

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.

1 Cor. 2:1-3



**Education in mission schools brings hope to the poor and weak**

P5



**Para Uskup Malaysia lancar Caritas Malaysia**

BM8

**INSIDE**

- 'Unusual kindness' breaks down walls and prejudices **P14**
- Young Adult, get involved in your parish **P16**

先鋒報 P18-20

இறைத்தூதன் கத்தோலிக்க வார இதழ் P21-22

# For Religious, God's love is worth more than any earthly goods

**VATICAN:** When one is totally in love with the Lord, then poverty, chastity and obedience are not sacrifices, but vehicles of freedom, Pope Francis told consecrated men and women.

Celebrating the World Day for Consecrated Life, Pope Francis urged women and men religious to be people of hope, and he asked all Catholics to pray for the hundreds of thousands of women and men who continue to consecrate their lives totally to serving God and their brothers and sisters.

Led by candle-bearing men and women from a variety of religious orders, Pope Francis processed into a darkened St Peter's Basilica Feb 1 for a vigil celebration of Candlemas — the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord — and the Vatican celebration of the World Day for Consecrated Life.

And, on the feast day itself, Feb 2, he spoke about how every member of the Church has a role to play in sharing the good news of salvation in Christ.

In his homily at the Mass with religious the evening before, Pope Francis focused on the figures of Simeon and Anna, who were present in the Temple when Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus. Simeon and Anna, who dedicated their lives to prayer, recognised Jesus as



Pope Francis uses holy water as he celebrates a Mass marking the World Day for Consecrated Life in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Feb 1, 2020. (CNS photo/Stefano Dal Pozzolo, pool)

the Messiah.

Simeon says that he can die in peace because he had seen "the grace that was worth more than life," the Pope said.

Religious men and women and consecrated virgins also "caught sight of the treasure worth more than any worldly good," Pope Francis said. "And so, you left behind precious things such as possessions, such as making a family

for yourselves."

"You fell in love with Jesus, you saw everything in him and, enraptured by his gaze, you left the rest behind. Religious life is this vision," he said.

A key to perseverance and joy in religious life is to be always aware of the presence of God's grace, the Pope told the religious. "The tempter, the devil, focuses on our 'poverty,' our

empty hands," the things one did not achieve, the lack of recognition and the struggles one has had.

A temptation that every Christian, including religious, experiences is that of seeing life in a "worldly way" rather than focusing on God's grace at work. When that happens, the Pope said, people go off "in search of something to substitute for it: a bit of fame, a consoling affection, finally getting to do what I want."

Focus on God's enduring love is the only antidote, the Pope said. "If consecrated life remains steadfast in love for the Lord, it perceives beauty. It sees that poverty is not some colossal effort but, rather, a higher freedom that God gives to us and others as real wealth. It sees that chastity is not austere sterility, but the way to love without possessing. It sees that obedience is not a discipline, but is victory over our own chaos, in the way of Jesus."

Simeon was able to recognise the Messiah because he had been looking for him, the Pope said. He never lost hope.

"Looking around, it is easy to lose hope: things that don't work, the decline in vocations," the Pope said, but a life devoid of hope is a worldly one, not one focused on Jesus and trust in God's love and fidelity.

"We become blind if we do not look to the Lord every day, if we do not adore him," the Pope told the religious. "Adore the Lord." — **By Cindy Wooden, CNS**

## Vatican donates masks to China to combat coronavirus

VATICAN CITY: The Vatican has donated thousands of protective masks to several Chinese provinces affected by the outbreak of the deadly coronavirus.

The Vatican press office confirmed a report that appeared in the Chinese newspaper *The Global Times*, which said that since Jan 27, the Vatican has sent between 600,000 and 700,000 protective masks to China.

"The masks are destined for the provinces of Hubei, Zhejiang and Fujian. It is a joint initiative of the Office of Papal Charities and the Chinese Church in Italy, in collaboration with the Vatican pharmacy."



Catholics celebrate Mass at Hong Kong's Catholic Cathedral with protective masks Feb 2, 2020. (CNS Photo/Francis Wong)

Chinese Fr Vincenzo Han Duo, vice rector of Rome's Pontifical Urbanian College, said the donation was made possible with the help of Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, the papal almoner.

The masks were paid for by the Vatican and Chinese Christian communities in Italy, while airline companies, including China Southern Airlines, provided free shipment, the report said.

"I hope the supplies can reach where they are needed as soon as possible, so that people who are suffering the disease can feel the concern from the Holy See. The whole world is standing together to fight the virus," said Fr Han.

During his Sunday Angelus address on Jan

26, Pope Francis expressed condolences to the victims of the virus and his support for efforts to fight its spread.

"I wish to be close to and pray for the people who are sick because of the virus that has spread through China," he said. "May the Lord welcome the dead into his peace, comfort families and sustain the great commitment by the Chinese community that has already been put in place to combat the epidemic." — **By Junno Arocho Esteves, CNS**

● Turn to Pages 3 & 4 for the Pastoral Responses from the various Arch/Dioceses on Novel Coronavirus 2019

# Move towards a more progressive taxation system

St Francis of Assisi was well known for his “preferential option for the poor”, eight centuries before our time.

When Francis heard a voice telling him repair to the church as it was “falling into ruins”, he took it literally, thinking that the Lord meant him to physically repair ruined churches.

Now, Francis’ father was one of the wealthiest cloth merchants in the region, and so Francis took some of his cloth and sold it to raise money for a church that was in disrepair. The priest rightfully refused to accept the money.

By now Francis was dressed in rags, having grown disillusioned with wealth and the “good life”. When his father found him, he received a thrashing for bringing “shame” to the family, and Francis was then dragged before the bishop. Before a shocked crowd, Francis returned whatever he had taken from his father including his own clothes, and then renounced his family inheritance.

Like Jesus, Francis simply could not bear to see the poor and the sick suffering around him. He probably felt that his father had more than enough wealth, and selling some of it for a good cause would not hurt.

These days, we don’t have to resort to such drastic measures for the public good – a progressive taxation system will take care of the welfare of the least, the lost and

**Sunday Observer**

By  
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the most vulnerable in society.

Unfortunately, a recent report by the UK charity, Oxfam, makes for grim reading: “The world’s 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up 60 per cent of the planet’s population.”

And the inequality is getting worse.

This worsening disparity in wealth is also helped by governments under-taxing super wealthy companies and individuals, including the billionaires.

As a result of insufficient tax income, many governments don’t have enough money to finance essential services such as public healthcare and education.

Some people argue that if you tax the rich more, especially the billionaires, the economy will suffer.

But that is not quite true. In the 1950s, the US thrived even when the top tax rate was 90 per cent for those earning more than US\$200,000. Even if we use the effective tax rate (which was 42 per cent) that the top 1 per cent of the population paid dur-

ing that period, it is still much higher than the effective rate of 36.4 per cent they were paying in 2014 (Jordan Weissmann, 2017, *slate.com*).

And there are many more wealthier people today who are paying lower effective tax rates.

Let’s look closer at Malaysia. Forty years ago, in the Supply Bill 1980, it was stated that the new top marginal income tax rate would be 55 per cent for those earning more than M\$75,000. Compare that to what we have now. The top marginal tax rate is just 30 per cent and that too, only for those earning more than RM2m per year.

On top of that, estate duty used to be 5 per cent for those above RM2m and 10 per cent on inheritances above RM4m. But that was abolished in 1991.

As in the US in the 1950s, the Malaysian economy actually boomed in the 1970s despite the heavier taxes on the wealthy. Hospitals and schools catered for the majority of the public, at minimal charge, even though they were not as sophisticated

as the private hospitals and international or private schools of today.

Today, with lower taxes for the rich and low wages for the majority, the economy is lethargic.

Wealth is even taken out of the country through illicit financial outflows. The wealthy are also able to hire tax consultants to avoid taxes using legal means. They can also squirrel away their wealth – or money launder their ill-gotten gains – via tax havens, undetected by enforcement agencies.

Instead of paying more taxes, companies prefer “corporate social responsibility” schemes while billionaires revel in philanthropy. The problem with these is that they often don’t reach as many people as money paid through taxes will (provided corruption can be reduced).

As Dutch journalist and historian Rutger Bregman said: “Just stop talking about philanthropy and start talking about taxes. ... We can invite Bono once more, but we’ve got to be talking about taxes. That’s it. Taxes, taxes, taxes. All the rest is bull\*\*\*\* in my opinion.”

So we really need to review our taxation system to reduce disparities and raise tax revenue. Our universities, public hospitals and rural schools need more funds, while the lower-income group and vulnerable communities could do with more welfare assistance.

## Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time: The Wisdom of God

I want to begin today with some thoughts regarding the ancient civilisation of Greece. When we think about the ancient Greeks, certain images come to our mind. We think about the beautiful temples. We think about the wonderful and still meaningful Greek dramas. And, we think about Greek philosophy.

The Greeks were very serious about philosophy, far more than we are today, unfortunately. When St Paul visited Greece, he found that many of the Greeks were firmly entrenched in the camps of several philosophers. For example, there were those who followed Heraclitus and believed that the world was always in a constant state of change. There were those who followed Parmenides who claimed that the world was unchangeable. There were the followers of Plato who spoke about the inner recollection we all have of an ideal world. The world according to Plato was a combination of what our minds could make of it and reality. There were the followers of Aristotle who said that the world is as it appears. Reality exists, and we are capable of understanding it.

Paul came to these people without having any particular knowledge of the major Greek philosophers. You can understand why he came to these intelligentsia in fear and trembling. “What line of thinking are you employing?” the Greek citizen would ask Paul. “In what philosophy is your wisdom based?” To these Paul states in the second reading for today, “My message and my preaching has none of the persuasive force of ‘wise’ argumentation. Instead it has the convincing power of the Holy Spirit.” Then

he reminds the Christians at Corinth, “As a result, your faith rests not on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.”

Philosophy is good, important and necessary, but the wisdom of philosophy is infinitely inferior to the power of God. This is Paul’s message to the new Christians at Corinth. It is his message to us as we are continually tempted to underestimate the value of our faith.

Sometimes we come upon our modern intelligentsia who will lay claim to the term of being wise because they have studied Kant, or Kierkegaard, or are well acquainted with the writings and beliefs of the East, the Buddhists or Hindus, or the Moslems, etc. An arrogant intellectual might ask: “You mean you haven’t read Stephen Hawking’s *A Brief History of Time*?” The assumption would be that if we had read and understood that book we would be a lot wiser. This is not true. Having a grasp of all the knowledge there is in the world and all the great theories of the greatest of the philosophers may help develop our intellectual capacity and give us a clearer understanding of the world, but if this were the basis of our wisdom, then we would not be wise. Instead, we would be fools. To the Christian, wisdom is not based on any person other than the person of Jesus Christ. Our wisdom is not lost in some document past or present, our wisdom is alive, because the Power of God lives.

