eight-and-a-half years of formation. Truly, "many are called, but few are chosen."

I encourage parents and young people to remain open to God's call. Do not be afraid. Everything unfolds according to His plan.

I did not become a priest because I am worthy or perfect. I am a sinner and always will be. But I trust that God will continue to guide and strengthen me each day.

Finally, I thank my parents, family, clergy, religious, catechists, and all who have supported me along this journey.

May God bless you all. Amen.

● Fr Brywinedren Godon was ordained on February 15, 2026

Clergy celebrating milestones

In our Church, those called to the priestly vocation serve as shepherds of God's people and pillars within their parish communities. The faithful turn to them for guidance, encouragement, and spiritual nourishment as they journey in faith.

As we mark Vocations Sunday, we take this opportunity to honour and give thanks for the clergy who are celebrating jubilees of their priestly ordination. These milestones — ranging from 25 to 60 years of dedicated ministry — stand as a testament to their enduring fidelity and generous response to God's call.

Throughout the decades, these priests have walked closely with their parishioners in moments of joy and sorrow, offering counsel, celebrating the sacraments, and fostering communities of faith, hope, and charity. Their lives of service have helped to nurture and sustain vibrant parish communities, becoming a source of strength and inspiration to many.

Today, we thank them for their unwavering commitment, and the role they have played in helping nourish and cultivate a warm environment in their parishes. As servants and instruments of God's grace, their witness has touched countless lives.

May their example continue to inspire others to listen to God's call and to live out their Christian vocation with faith, courage, and compassion. Let us keep them in our prayers, that they may be blessed with good health, renewed strength, and the wisdom to continue serving the Church for years to come.

Mark Charles

NAME	DATE	YEARS	DIOCESE
Fr Francis Tsen	09.01.66	60	Kota Kinabalu
Rt. Rev Paul Tan Chee Ing, SJ	21.06.71	55	Malacca Johore
Fr Cosmas Lee	27.12.76	50	Kota Kinabalu
Msgr Stephen Liew	03.09.81	45	Penang
Fr Stephen Lim	07.08.81	45	Kuching
Fr Peter Abas	02.02.86	40	Kota Kinabalu
Fr Boniface Kimsin	04.11.91	35	Keningau
Fr Erik Patrick Jerome	06.01.91	35	Kota Kinabalu
Fr Jerome Juleng	1991	35	Kuching
Fr Joseph Sebastian	28.05.91	35	Sibu
Fr Raymond Pereira	05.11.91	35	Kuala Lumpur
Fr Christopher W. Soosaipillai	21.11.96	30	Kuala Lumpur
Fr Fabian Felix Dicom	12.06.96	30	Penang
Fr Ferdinand Magimay	21.11.96	30	Kuala Lumpur
Fr Lazoros Uhin	11.11.96	30	Keningau
Fr Paul Chee	01.01.96	30	Sibu
Fr Andy Lee	2001	25	Miri
Fr Anthony Mikat	27.05.01	25	Keningau
Fr Bonaventure Unting	30.05.01	25	Keningau
Fr Henry Louis Rajoo	19.01.01	25	Penang
Fr Jalius Sading	04.06.01	25	Kota Kinabalu
Fr Joseph Ng Swee Chun, SJ	2001	25	Kuching
Fr Lazarus Swinie	26.03.01	25	Kuching
Fr Mark Michael	26.03.01	25	Penang
Fr Ramon Borja SDB	08.12.01	25	Kuching

Fr Francis Tsen

Sixty years of a quiet 'yes'

Joseph Tek Choon Yee

Some vocations begin with thunder. Others begin with a question asked gently, almost in passing, and answered with the simplicity of a child. The story of Fr Francis Tsen belongs to that quieter kind.

As he marked his Diamond (60th) Sacerdotal Anniversary in January 2026, what shines through is not drama but fidelity: a long, grace-filled yes to God, lived through decades of prayer, study, sacrifice and pastoral service. He was ordained on January 9, 1966 at Sacred Heart Church, Jesselton, by Bishop James Buis. Sixty years later, that first 'yes' still speaks.

Born on Sept 20, 1941 in Tuaran, Francis Tsen was the youngest in a family of eight. His early life was marked by sorrow. His father, a clerk at the Tuaran Rubber Estate at Sungai Damit, was killed at Petagas in the Japanese reprisals following the 1944 Double Ten Rebellion, and his mother died not long after. The boy who would one day stand at the altar was thus formed early by loss and uncertainty.