Our wisdom is based not on theory but on faith.

I want to tell you a little story that illustrates this. This is a story about identical twin girls, Amy and Annie. The twins, Amy and An-

### Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

#### 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Readings: Isaiah 58:7-10;

1 Corinthians 2:1-5;

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-16

nie, were about one month away from their birth. Life was very pleasant for the twins. There was a constant source of food for each of them, even if sometimes it was a little spicier than they wanted. Their home was warm and comfortable. It seemed to move around a lot, but they were in lovely, velvety soft water, so they didn’t mind it. They slept and played. One of their favourite games was kickboxing. One day, they got into an argument. Amy said she was sure looking forward to the day when she could see the Mommy face to face. Annie said, “How do you know there is a Mommy?” Amy said, well of course there is a Mommy, look at how wonderful our life is. We couldn’t have this if there was no Mommy.” Annie said, “Well, if there is a Mommy: show her to me. If I can’t see the Mommy, I don’t believe there is a Mommy.” Amy could not show Annie the Mommy, but she could feel her presence and her love. The discussion and argument went on for about a month. Amy used to say to Annie, “You have to believe, you have to trust. There is more to life than meets the eye.” And Annie would respond, “Stop being so simple, so naive. Use your mind and put your trust only in that which your mind can discover.” Then one day their world became quite unsettled. The walls started squeezing them into a small space. Amy cried out, “Mommy I know you are out there. I need you now.” Annie just cried and cried. She was at a total loss trying to understand what was happening. Her mind could not explain it. She was full of fear. Fi-

nally, she called out, “Mommy, I hope you exist because I am afraid and need someone to calm my fear.” And the twins were born. After the initial shock of it all, they both felt the warmth and the love they had felt in their former home. And Annie realised that Amy was right. There is a Mommy, and the warmth and love she felt before and feels now was the very presence of the Mommy.

Paul is telling the people of Corinth and us that the reality which we do not see is more powerful, more certain, a deeper truth than the reality that we do see. The wisdom that our minds cannot come to is infinitely superior to the wisdom that is based solely on our intellectual capacity.

When sickness, trauma or tragedy hits us; when our loved ones become ill, injured or die; it is Jesus Christ and Christ alone who brings order to the chaos of our lives. We are people who have been enlightened by Christ. Jesus Christ is God’s answer to every question that has ever been or ever can be posed. We are called today to reveal the true wisdom of the Lord to the world. The wisdom not based on great intellects, but on the power of God. The world needs this still new wisdom. Enlightened by Christ, we are the light of the world. — *By Msgr Joseph A Pellegrino*



**Malaysian Bishops' Diaries February 2020**

**ARCHBISHOP JULIAN LEOW  
KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE**

11 **AOHD Board Meeting**

**BISHOP BERNARD PAUL  
MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE**

11 **Mission Pastoral Institute Meeting – MAJODI**

11 **MJ Diocesan Animating Team Meeting – MAJODI**

12 **South Johor Vicariate Pastoral Council – Sacred Heart Cathedral, Johor Bahru**

15-16 **Weekend With Rabboni 1 – Oasis, Kluang**

**BISHOP SEBASTIAN FRANCIS  
PENANG DIOCESE**

11 **Penang Diocesan Finance Committee (PDFC) – Pusat**

16 **Mass - Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Sabah – Penang**

# Visitation parishioners bid farewell to Fr George Harrison

SEREMBAN: The Church of the Visitation bid farewell to their Parish Priest, Fr George Harrison on December 31. He had served in the parish for the last four and a half years. Fr George has been appointed to serve the Dicastery for Promoting Human Development under the Roman Curia in the Vatican. Assistant Parish Priest, Fr Xavier Andrew, was appointed as the Parish Priest of the Church of the Visitation and Friar Kenneth Gopal OCD as Assistant Parish Priest effective January 1.

On New Year's Eve 2019, Fr George presided at the 8.00 pm multi-lingual Mass. The Mass was concelebrated with Fr Xavier, Friar Fr Kenneth and Fr Christopher Loh.

In his homily, Fr George asked the congregation to recall the numerous blessings that they had received from God throughout the year 2019. The Church, he said was given this day, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, who gave us Jesus. Fr George said Jesus continues to bless us as we usher in the New Year. Referring to the simple shepherds who saw baby Jesus in the manger on Christmas day, Fr George said that our lives too must be simple, always ready to listen, reflect and pray. As the Church also celebrates World Day of Peace, it is hoped that peace will be in our hearts, in our homes and in the world. He concluded his homily by urging all to be a blessing to one another.

At the end of the Mass, representatives from the Languages Apostolates namely Ignatius Wong (Mandarin), Eruthayana-



From L to R: Bro Joseph Savage, Friar Kenneth Gopal OCD, Fr George Harrison, Fr Xavier Andrew and Fr Christopher Loh.

than (Tamil), John Maynard (English) and Albert Izuli (KUBM) came forward to say a few words. July, an Orang Asal from Kampung Sebir, presented a memento to Fr George.

Fr Kenneth also said a few words on behalf of the Carmelite community in Seremban.

Fr Xavier described Fr George as someone who is socially active, physically dynamic, spiritually discerning, pastorally giving and charismatic.

In his speech, Fr George recalled visiting the chapels in the estates and the Chapel of St Augustine in Titi, Jelebu, celebrating Masses and visiting homes of parishioners who became very close to his heart. He remembered vividly the first home visit he made to a gentleman in Titi. Fr George asked the congregation to keep him in prayer and to give their fullest support to Fr Xavier and Friar Fr Kenneth.

Archbishop Julian Leow, who was pre-

sent, thanked Fr George for saying yes and accepting the invitation to work in the Vatican and wished him all the very best.

Fr Christopher and Fr Kenneth then presented gifts to Fr George. In a symbolic gesture of handing over his duties as Parish Priest, Fr George presented the Key to the Minangkabau style Tabernacle to Fr Xavier. The key, Fr George said, represents Jesus Christ who is the Centre of everything.

The Mass was followed by a simple farewell fellowship, which was held in the Visitation Community Hall. There were some performances by groups and individuals. A song composed by the Orang Asal entitled *Sampai Jumpa Di Lain Hari* was sung in honour of Fr George.

Fr George left for Rome on January 4 from Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). He was seen off by a small group of parishioners. — *By Paul Peter Fernandez*

This column will feature the latest topics which are trending. **TRENDING**

## Peninsular Malaysia Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Novel Coronavirus



To Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful

29th January 2020

### PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS - NOVEL CORONAVIRUS AND INFLUENZA A

Concerns have been raised about a recent outbreak of Influenza A in Malaysia and the more recent novel coronavirus epidemic, which is believed to have originated in Wuhan, China.

In the light of the current crisis, the three arch/bishops of the ecclesiastical province of Peninsular Malaysia, Archbishop Julian Leow of Kuala Lumpur, Bishop Sebastian Francis of Penang and Bishop Bernard Paul of Melaka-Johor, would like to make the following pastoral recommendations to avoid the spread of infection:

A) Persons displaying flu-like symptoms, e.g. fever, runny nose, sore throat, cough, cold, etc are advised to stay home and avoid public places including churches. For those not able to attend mass for these reasons, they are encouraged to make an act of spiritual communion (offer a prayer at home accompanied with a desire to be in union with the Eucharistic Lord).

B) Prayers should be offered privately and in parishes for all the victims affected by the above epidemic and for the medical staff tasked with their care and treatment. The following intention may be included in the General Intercessions,

“For the victims of the coronavirus, people affected by the quarantine and shutdown of public facilities, the medical staff tasked with the treatment and care of those who have contracted the virus, that God may protect them from further harm and grant those who are sick swift recovery. We pray to the Lord ...”

The local Church will continue to closely monitor the development of the above situation in Malaysia and will issue further updates and guidelines, if and when it is deemed necessary.

The arch/bishops would like to call upon all the faithful to remain calm, to trust official announcements, and follow the general precautions issued by the Ministry of Health.

*Sebastian Francis*  
Rt Rev Sebastian Francis D.D  
Bishop of Penang

*Julian Leow*  
Most Rev Julian Leow, D.D  
Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur

*Bernard Paul*  
Rt Rev Bernard Paul, D.D  
Bishop of Malacca-Johore

## Coronavirus declared global health emergency by WHO

GENEVA: The new coronavirus has been declared a global emergency by the World Health Organisation, as the outbreak continues to spread outside China.

“The main reason for this declaration is not what is happening in China but what is happening in other countries,” said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Jan 31.

The concern is that it could spread to countries with weaker health systems.

At least 213 people have died in China, with almost 10,000 cases of the virus.

The WHO said there had been 98 cases in 18 other countries, but no deaths.

Most international cases are in people who had been to the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the outbreak began.

However, there have been eight cases of human-to-human infection — in Germany, Japan, Vietnam and the United States.

Speaking at a news conference in Geneva, Dr Tedros described the virus as an “unprecedented outbreak” that has been met with an “unprecedented response”.

He praised the “extraordinary measures” Chinese authorities had taken, and said there was no reason to limit trade or travel to China.

“Let me be clear, this declaration is not a vote of no confidence in China,” he said.

But various countries have taken steps to close borders or cancel flights, and companies like Google, Ikea, Starbucks and Tesla have closed their shops or stopped operations.

Source: BBC

## PASTORAL RESPONSES FROM THE VARIOUS ARCH/DIOCESES ON NOVEL CORONAVIRUS 2019



### Singapore Archdiocese

January 24, 2020

Dear Rev Fathers

Wishing you a Blessed Lunar New Year

As a further health precaution against the Wuhan flu virus, here are some guidelines for immediate action in all parishes:

- (1) There will be no Holy Water in the fonts at church entrances.
- (2) At Masses and services, during the "sign of peace", bow instead of shaking hands.
- (3) Do not leave used tissues in the pews. Please instruct the faithful to dispose of these items properly.

The Archbishop, in consultation with his Consultors has decided to suspend all Catechism Classes for children until 1st March, 2020 in view of the Wuhan Coronavirus as precautionary measures to protect our children. (Published February 1, 2020)

Let us be united in prayer for God's protection on our people and also prayers for the medical personnel attending to victims of the virus.

Thank you and with God's blessings

**Fr Stephen Yim**  
Chairman Senate of Priests



### Miri Diocese

January 28, 2020

Diocese of Miri advisory on preventive measures to be taken at all churches in response to the Wuhan virus outbreak with immediate effect.

1. Any person who is unwell or exhibits symptoms of flu is exempted from attending Masses.
2. Holy Communion is to be received only on the hand during this period.
3. There will be no holy water in the fonts at church entrances.
4. At Masses, during the sign of peace, bow instead of shaking hands.

**Bishop Richard Ng**



### Keningau Diocese

January 28, 2020

The Chancellor Office of Keningau Diocese has published a Precautionary measure/advisory due to the coronavirus epidemic as follows:

1. Avoid large and frequent social group gatherings.
2. Avoid sharing a straw-sipping rice wine jar and using a same spoon.
3. Avoid frequenting shopping malls and open markets if there is no urgent need to buy.
4. Temporarily, avoid visits to hospitals unless you are sick and need treatment or you are visiting a sick family member. Use a mask wherever possible.
5. Don't consume raw or half-cooked food, especially exotic meat such as snake, frog, big bat and wild boar.
6. Frequently wash your hands with soap and don't touch face, eyes and nose with unclean hands.
7. Always wear a mask whenever possible, be it in the bus, shopping mall, etc.
8. Don't drink unboiled water.
9. When sneezing, cover your mouth with a tissue or handkerchief.
10. During Service and Mass:  
Temporarily there will be no holy water  
Bow during the "sign of peace" instead of shaking hands.

Don't throw or leave used tissue paper in the pew.

Prevention is better than cure. Let us be more responsible.

**Fr Rudolph Joannes**  
Chancery office Diosis Keningau



### Kuching Archdiocese

January 28, 2020

#### PASTORAL & HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS IN CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

To the Catholic faithful

On every weekend, our Churches are usually packed with worshippers. With the outbreak of novel coronavirus, I exhort all Catholics to pray earnestly and take necessary precautionary measures to help contain this outbreak. Following my initial guidelines issued on 25th January 2020, please find new recommendations appended below:

1. Persons displaying flu-like symptoms, e.g. fever, runny nose, sore throat, cough, cold, etc are advised to stay home and avoid public places including churches. Such persons are exempted from Sunday Obligations.
2. Catholics who are not able to attend Mass for the above reason are encouraged to stay home and read the Sunday Liturgy of the Word, make an act of Spiritual Communion by offering a prayer, accompanied with the desire to be in union with the Eucharistic Lord.
3. Prayers are to be offered privately at home and in all parishes:
  - a) Pray for medical professionals — doctors, nurses and health personnel who are providing health care to patients.
  - b) Pray that world health experts will speedily develop vaccine and ways to control the outbreak.
  - c) Pray for the victims, especially those who have died and for their grieving family members.

4. In solidarity with the Catholic Dioceses in Malaysia, the following intentions are to be included in the General Intercessions:

*"For the victims of the coronavirus, people affected by the quarantine and shutdown of public facilities, the medical staff tasked with the treatment and care of those who have contracted the virus, that God may protect them from further harm and grant those who are sick, swift recovery. We pray to the Lord ..."*

5. Practical recommendation and precautions in Churches during Masses:

- Holy Water will not be used in fonts at church entrances.
- At Mass, during sign of peace, bow instead of shake hands.
- Use a tissue to cover nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing.
- Do not leave used tissues on the pews. Dispose of properly.
- Practise good hygiene — proper washing of hands with soap.
- Do not touch eyes, nose or mouth with hands before washing.
- Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms.

While taking the above precautions, I call upon all Catholic faithful to remain calm, to trust official announcements, be responsible and verify news on social media, to cooperate and follow the precautions issued by the Ministry of Health.

With prayers and New Year blessings,

**Archbishop Simon Poh**



### Kota Kinabalu Archdiocese

January 29, 2020

#### Advisory on "Corona Virus" Epidemic

In support of precautionary measures taken by the Ministry of Health of Malaysia regarding the corona virus epidemic, the Archdiocese is supplementing the following with immediate effect:

1. There will be no holy water in the fonts at church/chapel entrances for the time being.
2. At Masses and services, the "exchange of peace" is done by bowing to each other instead of shaking hands.
3. Holy Communion is to be received only on the hand during this period of health concern.
4. Mass celebrants and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to ensure their hands are thoroughly cleansed.
5. Please cover your mouth with a handkerchief or tissue-paper when coughing or sneezing during Mass or service.
6. Used tissue-papers are to be disposed properly in trash bins instead of leaving them in the pews.

Let us continue to pray for divine intervention as China and the World Health Organisation (WHO) deal with the corona virus epidemic.

**Archbishop John Wong**

## Lawyers urge PM to act on conversion of students

KOTA KINABALU: Non-Muslim lawyers feel it is time for the Education Ministry, now that it is under Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, to issue a directive once and for all forbidding the conversion of students to whatever religion in schools.

A Sabahan lawyer who has been engaged to handle the latest alleged conversion of a Christian student to Islam said she was also contacted by Catholic lawyers in Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak, who were concerned about the recurrences of such incidents.

"This is not the first reported case," said Priscilla Ruth Marcus, who has been engaged by the parents of the boy in Kota Marudu in the latest incident, to refer the matter to the courts.

Parents Vilbon bin Madilan and Wastinah Mangis have decided to sue the relevant authorities over the conversion of their son, the eldest in a family of five, by an Ustaz posted to the



Lawyer Priscilla Ruth Marcus (left) with the parents of the boy (not in the picture).

school.

"My clients' instruction is to challenge the validity of the conversion of their son. He is still a minor," Priscilla said.

"The parents were unaware of the conversion. They were shattered when they found out. In the past, two teachers from the peninsula in

SMK Lutong in Miri, Sarawak, converted a 13-year-old student to Islam.

"The Education Ministry acted to end the episode as any attempt to convert any child below 18 years to whatever religion without the parents' consent is illegal.

"The girl involved came from a Christian family which had angered the predominantly Christian community in Sarawak."

A similar controversy arose in SMK Kinarut in Sabah when a 16-year-old schoolgirl reportedly was converted to Islam.

The then Sabah Police Commissioner Datuk Jalaluddin Abdul Rahman said their inquiry showed the girl was still a Christian and had not converted although she practised the Islamic ways.

Her father, Jilius Yapoo, correctly insisted that his daughter remained a Christian and can only decide on her own religion after she turns 18.

The cases appear to reinforce fears among parents of the rural Christian communities in both Sabah and Sarawak over what might happen if they send their children to schools with hostel facilities. Away from home, the parents need to be reassured that their children are going for an education and not a new religion.

While it may be natural for teachers, especially those who are religious, to share their beliefs with their students, the parents viewed this as a form of indoctrination.

They said the teachers' responsibility is to teach, and in the case of the hostel students, to also care for their well-being as these young students were away from home.

The children are still considered minors and the law is very clear that their religion is determined by their parents until they turn 18. It is also a violation of the Child Protection Act. —

**By David Thien, Daily Express**

# Education in mission schools brings hope to the poor and weak

JOHOR BAHRU: The Mission Authorities are the founders of the school, as well as the registered owners of the land and buildings.

Malaysian Canossian Schools Coordinator, Sr Mary Tay, said this in her opening remarks at the half-day Seminar on Mission Schools at the Canossian Oasis in Kluang, December 14.

Present were 85 members of the Board of Governors, Board of Managers, principals, religious and priests. Also present was Bishop Bernard Paul.

Speaking on *Ethos, Character & Traditions of Missions School*, Sr Tay said education is for everyone irrespective of race, religion or social-economic status.

She explained that the composition of students and teaching-staff reflects the multi-ethnic character of the country.

She said the ideal of unity is put into practice among all and, there-

fore, discriminatory and divisive practices are avoided.

“Mutual respect for one another’s differences and culture is inculcated,” she said.

Sr Tay made it clear that education in mission schools brings hope to the poor and weak, adding there is, “Care, concern and compassion for the least, the last and the lost.”

Therefore, she says, it gives special attention and care to those suffering from any aspect of poverty: financial, moral, cultural, spiritual, cognitive, physical or emotional.

She clearly emphasised that each student is a unique individual made in the image of God and endowed with distinctive character, aptitudes and abilities and is worthy of love, respect and acceptance.

She said it is important for us to study the student’s character and temperament, adding that, “What is good for one is not necessarily good for another.”



Members of the Board of Governors, managers, principals, religious and priests at the Seminar on Mission Schools.

Sr Tay made it clear that each student should be nurtured and developed as a whole person – spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, physically and socially, to his or her fullest potential.

She pointed out that mission schools possess a culture of “dis-

cipline with love” and the benefit of discipline lies in the formation of the heart.

Speaking on *Discipline with Love*, Sr Tay said, “Being proactive is taking preventive measures, treating root causes and not reacting superficially to problems and issues.”

Therefore, she said, discipline is inculcated with appropriate punishment, creating an awareness of right and wrong.

She stressed that this takes place within a context of constant encouragement, affirmation and love.

On Passion and Perseverance, Sr Tay emphasised that teachers in mission schools, led by the head teachers are driven by the spirit of dedication and sacrifice.

She added that teachers must work with full commitment to guide the boys and girls under their care with charity and patience.

On Human Dignity, she said there must be care for the marginalised students such as feeding the poor and home visits.

She also called on the Board of Governors/managers to be active in the school, adding that, “there must be active participation of alumni.”

## Board of Directors is responsible for the proper management of schools

JOHOR BAHRU: In his talk on *Roles and Responsibilities of the Mission School*, Board of Governors/ Manager, Lee Kok Hwee, said the Mission Authority is the owner of the school.

Lee, who is the vice-chairman of the Malaysian Christian School Council (MCSC), said the Board of Governors/managers is set up to govern as representatives of the mission authority.

He said, “The school administration, under the principal/headmistress, is custodian of ethos and values of the mission authority.

“The BOG/BOM is responsible for the proper government/management of the school,” he said.

On legal title of the land, he said the ownership and property of the school lies solely with the mission authority.

Not mincing his words, he said the school and other parties are to respect the sanctity of ownership by always seeking the consent of the mission authority before any changes are to be made.



Malaysian Canossian Schools Coordinator, Sr Mary Tay with Board of Governors/Manager, Lee Kok Hwee giving his talk.

He urged the BOG/BOM to work closely with the principal/headmistress on the proper maintenance of the school.

On the role of the Board, he said it is responsible for the welfare and general progress of the school in creating a conducive learning and working environment so as to promote total development of pupils in spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social and physical dimensions.

“It shall strive to support the efforts of the teaching staff to improve the

standard of education,” he stressed.

He also pointed out that the Board can also consider the setting up of a Trust Fund for caring and providing for the marginalised in the school population.

Touching on the *Custodian of Character and Ethos*, he said we need to be the guardian of the school for continuity and the preservation of its tradition such as prayers, teaching of Bible Knowledge, Chapel Services, Christian Fellowship, Girls’ Brigade and Boys’ Brigade.

He explained that it must also strive to preserve the Christian motifs, icons and nomenclature to retain all references to the School’s heritage and historical values.