Yet grace often works quietly through wounded beginnings. His life thereafter unfolded in mission settings: first at Sacred Heart Primary School in Jesselton, then at St

Anthony's Boys School in Labuan, and later at the minor seminary in Jesselton. In a very real sense, the Church became the home in which his vocation was sheltered and slowly nurtured.

At St Anthony's Boarding School in Labuan, he came under the care of Fr Willibrord Smit. There came the question that changed everything. Fr Smit asked him whether he wished to be a priest. The answer was yes. It was not dramatic; it was decisive. Fr Francis would later recall that from then on, he never looked back.

At 13, Fr Willibrord arranged for him to enter the seminary in Jesselton as a mini-minor seminarian. It is a striking reminder that vocation is often born not in spectacle, but in the patient accompaniment of someone who sees what a young soul may become before the world does.

After completing Form Five in 1956, he entered St Francis Xavier Seminary in Singapore in 1957 for three years of minor seminary formation. He then continued at College General, Penang, from 1960 to 1965. Those years placed him within a wider ecclesial generation that would help shape the Church in Sabah, including senior seminarians such as the late Bishop Simon Fung and Archbishop Emeritus John Lee.



Fr Francis Tsen (left) with Archbishop John Wong in 2016.

His path to priesthood was not hurried. It was built on years of formation, discipline and discernment.

His priestly life then unfolded across many places. After ordination in January 1966, he served first in Keningau in 1966 and then in Tenom from 1967 to 1968, before pursuing licentiate studies in Biblical Theology in Rome from 1969 to 1973. He later lectured at College General in Penang from 1974 to 1979, and went on to serve in Tenom, Beaufort, Tanjung Aru, Tawau, Sandakan, Port Dickson and Ranau. It is a ministry that joined learning to service, study to shepherding. Fr Francis was not only a parish priest; he was also a man of the Word, one who studied it deeply and then carried it back to the people in the ordinary places where faith is lived.

One image captures the soul of his vocation especially well. He has kept the chalice given to him by Bishop Buis on the day of his ordination. Whenever he looks at it, he said, it reminds him of Christ's question in Matthew

20:22: "Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?" That memory is both beautiful and searching. Priesthood is not only honour; it is also surrender. It is not merely standing at the altar, but allowing one's life to be gradually poured out in service. Over sixty years, Fr Francis Tsen has borne that cup with quiet steadiness.

When Archbishop John Wong spoke at Fr Francis' Golden Jubilee in Ranau in 2016, one word came to his mind: fidelity. It was the right word then, and it is even truer now. Fidelity is not flashy. It does not ask for applause. But in the life of a priest, it becomes one of the most eloquent forms of witness.


As the Church gives thanks for Fr Francis Tsen's sixty years of priesthood, it honours a man shaped by suffering, called through kindness, formed by the Church, and sustained by grace. His vocation story reminds us that God still calls quietly, and that a simple yes, lived faithfully over a lifetime, can become something radiant.

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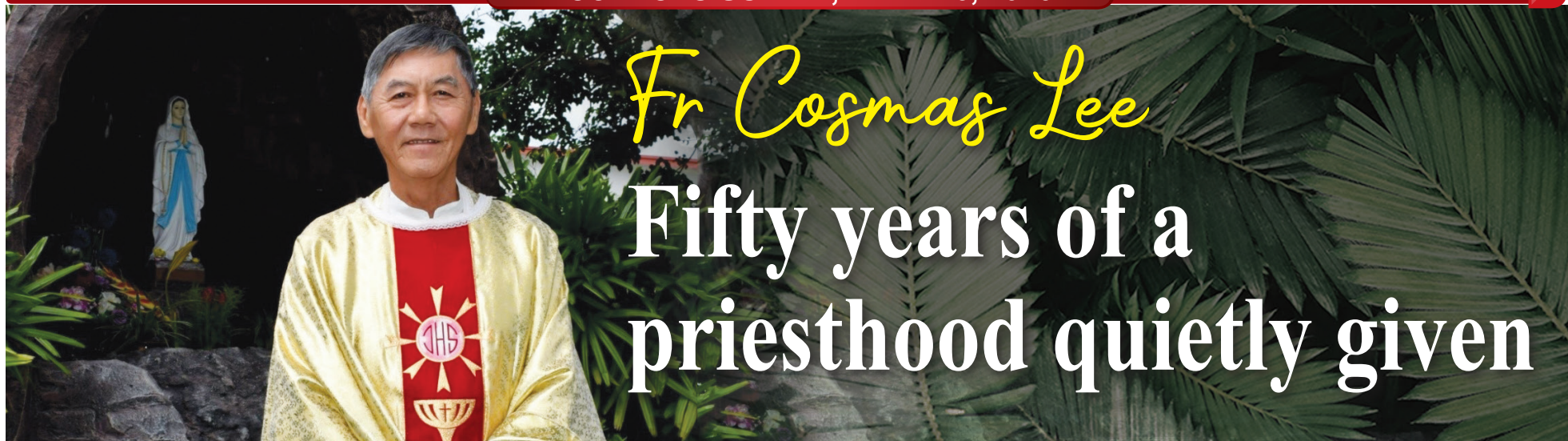
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Fr Cosmas Lee