On the appointment of principals and senior assistants, he said, in keeping with the principle of maximum consultation, the Boards shall recommend the appointment of person/persons for such positions to the Mission Authority which will then make the final decision before its submission to the Minister, adding that, “If the nominee/nominees list is not deemed suitable, the Mission Authority will then draw up a new list till it is.”

He called on the Boards to bring about continuous progress and development of the school by working closely with the Mission Authority, the PIBGs, the Alumni and the Education Ministry as well as to seek assistance with organisations pertaining to youth, sports, corporations, Education Foundations, that will help it promote holistic education and development of the pupils.

In his closing remark, Bishop Ber-

nard Paul said this is the time for re-orientating, a time for rebuilding and a time to rediscover what is going on.

He said, “By sharing and questioning, we have clarified many things. There are many things we know; there are many things that we do not know.”

“Many things are written but not spelt out in detail, so we do not know where we are.”

The type of education that we had will no longer suffice in an era characterised by flux and change. So, the way education is imparted in the millennial age is no longer the transfer of knowledge among a group of students by a teacher.

To those present, he said, “we are living in a ‘Vuca Word’! What this means is that the world is Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous.”

He added that for this kind of world, we need a response. The type of education we give to people makes a difference — whether it is education for life or just the tool of a system. — **By Vincent D’Silva**

## Kristus Aman’s Teddy Bear Project

KUALA LUMPUR: Following an appeal from the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese, Kristus Aman Chapel appealed to its parishioners and students to donate pre-loved and new teddy bears for distribution to less fortunate children. Teddy bears have a universal appeal and are an enduring symbol of cuddly toys that children cling to for comfort, to help them sleep and whenever they feel insecure. So, giving up a teddy bear, no matter how old and tattered, is a significant emotional parting for many, even for the grown-up kids.

Soon, the teddy bears started to trickle in ... small, big and humongous, skinny and chubby, multi-

coloured and mono-coloured, some looking more like other animals than bears. All were happily received. Over time, the numbers kept growing such that we soon ran out of space to store them. By November 2019, over 200 teddy bears were received.

The Kachin Refugee Learning Centre (KRLC) was selected as the recipient of the teddy bears. KRLC has been running two refugee schools for over twelve years, one in Bukit Bintang and the other in Setapak. These schools cater to children from nursery school to secondary school level. A third school was started in Serdang in 2017 for nursery and pre-school

children. At the end of each school year, KRLC holds a combined concert and prize-giving event for all three schools. It was decided that this would be the ideal event for the distribution of the teddy bears, prioritising the younger children first.

On Dec 7, KRLC held their annual year-end event with a food sale, concert and prize giving for the top students from each class. When the event was over and the children were filing out of the auditorium, the teachers handed out to each of the little kids a teddy bear. There were beaming smiles of surprise and glee from each one of them, not suspecting they would receive a charming door gift such



Some of the catechism students of Kristus Aman.

as this. After all the younger kids received their teddy bears, the remaining teddy bears were distributed to the others.

The catechism students of Kristus Aman can be proud of the difference they have brought to many

young children through this innovative project. Though the children have given teddy bears, which may have had memories for them, the teddies now go on to make fresh memories with their new “friends”. — **By Michael Perreau**

# Celebrating Chinese New Year in the church

IPOH: Chinese New Year at St Michael's Church (SMC) was a lively event for all.

The church itself was packed with locals and those from other parishes in Ipoh, as well as people from outstation who had come to celebrate the Lunar New Year in their hometown.

The joyous morning Mass was celebrated by SMC parish priest Fr Anthony Liew and concelebrated with Fr Paul Cheong, OFM, Cap on Jan 25, 2020.

SMC was bursting with colour, with the people dressed in mainly red, and there were red decorations, ribbons, lanterns, window decorations, plum blossoms and yellow and red flowers. It was a congregation of families over several generations, who came to give thanks to God.

In his homily, Fr Liew said Chinese New Year is celebrated as a time of reunion and thanksgiving. "Even though reunion dinners are now more costly than ever, everyone spends lavishly with the hope of getting lasting happiness through the year.

"Because of this, reunion dinners have become commercial in nature. That shows everyone's aim is to be happy," he said.

"Now the trade wars between the US and China show the world's problem with money. The Beatitudes speak of blessedness which is, in fact, happiness," he said.

"Our happiness does not depend



An elderly couple presents joss sticks to the ancestors after Mass.

on whether we are poor or rich, and having wealth is not a guarantee of happiness.

"Happiness only relies on God. When God is with them, people will be comforted and the kingdom of God is with them, so all challenges can be overcome.

"Reflect on whether we depend on external factors for our happiness. If we do, why don't we rely on God instead?," he asked.

He quoted an old Chinese saying, which states 'that knowing enough brings happiness'.

"In fact, it is knowing God that brings happiness. We can create an abundance of happiness, where we are, with what we have (little though it may be) by bringing ourselves into alignment with God.

"The best part of learning to be happy with what we have is our consciousness of God in our lives, and that is abundance. Let us surrender all our challenges to God today," he said.

During the offertory, three generations of a family brought up the gifts, comprising fruit, flowers and bread and wine.

After Holy Communion, SMC welcomed all newcomers to the parish with a round of applause.

Since giving respect to the family's ancestors is also vital to Chinese New Year, the Rite of Commemoration of ancestors began after the final blessing.

First an introduction on it was given, detailing why departed relatives are remembered with great

respect — because they were responsible for laying the foundations for the family.

Honouring the ancestors on the first day of Chinese New Year is a way of fulfilling filial piety.

It is a tradition of the church to offer special prayers to our departed loved ones during Mass.

The rite of commemoration of the ancestors is in accordance with and not in contradiction to the teachings of the Church.

Pope Pius XII in 1939 stated that "the liturgical ceremony of bowing in respect to the photographs or tablets of our ancestors, is both reasonable, as well as permissible".

Hence, in accordance with this, Christians can honour their ancestors, as long as they do not have the idea of worshipping them as idols.

So on the first day of Chinese New Year, the church can arrange a special ceremony to have the rite of commemoration of ancestors after the Mass is over. It is a way of inculcating Chinese culture into the local church.

As the rite of commemoration started, a passage from the book of *Sirach* was read.

The presence of the ancestors was acknowledged with a table set with joss sticks, candles and an ancestral tablet.

Then three generations of a family presented incense (joss sticks), tea and oranges to the ancestors.

"We pray for our deceased ancestors during this time, because it is important in Chinese culture. The Catholic Church is universal in nature and so Chinese culture is inculcated into the local church. Joss sticks are used in place of burning incense," said Fr Liew.

After the rite of commemoration of ancestors, the people knelt and gave thanks to the Trinitarian God, and bowed towards the altar.

They then turned towards their priests, bowing towards them in thanks for their dedication and commitment towards the people. Then the congregation bowed towards one another in thanks.

Fr Liew then blessed the mandarin oranges before they were distributed to the people.

The people received an *ang pow* and an oranges from the priests who stood at the altar.

Outside the church after Mass, to the familiar rhythmic beating of drums and the loud clashing of cymbals, the lion Dance began. Two "lions," from the Sam Tet secondary school, gave a good performance as the Chinese community prepared themselves for a series of celebratory events with their families over the next fifteen days, until Chap Goh Meh.

Many parishioners crowded around the porch area, to see the two colourful lions dance and "eat up" the hanging lettuce leaves and throw out mandarin oranges to the crowd.

## Free meditation sessions available for this year

KUALA LUMPUR: Since he started teaching the art of disengaging from stress and traumatic experience through silent meditation sessions, Fr Charles Chin said several hundreds have benefited from attending the free courses that he facilitated.

Fr Chin who is currently the resident priest at the Church of St Michael in Alor Setar, Kedah, said that meditation courses are now available throughout the three Arch/Dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia.

For year 2020, the sessions available are:

- (A) Art of De-stressing (Introductory Courses) three days (eight hours per day);
- (B) Art of De-stressing (Deeper) three days (10 hours per day);
- (C) Art of Handling Stress & Anxiety 1 day (eight hours);
- (D) Art of Wellness & Health 1 day (8 hours); and
- (E) Art of De-stressing Through Writing Meditation (Intensive Journal) three days (eight hours

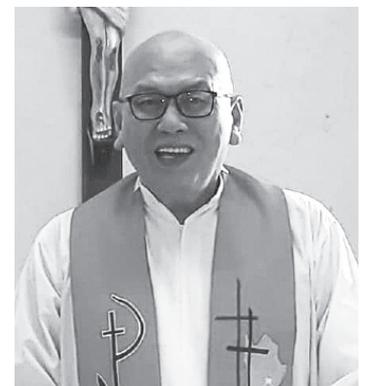
per day).

Those interested (with a minimum of four persons) can contact via WhatsApp message to 012-5655893 (Jean) or 012-5102515 (Fr Chin), so that a date and venue can be arranged.

The sessions are available in English, Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia and are free of charge. The participants will only need to source the venue.

Participants will learn the art of letting go of stress and traumatic

experiences. It is a technique to explore your thoughts and feelings, a technique to explore and to experience the intimate connection of body, mind and spirit. It is learning to let go of our bad habit pattern or reacting, and learn to cultivate a new habit pattern of acting, at the right and proper time. This technique is also a rehab programme to recharge and to rejuvenate oneself. This technique is logical, scientific and result oriented. — **By Bernard Anthony**



Fr Charles Chin

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# Formations help us know God better

IPOH: Formations help us to know God better, and develop a relationship with him through Jesus Christ. Knowing God helps us do the will of God effectively, and also brings us into a new dimension of knowing God and understanding his purpose for our lives.

St Michael's Church (SMC) parish priest, Fr Anthony Liew, said this during his homily on Catechetical Sunday, on Jan 19.

During two separate Masses, some 100 faith formators at SMC underwent the rite of commissioning.

They comprised 35 from the English-speaking group and 65 from the Chinese-speaking group. They are currently serving as catechists in Sunday School, Children's liturgy of the Word, the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) the Infant Jesus choir administrative team (English) and the 5th Formation team (Chinese).

"The upcoming *Discovering Christ* programme from Feb 15 till April 4, gives us many insights into our faith.

"All these formations help us to truly know God before we can share God with others.

"It is all right if you can't make it to all the sessions, but don't lose out on this chance.

"Before doing anything else, it will be a good thing to know God



Faith formators .. their rite of commissioning.

better ourselves," he said.

Fr Liew shared his personal testimony of how one formation programme changed his life – the Disciple Programme. He did not really know Jesus when young, and never attended formations. He joined the Disciple programme after his university, and that decision totally changed his life.

"I got to know Jesus, and build a personal relationship with Him. That made me come forward to become a priest," he said.

"Ask yourself if you feel a stirring to join a formation programme, for it is Christ who calls you," he added.

There are a variety of ways God tries to attract our attention, because there are things he wishes to share with us, such as in formations. Through our own baptism, we are called to seek, know and share

Christ with others.

"Catechetical Sunday invites us to share Christ with others, but how do we do this if we ourselves do not know Him? As we need to study to progress in education, we also need to deepen our faith knowledge to go further in our faith life.

"Through faith formation, we journey together and get to know each other and Jesus better. We delight in God as he encourages us in the things we have already learned. All of us have been commissioned by Jesus before his ascension to Heaven, to share with others, our gift of baptism.

"We are invited to seek Jesus and come to him continuously, bringing others who do not know him.

"Formations are important because they give us the foundation to know our faith, and Christ, better. Catechism classes help our children

to mix and share with each other, in love. This is especially important as our modern-day families are getting smaller in size.

"Many don't know how to share, and that is why we invite non-Catholics to come for catechism, as there are few schools that teach Catechism. The children are encouraged to attend at least 80 per cent of classes, and I hope this can also be encouraged and seen in daily Mass."

He said parents play the most important role in a child's life when sharing Christ. "Teachers meet them once a week, but we are with our children most of the time. Your children are God's gift and we know God our Father who created them, protects them, and blesses them.

"Have we done our part in passing on our faith to our children? Saying grace before meals and coming to church regularly for Mass helps our

children to know God and cling to him when they need assistance.

"Our children cannot be with us forever, they need to go away for studies, or jobs. So let us do our best to make them know God and surrender their difficulties to God. Nowadays, there are many cases of children who are not able to cope with life, or who feel stressed out when they leave home," he said.

Remembrance of God in our lives is a stimulus to our faith, and encourages our children to trust him in the present and future of their lives, he added.

After Holy Communion, Fr Liew invited parishioners to bring along their non-Catholic friends for the Chinese New Year Eve Mass and Chinese New Year day Mass, which would be celebrated in Mandarin and English.

"By doing so, you will enable them to learn more about your faith, the Catholic church and the inculturation of traditions, such as veneration of ancestors during the Mass," he said.

Fr Liew also announced that SMC's priest in residence, Fr Robin Andrews, will be at the Little Sisters of the Poor in Penang from Jan 30, for his convalescence. Fr Robin, who has been in Fatimah Hospital since more than two months ago for breathing difficulties, will return to SMC once he is fully recovered.

## Parents should live as examples to their children

KUALA LUMPUR: *Seek, Know, Share Christ* was the theme for this year's Catechetical Sunday which was celebrated on January 19, 2020.

Every year, in the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Catechetical Sunday is the day all catechists, including religious education, pre-baptism, Bible Knowledge, blossom and buddies and RCIA educators are to be commissioned.

A total number of 52 catechists pledged their commitment as catechists to continue to share the word of God to others. They were then commissioned by the parish priest.

Besides these 52 catechists, a total of 200 learners from the catechism and 10 RCIA candidates,

along with their parents, pledged their commitment too.

During the sermon, Parish Priest Msgr Leonard Lexson, VG said, "John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said; look, that is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world", so we are reminded to point Jesus to the world and especially to our children.

Msgr Leonard continued by saying that parents should live as examples to their children. Parents play a vital role in the life of their child as their first catechist. They must not depend on the catechists alone. A child's faith depends on how parents plant the seed from birth.

Msgr Leonard said that prayer is essential in everyone's life. Parents should take the time to teach



Catechists of St John's Cathedral.

their children about Jesus, how to spend a few minutes of their life with Jesus every day. Parents show importance when children come back from school and asking about their homework. But how many parents actually ask their children what they learnt or did in Catechism every Sunday? By this, the children would know

that their parents are interested in their faith that they point of the importance of Jesus in their life. In this way children will not run away from Jesus or their faith.

Msgr Leonard mentioned that we are devotees, we are worshippers, we are believers, but are we disciples of Jesus? Connecting to the responsorial psalm of the day,

"here I am Lord; I come to do your will." It is not what I want from you Lord, but what you want from me. Msgr Leonard ended the sermon by reminding the catechists to continue to be witnesses to the children of God and continue being disciples of Christ for He is the way, the truth and the life. —

By Alysson Ann Lourdes

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# Pakistan: Girl, 14, set to make legal history

ISLAMABAD: A 14-year-old Catholic girl from Pakistan will make history if — as expected — she becomes the first alleged victim of abduction, forced marriage and conversion to give testimony in court.

Judges in Sindh province's High Court have instructed police officers investigating Huma Younus' alleged abduction that the girl come to the next hearing on February 3.

This will not only be the first time a forced conversion and marriage case comes before a High Court in Pakistan, but also the first time the 2014 Child Marriage Restraint Act — which bans marriage with minors — is applied.

Tabassum Yousaf — the lawyer representing Huma, who was report-

edly kidnapped by a Muslim man Abdul Jabbar last October — told Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need that the act has not been used before because Christians could not afford legal help.

The poverty and lower social status of the province's Christian and Hindu communities have led to young girls from these groups being regularly targeted for abduction and forced conversion.

Ms Yousaf said, "Until now, no family has ever succeeded in seeking justice, because the Christians are poor and poorly educated and cannot afford to pay for legal assistance."

She alleged that police officers were corrupt and colluded with the



Huma Younus

man accused of Huma's abduction.

Ms Yousaf said: "In court, the officer in charge of the investigation, Akhtar Hussain, reported that on Jan 9 Huma had been brought before the court of first instance in order to sign

a declaration stating that she was an adult.

"Neither I nor her parents had been informed and such procedures could not take place in the absence of both parties. So it is clear that the police are helping her abductor."

While Huma's alleged abductor Abdul Jabbar claimed she was an adult, Huma's parents gave evidence to show that she is a minor — including a baptismal certificate from St James' parish, Karachi, giving her date of birth as May 22, 2005.

In a statement to ACN, Huma's parents called on global media to highlight the case.

They said: "We appeal to the international community and to the major international media, we appeal to

you to raise your voices in defence of Huma. Our daughter is just 14 years old. If you had a 14-year-old daughter who was going through all these things, what would you do? How much would you be suffering? Please think of our child as though she were your own daughter. Please help us."

In September 2019, Archbishop Sebastian Shaw of Lahore told ACN that girls as young as 14 have been abducted.

He said, "Kidnapping is a crime. It has to be treated as one. This is the only way to stop it. The girls are usually 14, 15. The men often already have one wife. They can be 25 or older. They can be younger, more like 20." — *ICN*

## Pope Francis and Iraqi president discuss securing a future for Christians

VATICAN: Pope Francis met Saturday with Iraqi President Barham Salih, and discussed the need to secure the future of Iraq's deep-rooted Christian population.

The president and the pontiff spoke privately for about 30 minutes before Sahil met with Cardinal Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin and Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States.

A Vatican statement Jan 25 said the talks focused on "the challenges the country currently faces and the importance of promoting stability and the reconstruction process."

"Attention then turned to the importance of preserving the historical presence of Christians in the country, of which they are an integral part, and the significant contribution they bring to the reconstruction of the social fabric," the Holy See said.

During the talks, the Vatican underlined the need to guarantee Christians "security and a place in the future of Iraq."

US Vice President Mike Pence said that Pope Francis also expressed his great concern for persecuted Chris-



Pope Francis greets Iraqi President Barham Salih at the Vatican Jan 25, 2020. (CNS photo/Vatican Media) (CNS photo/Kevin Lamarque, Reuters)

tians in Iraq in his audience with the Pope the day prior.

Christianity has been present in the Nineveh plains in Iraq — between Mosul and Iraqi Kurdistan — since the first century. However, since the ousting of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, Christians have been fleeing the region.

Five years after the Islamic State captured the Christian communities of the Nineveh plains, the region's

diminished Catholic population are still in the process of rebuilding their destroyed homes and churches.

Recent tensions between the United States and Iran have heightened Iraqi bishops' fears for Iraq's fragile Christian communities.

"Iraqi Christians need the certainty, reassurance, hope and the belief that Iraq can be a peaceful country to live in rather than being victims of endless collateral damage," Archbishop

Bashar Warda said following an Iranian attack on an air base in Erbil Jan. 8.

The Holy See said it encouraged "the path of dialogue" and solutions in favour of the Iraqi people and "with respect for national sovereignty" in the meetings with Salih.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis began protesting government corruption and Iranian influence in Oct. 2019 in the largest protests in Iraq since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

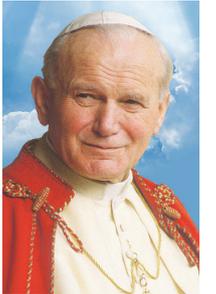
The Vatican meeting occurred one day after an estimated 200,000 people protested in Baghdad in a demonstration against the US military presence in Iraq organised by Shiite groups with ties to Iran.

Amid the tensions, Cardinal Louis Raphael I Sako, Chaldean Patriarch of Babylon, has called for dialogue.

"The international community has a responsibility for what is happening in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Iran now. They should help people to sit together and to dialogue in a civilised way and to look for a political solution," said Cardinal Sako. — **By Courtney Mares, CNA**

## Pope Francis has co-authored a book on St John Paul II

VATICAN: Pope Francis has co-authored a book of reflections on the life of St John Paul II (pic) to be published in Italian.



The book, entitled *St John Paul the Great*, is the product of a series of conversations between Pope Francis and Fr Luigi Maria Epicoco which took place from June 2019 to January 2020, according to its preface.

The book is expected to be published sometime ahead of the 100 year anniversary of the birth of Karol Wojtyla on May 18.

When Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II in 1978, a 41-year-old Fr Jorge Mario Bergoglio was serving as the provincial superior of the Jesuits in Argentina. Pope John Paul II appointed Bergoglio to be an auxiliary bishop in 1992, elevating him to become Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998, and creating him a cardinal in 2001. Pope Francis canonised St John Paul II in 2014.

The book's co-author, Fr Epicoco, 39, has written two dozen books on spirituality since his ordination in 2005, including *John Paul II: Memories of a Holy Pope* which he wrote with Archbishop Piero Marini in 2014. Epicoco is a professor of philosophy at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome and offers numerous lectures and spiritual retreats throughout Italy.

The Pope is known to admire Fr Epicoco's writing. Before Christmas, Francis gave each member of the Roman curia a copy of the Italian priest's book, *Someone to look up to: A spirituality of witness*. — **By Courtney Mares, CNA**

## Cardinals Re, Sandri elected to top posts in College of Cardinals

VATICAN: Pope Francis has approved the election of Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re as dean of the College of Cardinals and of Argentine Cardinal Leonardo Sandri as the subdean.

The Vatican announced the elections Jan 25, about a month after Italian Cardinal Angelo Sodano, 92, stepped down as dean and Pope Francis announced he was changing Church law to limit the dean's service to a five-year term, which is renewable once.