Fifty years of a priesthood quietly given

Joseph Tek Choon Yee

Some vocations arrive dramatically. Others grow almost in silence, like a seed that has long been hidden but is slowly, steadily, finding its season. The priestly life of Fr Cosmas Lee seems to belong to that second kind.

As he approaches his golden (50th) sacerdotal anniversary in December 2026, what emerges is not a story of spectacle, but of depth: a vocation shaped by family, formed by the Church, deepened by study, and lived with that rare combination of intelligence, gentleness and steady pastoral presence. He was ordained priest on December 27, 1976 by Bishop Simon Fung.

Born on May 31, 1950 in Jesselton, now Kota Kinabalu, Cosmas Lee Khod Min was the eldest of eleven children. That fact alone says something. In large families, the eldest often learns early that love is not merely affection but responsibility. One learns to notice, to help, to guide, to absorb. Those early domestic lessons seem to have left a lasting mark on him. Long before Rome,

London or parish administration, there was already the school of family life. And later, reflecting on his vocation, Fr Cosmas would say with beautiful simplicity that it all began there: in the family, which he called the domestic church.

As a young man, he spent much time at Sacred Heart Church among the priests. What he saw in them did not repel him with distance or grandeur; it attracted him through pastoring. He remembered them as wonderful fathers. That image mattered. It helped him understand his own place as eldest son at home, and it stirred in him a desire not merely for a profession, but for a form of spiritual fatherhood. He wanted, as he later put it, to be father not just to one family, but to many. That is a striking insight into vocation.

At 17, he left Sabah for St Francis Xavier Minor Seminary in Singapore. Later, in 1971, he went to Rome to study philosophy, completing his baccalaureate in 1973. Formation then took him onward to St Joseph's College, Mill Hill, London, where he completed his theological studies.

He was ordained deacon on May 8, 1976, and later that same year, on Dec 27, he was ordained priest on the Feast of St John the Evangelist. It was a fitting providence, for in later years, Fr Cosmas reflected on St John as one who bore witness to what he had truly seen and heard and believed. That emphasis on witness, rather than display, seems to have run like a quiet thread through his whole priesthood.

His ministry took him through different places, responsibilities and seasons. He himself later acknowledged with gratitude that he had been given the opportunity to study in several places and travel widely. With candour, he admitted that in younger years there could be a temptation to measure ministry by visible busyness. But over time, he came to value something deeper: not mere movement, but presence; not noise, but the patient work of shepherding souls.

That interior ripening found perhaps its most fitting home at St Simon Catholic Church, Likas. He began serving there as rector on June 1, 2008, and it became the longest chapter of his active parish life, lasting about 17 years until his retirement from active priestly ministry took effect on Jan 1, 2026. By then, the parish had become more than an assignment. It was the place where his priesthood seemed most distilled: calm, thoughtful and quietly fatherly.

What made Fr Cosmas especially endearing was that his seriousness never excluded

humour. In one anniversary reflection at St Simon, he joked about growing older and asked his people to pray that he would not become a grumpy old man. The remark drew smiles, but it also revealed something real: he never hid behind clerical stiffness. He understood that priesthood does not erase humanity; it purifies and enlarges it. In that same reflection he returned to the central truth that had shaped him from the beginning: a good family is a great gift, and the family remains the first school of faith.

Even beyond parish ministry, his vocation carried another important dimension: memory. In March 2025, public reports highlighted the launch of his book *Ultimate Sacrifice*, the fruit of 15 years of painstaking research into the deaths of Catholic missionaries in North Borneo during the final phase of the WWII. That long labour showed something distinctive in him. He was not only pastor and preacher, but also custodian of memory – one who believed that truth matters, that sacrifice should not be forgotten and that honouring the dead can itself be a form of pastoral fidelity.