Cardinal Re, who will celebrate his 86th birthday January 30, had been subdean since June 2017. He was prefect of the Congregation for Bishops before his retirement in 2010.

Because he is over the age of 80, Cardinal Re is not eligible to enter a

conclave to elect a new pope. If the pope dies, it is the dean's task to inform heads of state and diplomats accredited to the Holy See, and he presides over the meetings of the entire College of Cardinals in the days preceding a conclave to elect a new pope.

As subdean, the 76-year-old Cardinal Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, would preside over the actual election of a new pope in the Sistine Chapel.

The dean is elected from among the top-ranking cardinals, known as cardinal bishops. Currently they include: Cardinal Re, Cardinal Sandri, Cardinal Sodano, Nigerian Cardinal Francis Arinze, 87, Italian Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, 85, Portuguese Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, 88, Italian



Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re as dean of the College of Cardinals

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, 65, Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, 75, Italian Cardinal Fernando Filoni, grand master of the Equestrian Order of Holy Sepul-



Argentine Cardinal Leonardo Sandri as the subdean.

chre of Jerusalem, 73, Cardinal Antonios Naguib, retired patriarch of the Coptic Catholic Church, 84, Cardinal Bechara Rai, Maronite patriarch, 79, and Cardinal Louis Sako, the Chaldean Catholic patriarch, 71. — *CNS*

# Doctrine is renewed with roots firmly planted in magisterium

VATICAN: Christian doctrine is not modified to keep up with passing times, nor is it rigidly closed in on itself, Pope Francis told members and advisers of the doctrinal congregation.

“It is a dynamic reality that, staying faithful to its foundation, is renewed from generation to generation and is summed up in one face, one body and one name —the risen Jesus Christ,” he said.

“Christian doctrine is not a system that is rigid and closed in on itself, but neither is it an ideology that transforms with the changing of seasons,” he said Jan 30, during an audience with cardinals, bishops, priests and laypeople who were taking part in the plenary assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The Pope told them that it was thanks to the Risen Christ that the Christian faith throws its doors wide open to every person and his or her needs.

That is why handing on the faith “demands taking into account the person receiving it,” and that this person be known and loved, he said.

In fact, the congregation was using its plenary to discuss a document



Pope Francis greets Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, at the Vatican Jan 30, 2020, during the congregation's plenary meeting. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

on the care of people experiencing the critical stages of a terminal illness.

The aim of the document, said Cardinal Luis Ladaria, congregation prefect, is to reiterate “the fundamentals” of Church teaching and offer “precise and concrete pastoral guidelines” regarding the care and assistance of those at a very “delicate and crucial” stage in life.

Pope Francis said their reflections were essential, particularly at a time when the modern era “is progressively eroding the understanding of what makes human life precious”

by judging the value or worthiness of life according to how useful or efficient that person may be.

The story of the good Samaritan teaches that what is needed is conversion to compassion, he said.

“Because many times people who look don't see. Why? Because they lack compassion,” he said, noting how often the Bible repeatedly describes Jesus' heart “being moved” with pity or compassion for those he encounters.

“Without compassion, people who see do not get involved with what they observe, and they keep

going. Instead, people who have a compassionate heart are touched and engaged, they stop and take care” of the other, he said.

The Pope praised the work done by hospices and asked them to continue to be places where professionals practise a “therapy of dignity” with commitment, love and respect for life.

He also underlined how important human relationships and interactions are in caring for the terminally ill, and how that approach must operate from a duty “to never abandon anyone facing an incurable disease.”

The Pope also thanked the congregation for its work studying the revision of norms concerning *delicta graviora*, that is, “more grave crimes” against Church law, which include the abuse of minors.

The congregation's work, he said, is part of an effort “in the right direction” of updating norms so that procedures can be more effective in responding to “new situations and issues.”

He encouraged them to continue “with firmness” and proceed with “rigour and transparency” in safeguarding the sanctity of the sacraments and those whose human dig-

nity has been violated.

In his opening remarks, Cardinal Ladaria told the Pope that the congregation has examined “a project of a revision” of St John Paul II's *motu proprio*, *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, which gave the doctrinal congregation responsibility to deal with and judge allegations of the sexual abuse of minors by clergy and other serious crimes in the realm of canon law.

The cardinal said they also discussed, during the plenary, the work carried out by the disciplinary section, which handles abuse cases and has seen a noticeable increase of cases in the past year.

Msgr John Kennedy, head of the section, said Dec 20 that the office registered a record 1,000 reported cases for 2019.

The huge number of cases has “overwhelmed” the personnel, he said.

Telling the Pope about some of the documents the congregation has published the past two years, Cardinal Ladaria also said it had issued a “private,” that is, unpublished, clarification on “some canonical questions regarding transsexuality.” — **By Carol Glatz, CNS**

## In Amazon, without a priest, ‘there is a gap in the family’

SAO PAULO: Catholics who work in the Amazon say members of small, isolated villages believe the Church could be more present in their lives if it allowed the ordination of married men — a plan being considered on a limited basis for the Amazon region.

The controversial initiative discussed at the October Synod of Bishops for the Amazon is the result of concerns about the lack of priests in regions difficult to access — which, in the Amazon, is a good part of the region. The synod's final document acknowledged that a lack of priests means Catholics in the Amazon have only sporadic access to the Eucharist, reconciliation and anointing of the sick.

“There is a colleague of mine who serves 52 communities by himself around Santarem. This is an almost impossible mission, but he has been doing it for years,” said Fr Edilberto Sena, 77, of Santarem.

The priest of 49 years, who is the director of a network of radio stations throughout the Amazon re-

gion, said to allow married men to become priests would not solve all the Catholic Church's problems, but it would help communities that have the visit of a priest one or two times per year.

“It is a community's right to have sacred Mass once a week,” said Fr Sena, who does not have a parish of his own but helps with sacraments whenever he is called.

Archbishop Roque Paloschi of Porto Velho said, “What our communities ask for today is a more constant presence ... the challenge of building an embodied Church, of proximity rather than a Church of sporadic visits.”

“I believe it is a different way for the Church to be present. It is no longer a church far away, but a nearby church, embodied,” added Archbishop Paloschi.

Fr Sena spoke of a priest in Tefe who takes “a seven-day boat trip to conduct Mass in the community of Itamarati. Many of the communities in the region are along rivers, and the mode of transportation is a boat.”



Norberto Cruz da Silva, a leader in the Wapishana indigenous village of Tabalascada in the Brazilian Amazon and the local catechist coordinator, is pictured in April 2019. (CNS photo/Paul Jeffrey)

Bishop Edson Taschetto Damian of Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira heads the diocese known to be “the most indigenous diocese in Brazil” and paints a similar picture. He said that the current 19 priests in the diocese are not enough to serve the 23 indigenous ethnic groups dispersed in a region that is slightly smaller than the state of Arizona.

“The priests, with great effort, are able to visit the communities three, four times a year. Catechists are the ones who keep the faith of the communities alive,” he said. “These catechists can be ordained as permanent deacons, and then communities can choose those who are capable of receiving priestly ordinations.”

This would allow the Church to have a permanent presence, he said.

Fr Sena said the idea was “not to allow priests who have gone through the seminary for many years to get married, but to choose leaders, who are pillars of the community, and provide them with an annual monthly course, letting them go back to their communities and provide services that today, frankly, we are struggling to do.”

“We already have a structure set up in many places, with married men who already are seen as local Church leaders, so why not allow them to carry on all the responsibilities?” he asked.

Josep Iborra Plans, 59, was a Claretian missionary for 21 years when he asked to leave the priesthood to get married.

“For 15 years, I devoted myself to the people of Rondonia,” he said, including serving as “the priest for over 20 river communities along a 600-km (372-mile) stretch of the Guapore River.” — **By Lise Alves, CNS**

## French cardinal acquitted by appeal court of failing to report abuse

LYON, France: Cardinal Philippe Barbarin has been acquitted by a French appeals court of failing to report sexual abuse by a diocesan priest. The Archbishop of Lyon was convicted in March, 2019, of “of non-denunciation of ill-treatment” of a minor and given a six-month suspended prison sentence.

The decision Jan 30 by the appeals court in Lyon was reached

after prosecutors in the case sought the Cardinal's vindication. The cardinal's lawyer called the result “logical,” saying that Barbarin had been the subject of “calumny” over the course of the trial.

At the time of his conviction in March last year, five other archdiocesan officials on trial with Barbarin were acquitted. Barbarin's acquittal was widely expected on

appeal after the prosecutor in the case argued there was no proof of the cardinal's legal wrongdoing and therefore no grounds for conviction.

At the time of his conviction, the cardinal said that “after the decision of the court, regardless of my personal fate, I want to reiterate, first of all, compassion for the victims and the whole place that they and

their families have in my prayers.”

Shortly after his conviction last year, Barbarin met with Pope Francis to submit his resignation, but the Pope refused to accept it while his appeal was pending.

Instead, Barbarin elected to step back from the day-to-day governance of the Archdiocese of Lyon, leaving its management to the Vicar General. — **CNA**



Cardinal Philippe Barbarin

# HERALD

February 9, 2020

## China to govern the Church?

Communist China has accelerated its policy of “sinicisation” of religions, with the implementation of a new set of crippling rules which Christian leaders say spell danger for their people, particularly for underground Catholics.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) introduced its Regulations on Religious Affairs in February 2018 but the revised administrative measures on religions came into force from Feb 1 across the country, covering all religions.

Among other things, the rules stipulate that each religion will be headed by a state-appointed conference, which will function as the supreme decision-making body for the respective religious group.

“Does this aim to abolish the traditional Church model headed by bishops and replace them with group conferences? If there is no Catholic head for a church, is it still a Catholic church?” asked Fr Li in Hebei province.

The Catholic priests and church members had opposed these measures but failed to stop them, said Fr Li.

“The CCP’s purpose is obvious. It is to change the Catholic Church into a group that belongs to them. These rules will push the Church into serious dangers,” he warned.

President Xi Jinping, in a significant speech in 2016, said that the sinicisation of religion aims to adapt religions to Chinese society. The CCP must “guide the adaptation of religions to socialist society,” he said.

The revised measures, incorporated into six chapters and 41 articles, require all religious organisations to “observe the constitution, laws, regulations, ordinances, and policies, adhere to the principle of independence and self-government, adhere to the directives on religions in China, implementing the values of socialism.”

They cover organisation, functions, offices, supervision, projects and financial administration of religious communities at national and local levels.

“Ever since the rules were introduced, the Christian community in China has been witnessing relentless persecution. Churches are being demolished, a ban has been imposed on online Bible sales, and several hundreds of Christians arrested for inciting subversion of state power,” said Fr Li.

Hau Baolu, a parish leader from Shaanxi, a province who has suffered severe repression over the years, said atheists have now come to manage the Church and wondered how the government could claim prominence over God and the Vatican in matters of faith and morals.

## China bans Christian funerals

Christian funerals have been banned in some areas of China as the communist government begins to enforce a set of restrictive regulations on religious practices.

In the eastern province of Zhejiang, the government has put in force a set of Regulations on Centralized Funeral Arrangement, which bans priests from attending funeral prayers outside a religious place.

The government claims the new rules aim to “get rid of bad funeral customs and establish a scientific, civilised and economical way of funerals.”

The new rules began to take effect recently, although enacted on Dec 1, said a Catholic in Wenzhou Diocese in Zhejiang.

“Clerical personnel are not allowed to participate in funerals” at homes and “no more than ten family members of the deceased are allowed to read scriptures or sing hymns in a low voice,” the rules state.

The regulations strictly ban religious activities outside religious places. A priest then will not be able to hold funeral prayers outside the church.

Source: ucanews.org

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# For the love of the Word

## Sunday of the Word of God

Pope Francis has been acclaimed by the world largely for his moral leadership. Welcoming migrants and refugees, caring for the earth, prioritising engagement with the poor and listening to victims of abuse have been the hallmarks of his pontificate. His institutional leadership as a reforming pope has also met with applause, as he has taken on the task of patiently working out knotty financial and organisational problems in the Church.

He has been given less credit, however, for his specifically religious leadership. A perfect example of this has been the dull thud with which the announcement of the new “Sunday of the Word of God” (the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time) landed when it came out in September. Contrary to the wonderment that greeted so many of his other plans, his initiative on a religious topic of relevance to every believer got lacklustre treatment. There were dutiful acknowledgements but hardly an enthusiastic response. Most Catholics I know didn’t even hear about it.

Yet how lovely this day could be: a shot in the arm for religious devotion, spiritual growth and theological literacy, and a dose of fresh energy for ecumenism. What Francis proposed is that the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time will be observed henceforth as a day on which to renew our love and gratitude for the Word of God. It includes a call to “enthron the Word” during the liturgy, to give out Bibles, and to promote reading and reflection on sacred Scripture by people in all walks of life. Such an observance could enhance the Eucharist and help us to better realise the hopes of the Second Vatican Council that the Word would stand at the heart of prayer, catechesis and preaching, becoming “the soul of sacred theology” (*Dei verbum* 24).

So why such a weak response? Part of the reason is surely that controversy drives media coverage, and this isn’t controversial. Popes since Pius XII have been recommending that the lay faithful read the scriptures. Also, Vatican II furthered



Pope Francis gives a Bible to a man in a wheelchair at the end of Mass Jan 26, 2020, in St Peter’s Basilica. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

commitment to the Word in the everyday life of Catholics in all sorts of ways, from the expansion of the lectionary, to Bible study, to the singing of psalms and scriptural songs. Perhaps we feel we’ve already “been there, done that.”

I wonder, however, if another reason might be that we’ve tacitly reduced Francis to a political figure whose role is limited to moral and organisational leadership. As important as such leadership is, the Pope has a prior claim to an even more important role: to help us grow in our relationship with God. Engagement with the scriptures is essential to this project. Toward this end, I think that the Sunday of the Word of God is actually more important than it looks.

Catholics who lived through the Vatican Council II know that an explosion of interest in the scriptures followed it, but that passion gradually faded. In Latin America, however, Scripture reading became an integral part of the daily life of the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) and achieved lasting significance as a lay phenomenon. Indeed, it was at the request of two missionary bishops from Argentina, Jorge Kemerer and Alberto Devoto, that the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy included a warm recommendation of “Bible services” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35.4).

Kemerer was the first bishop of Posadas, a remote community first evangelised by Jesuits in the seventeenth century (the so-called Reductions of the Guarani in the Jesuit Province of Paraguay were made famous to a US audience through the 1986 film *The Mission*). Priests were so few that Kemerer wrote a guidebook for Celebrations of the Word in the absence of a priest soon after he arrived in 1957. Devoto, the bishop of Goya, was also a ground-breaking figure who chose to live in poverty, close to his people. A major influence in the Third World Priests movement, and an inspirer of liberation theology, his desire to share God’s Word was part of a living faith. According to writer Marguerite Feitlowitz, to this day peasants keep pictures of him on altars at home and refuse to believe he’s dead. “No, he’s a saint,” they say.

Now here comes another Argentinian, sure that the Word will help us. Francis’ proposal is a gesture with roots in Vatican II, popular movements, and the experience of how the Word can kindle light and joy among the poorest of Christ’s poor. He could have produced a teaching statement, but instead he decided to inaugurate a liturgical observance—a wise choice, perhaps, because even if we missed it this time around, there’s always next year. — Rita Ferrone, *Commonweal*

## First ‘Year of the Word’ roadshow in Westminster Cathedral

LONDON: Westminster Cathedral recently celebrated ‘The Year of the Word’ by hosting the first leg of the Scripture Roadshow, a unique event which is travelling to dioceses across England and Wales throughout 2020.

For three days, from Thursday January 30 to Saturday February 1, six of the chapels in Westminster Cathedral were transformed into Tents of Meeting, each one revealing a different aspect of the Word of God. The themes included, *Exploring the Word, Living the Word, Mary and the Word, Receiving the Word, Seeing the Word and Sharing the Word*. A number of organisations (including Pax Christi, Walsingham Shrine and ‘Prayer and Life Workshops’) took part in the celebration by leading *Lectio Divina* and activities for children, as well as providing resources on how the Bible shapes and transforms lives.

Adrian Cullen, Evangelisation Coordinator at the Diocese of Westminster, and one of the organisers of the event, said:

“We were overwhelmed by the num-



Cardinal Vincent Nichols with artist Peter Codling and his mosaic. (ICN photo)

ber of people who came along to the Scripture Road Show, and the excitement that the Tents of Meeting generated. The visitors, including a good number of school groups, were especially drawn to the beautiful mosaic, *The God Who Speaks*, and listened intently to artist Pete Codling’s fascinating explanation of his work. During the three days, there was a real buzz in the Cathedral, with many positive and pleasing comments from those who attended. The Scripture Road Show has been a real

success!”

A new piece of artwork, *The God Who Speaks*, was on display for the duration of the Scripture Road Show. The Byzantine mosaic, specially commissioned for the Year of the Word, was created by Portsmouth artist Pete Codling. The artist was also on hand to speak to visitors about the artwork during the three-day event. The icon will tour the country as part of the Scripture Road Show during 2020.

2020 is the 10th anniversary of *Verbum Domini*, Pope Benedict XVI’s Apostolic Exhortation on ‘The Word of the Lord’. This year also marks 1600 years since the death of St Jerome, who famously translated the Bible into Latin. These dates have inspired the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales to dedicate 2020 as a year of focus on the Bible and ‘The God Who Speaks’. The Scripture Road Show is one of many celebrations of Scripture taking place throughout the year, including local events and activities across the diocese. — ICN

# Benedict's estrangement from Ratzinger

## A Theological Drift

The publication of *From the Depths of Our Hearts*, Cardinal Robert Sarah's book on clerical celibacy "co-authored" with Pope Benedict XVI, illustrates once more the problem with the institution of the emeritus papacy as it's currently functioning. Much has already been said about this aspect of the latest controversy, but less about what Benedict's contribution to the book signifies in terms of his continued revisionist thinking on Vatican II, where he played a significant role as a theological expert. Italian theologian Andrea Grillo has astutely remarked that "Benedict is one of the fathers of Vatican II, but full of remorse." Indeed, the defence of clerical celibacy put forth in *From the Depths of Our Hearts* is built on a view of Scripture, liturgy and the Church that makes no reference whatsoever to the documents of Vatican II.

Of course, it's hard to know at this point just how direct a hand the "pope emeritus" has had in the writing that has appeared under his name in the past year (including his musings on the genesis of the abuse crisis last April). Nevertheless, it fits within a pattern of theological drift dating back much farther than Francis' papacy. Some see signs of Ratzinger distancing himself from the council as early as August 1965, while Vatican II was still underway and the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* was taking shape. Others date it to the student protest movement in Germany in 1968 and 1969, when he was teaching at Tübingen before moving to the quieter University of Regensburg in Bavaria. The German national synod of 1972-1975 seems to have contributed to his disillusionment.

Then came his twenty-four-year tenure as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under John Paul II, during which he repeatedly intervened to regain control, or even reverse, some of the theological developments afforded by Vatican II (especially on the liturgy). And



Pope Benedict XVI descends the steps in St Peter's Basilica after giving a talk at a Mass for the Knights of Malta on Feb 10, 2013, two days before he announced his resignation. The retired pope marks his 92 birthday on April 16. (CNS file photo/Paul Haring)

his own pontificate's relationship with Vatican II can be framed by his December 2005 speech on the "hermeneutics of continuity and reform" and his February 2013 address to the clergy of Rome in which he confessed his disappointments with the council. In between came one of the most consequential pronouncements on the doctrinal policy of Vatican II: the July 2007 motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, which liberalised the use of the pre-Vatican II rite.

There were also the public pronouncements that seemed in keeping with his attempts to reverse the trajectory of Vatican II. These included the Regensburg speech of September 2006, in which he quoted a fourteenth-century Byzantine emperor who equated Islam with violence, and the reinstatement of four excommunicated Lefebvrian bishops, one of whom, Richard Williamson, turned out to have a history of making anti-Semitic statements. The institutional constraints of the papacy limited,

to some extent, certain practical aspects of Benedict's drift from John Paul II's teaching on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue (for example, in 2011 Benedict XVI went, despite his deep scepticism, to Assisi for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1986 interreligious meeting for peace). But as emeritus, those institutional constraints no longer apply. The entourage Ratzinger has surrounded himself with has embraced Vatican II revisionism, and his statements are amplified in a way that would have been impossible without the internet. Now, as Benedict nears the end of his life, a deep contrast is evident between the messages on Vatican II he delivers to the Church and the world and those of his predecessor. John Paul II, in a testament published after his death, spoke of the council as a "great patrimony to all who are and will be called in the future to put it into practice." Benedict XVI's last writings either exhibit a negative view of the effects of Vatican II, or com-

pletely ignore the council's documents and theology. The introduction to the volumes of his writing on Vatican II published in 2012, in the series of the complete works of Joseph Ratzinger, confirm the urge to establish some distance from the council.