So, when the Church celebrates Fr Cosmas Lee's Golden Jubilee in December 2026, it will be doing more than marking the passage of years. It will be giving thanks for a priesthood first nurtured in family, strengthened by formation, widened by experience and refined through long service into something beautifully simple: presence.

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A vocation of service to the diocese: *Auxiliary of the Apostolate*

The Auxiliary of the Apostolate is a vocation for lay single women called to be channels of God's love, sharing in the pastoral mission of the Bishop within the diocese. Representing Christ, the Bishop calls each auxiliary to be his apostle: one who lives a life totally given to God, drawing from Him and living for Him alone. In generous service, auxiliaries offer their time, charisms, and resources for the building of God's Kingdom.

In Malaysia, this vocation took root through a providential encounter. In 1983, then Archbishop Soter Fernandez visited the International Centre for Formation of Auxiliaries in Lourdes, France, to learn more about this calling. The centre serves as a place where bishops can send women for ongoing formation, both before and after they are called as auxiliaries. Moved by what he encountered, Archbishop Soter

recognised the potential of this vocation for the local Church and began introducing it within the Malaysian context.

Since then, the Auxiliary of the Apostolate has gradually grown, shaped by the needs of the Church and guided by the Bishop's pastoral vision. Women who discern this call respond with a generous "yes," embracing a path that allows them to remain in the world while belonging entirely to God.

Today, auxiliaries serve in a wide range of ministries across the diocese. Their mission is not confined to a single role but responds to where the need is greatest. They are involved in catechetical formation, parish coordination, youth and family ministry, administrative work, and outreach to the poor and marginalised. In each space, they become a steady and faithful presence, supporting the life and mission of the Church.



The beauty of the diocesan priesthood

Fr Simon Labrooy

Every year on Good Shepherd Sunday, the Church invites us not simply to think about vocations, but to listen again. In the midst of daily life, the Gospel speaks clearly: "I am the Good Shepherd. I know My sheep and My sheep know Me" (Jn 10:14). Christ continues to shepherd His people today — often through ordinary men drawn into an extraordinary closeness with God and His people.

The diocesan priest is chosen from among the people and sent back to serve them. His life unfolds within the rhythm of parish life: baptising, blessing marriages, guiding the young, and accompanying the sick and grieving. In these moments, Christ the Shepherd remains present.

Rooted in a local Church, the priest belongs to a community with its own culture and hopes. He is a familiar presence — one who knows names, remembers stories, and carries his people in prayer. In a world that often feels impersonal, he reflects a God who remains close.

At the heart of the priesthood is a deep interior life. Before he is a minister, the priest is a disciple. His vocation begins in friendship with Christ, sustained by prayer, Scripture, and the Eucharist. When this relationship is alive, his ministry becomes a channel of grace. The first call is simply "to be with Him."

This vocation is lived in communion. Through his obedience to the bishop, the priest shares in the Church's mission, building unity within diversity.

The priest encounters Christ within everyday life — among families, youth, migrants,

and the elderly. In a world marked by quiet loneliness, he becomes a sign that God has not withdrawn. Whether at hospital beds, in the confessional, or at the altar, his presence speaks of a God who remains near.

Priestly life carries sacrifice, yet within it is a deep joy: witnessing lives transformed and standing at the Eucharist, where heaven touches earth.

The Church still needs shepherds. The question is not whether God calls, but whether we are listening. Vocation often begins quietly — a stirring within the heart, an invitation: "Follow Me."

Discernment is not about pressure, but accompaniment — helping one discover where God is leading. Many vocations take root in families where faith is lived with sincerity.

Every member of the Church shares in nurturing vocations — through prayer, encouragement, and witness. For every calling begins with a deeper question: "Do you love Me?"

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, may we listen once more to Christ who still calls. The Shepherd walks among His people — and perhaps even now, He is calling new shepherds from among us.

Before you exit this article, pause and pray:

Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd, raise up shepherds after Your own Heart. Give courage to those You call, wisdom to guide them, and generous hearts to follow You. May our Church be a home where vocations are discovered and embraced with joy.

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VOCATION SUNDAY 2026

Good Shepherd Sunday — World Day of Prayer for Vocations

Shepherds Among the People

The Beauty of the Diocesan Priesthood



The Shepherd Still Walking Among Us

"I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me."

— John 10:14

- Called From Among the People
- A Ministry of Presence
- The Cost and the Joy
- A Voice Still Calling...

Are We Listening?

Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

A Listening Church Awakens Vocations

Contact the Diocesan Vocation Director, Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur:

Rev. Fr. Simon Labrooy, revsimonlabrooy@gmail.com



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