It must also be stated that there are some disturbing convergences between Ratzinger's theological agenda on Vatican II in the last few years and the theological and ecclesial agenda of the anti-Francis network. It is hard to overstate the role of Ratzinger's theology and Benedict's pontificate, for example, in the ongoing transition of the culture of U.S. Catholic hierarchical and episcopal leadership from a moderate Vatican II conservatism (seeking continuity with the previous tradition) to an extremist anti-Vatican II traditionalism (seeking a rupture with that moment of the tradition that is Vatican II). In 2020, the definition of a "Ratzingerian" theology of Vatican II is heavily dependent on the particular moment in which this or that theological opinion has been written. A pope's death usually seals and preserves his magisterial teaching in a way that a pope's resignation does not. How Benedict and his entourage have interpreted and managed the post-resignation period is a perfect illustration of this. Benedict XVI no longer owns his theological narrative; it's now at the service of an agenda that he helped create but that increasingly puts him at odds with a healthy sense of the Church.

The truly unfortunate thing about all of this is that Ratzinger was one of the most important theologians of Vatican II. Shortly after the council concluded, he wrote a fundamental commentary on the constitution on *Revelation, Dei verbum*. From this writing there emerges a dynamic, fecund view of theological truth. It's what makes his repudiation of Vatican II all the more troubling. It's sad to see the bishop of Rome estrange himself from his own conciliar legacy. — By Massimo Faggioli, *Commonweal*

## Vatican II inspiration becomes home for ecumenism in Geneva

In the hometown of John Calvin, theologian, pastor and reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, the Ecumenical Theological Workshop makes it possible for Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox theologians to get new insights to add more audiences of different faiths to their fold.

On Mondays, Pastor Blaise Menu and Catholic laywoman Anne Deshusses-Raemy, co-directors of the ecumenical institute, lunch together in a restaurant in Geneva, the second most populous city in Switzerland.

They take stock of life in Geneva. Of its 500,000 inhabitants, 35 per cent are Catholics, nine per cent Protestants, five per cent Muslims and 1 per cent Jews.

The Christians know that they are the "heirs of a precious ecumenical bond," said Menu.

"Since the beginning of the 20th century, ecumenism has been first and foremost a serious matter here," explained Menu, also a connoisseur of Geneva's history.

Thanks to the institute, "ecumenism has caught up with more experts. And, participants are increasing," Menu said.

### Vatican II

Taking inspiration from Vatican II, the institute was conceived in 1973 by a handful of pastors and Jesuits. After a year, they decided to widen its scope.

A two-year course familiarises students with the outside world as speakers are drawn from different parts of the globe.

Five Catholics, four Protestants and two Orthodox believers make up the 11-member theological faculty and the studies are centred around the Bible, history and ethics.

They attend each others' classes "to answer the students well," Deshusses-Raemy explained.

Every two weeks, they meet to piece together the content for the courses.

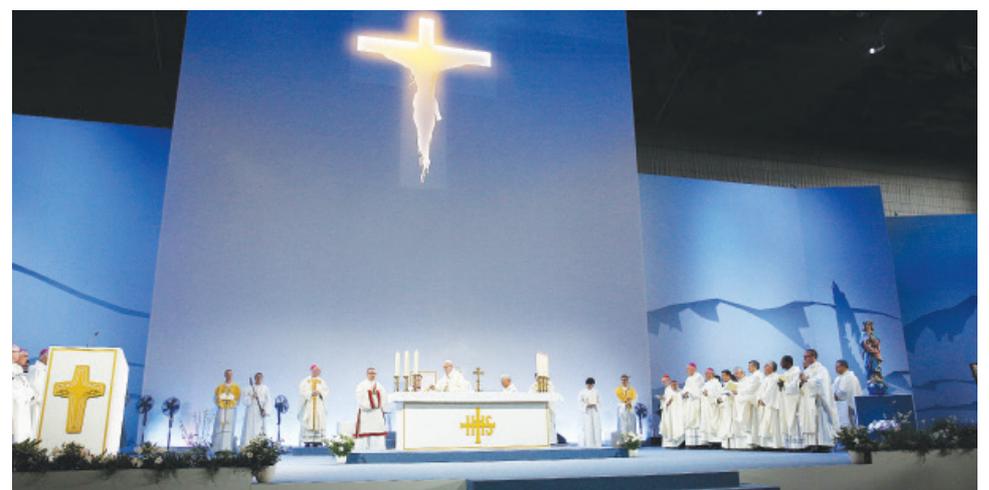
Stefan Contantinescu, a 33-year-old Romanian Orthodox layman, who has been teaching at the institute since three years ago, said the association with the ecumenical organisation has "enriched" him in more than one way.

### Faith and profession

There are 65 registered students for the academic year 2019-2021, a third of whom are Protestants, two thirds Catholics and one Orthodox woman.

Aged between 20 and 80, their vocational association ranges from the prestigious CERN, the European organisation for nuclear research, to civic departments.

"The only prerequisite is motivation," insisted Deshusses-Raemy, who also takes part in training at the Catholic Church's ecclesial mission in Geneva.



Pope Francis celebrates Mass at the Palexpo convention centre in Geneva June 21, 2018. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

### No certificate

Dominique Kuner, a 63-year-old Catholic and psychotherapist, underwent a drastic change while studying here.

"For the first two months I came out of classes crying because I felt my religion was being deconstructed, until I realised that I had to deconstruct before I could rebuild," she recalled.

A third of the 3,000 students who have passed out from the institute since 1973 have gone on to become chaplains in prisons, hos-

pitals and asylum-seekers' camps.

"Most of the committed lay people, whether Protestants or Catholics, trace their origin to the institute," said Pastor Emmanuel Fuchs, president of the Protestant Church of Geneva.

"Of course, the organisation does not dole out any certificate. But it's much more than that," added Menu. "It is the place that, in its own way, allows Christians to be ecumenical." — By Claire Lesegretain, *LCI* (<https://international.la-croix.com>)

# On self-hatred and guilt

Recently, on the popular television programme *Saturday Night Live*, a comedian made a rather colourful wisecrack in response to an answer that Nancy Pelosi had given to a journalist who accused her of hating the President. Pelosi had stated that, as a Roman Catholic, she hates no one – and this prompted the comedian to make this quip: “As a Catholic, I know there’s always one person you hate – yourself.”

I’m not someone who’s easily upset by religious jokes. Humour is supposed to have an edge and comedians play an important archetypal role here, that of the “Court Jester” whose task it is to deflate whatever’s pompous. Religion is often fair game. Indeed, I appreciated the wit in this wisecrack. Still, something bothers me about this particular wisecrack because it plays into a certain stereotype that’s, unfortunately, very common today, wherein people from all kinds of religious backgrounds (this is not specific to Roman Catholics) blame their religious upbringing for the struggles they have with self-hatred and guilt feelings.

How true is this? Is our religious upbringing the root cause of our

struggles with self-hatred and guilt feelings?

Obviously our religious upbringing does play some role here, but it’s far too simplistic (and not particularly helpful) to blame all of this, or even most of it, on our religious upbringing. Psychologists and anthropologists assure us that the issue of self-hatred and free-floating guilt is infinitely more complex, especially since we see it playing out in people of every kind of religious background, as well as in people who have no religious background at all. Struggles with self-hatred and guilt is not a particularly Roman Catholic phenomenon, Protestant phenomenon, Evangelical phenomenon, Jewish phenomenon or Moslem phenomenon; it’s a universal phenomenon that makes itself felt in almost every sensitive person. Moreover that struggle is not always unhealthy.

Any morally sensitive person, unlike someone who’s morally calloused, will constantly be self-assessing, often anxious as to whether she’s being selfish rather than good, and perennially worrying that some of her words and actions may have hurt others and damaged her rela-



Fr Ron Rolheiser

tionship with God. To experience this kind of anxiety is precisely to be struggling with feelings of self-hatred and guilt; but, at one level, this is in fact healthy. When we’re anxiously self-assessing, there’s far less danger that we will take others, take the gift of life or the take the goodness of God for granted. Moral sensitivity is a virtue and, like aesthetic sensitivity, it keeps you healthily fearful lest in ignorance and insensitivity you paint a moustache on the Mona Lisa.

Some of this, of course, is unhealthy. As Freud taught us, our conscience doesn’t tell us what’s right and what’s wrong, *it only tells us*

*how we feel about our actions.* And when we have guilt feelings about what we have just done or left undone, those feelings are, no doubt, often powerfully influenced by the social and moral standards that have been put into us as children by our parents, our teachers, our culture and our religious upbringing. Our religious and moral upbringing does leave us struggling with some false guilt.

But, that being admitted, there are deeper causes as to why we struggle with self-hatred and free-floating guilt and why we just never quite feel good enough.

If we could review our lives in a video, we would see the countless times we were, in every kind of way, told that we’re not good, not adequate, not lovable, not valued, not precious. We would see the countless times *we were shamed in our enthusiasm*; and this, I submit, more than any other factor, lies at the root of our self-hatred, our free-floating feelings of guilt, and the bitterness we so frequently feel towards others.

It starts in the highchair when, as toddlers, in our blind energy, we eat too enthusiastically and are told not to eat like a pig. Likewise, as tod-

dlers, full of food and zest, we shout and throw some food on the floor and are told to stop it, to shut up, that our natural energies aren’t healthy. Then, as a preschooler, we are often further shamed in our enthusiasm. Eventually things move on to the playground, the classroom, and into our family circles where our uniqueness and preciousness are not often sufficiently recognized or valued, where we’re frequently ignored, put down, treated unfairly, bullied, made aware of our inferiorities and failures and, in ways subtle and not-so-subtle, told that we’re not good enough. This sets us up for the rejections we absorb in adulthood, for the jealousies we feel when the lives of others look so much richer than our own, for the unexpressed bitterness we nurse because of our own inadequacies, and for the guilt we feel because of our own betrayals.

It isn’t primarily because of our religious training that we hate ourselves and are haunted by a lot of free-floating guilt.

Yes, most of us Catholics do hate ourselves. Sadly, would it were otherwise, so too does everyone else. — *By Fr Ron Rolheiser, all rights reserved*

## How family life led this couple back to the Catholic Church

GALLUP, N.M.: With their children getting older, the Aguilars wanted to find a church home for their family. They visited a few Christian churches close to home, but nothing felt right. They were surprised, the couple said, to find that the Catholic Church — the Church of their youth — was the place where they realised they were at home.

Michelle and Andres Aguilar decided to reenter the Catholic Church in 2019, finishing Michelle’s confirmation process and validating their marriage in the Church.

The couple now attends St Mary’s Catholic Church in Bloomfield, New Mexico, which is pastored by Fr. Josh Mayer. Michelle, 38, owns the oilfield company Ernie’s Pilot Service, and Andres, 33, works as a parole officer.

Michelle was confirmed by Bishop James Wall of Gallup last Easter. She said that the Easter Mass, where her two children also received their first communion, was one of the most beautiful experiences of her life.

“Last April, we all made our sacraments together. I tell everybody that aside from my marriage and my kids’ births, that was the best day of my life. I felt so much joy and it was at the Easter vigil. We [got] home [at] like one in the morning and I could not sleep. I was just so excited from it,” she said.

Michelle and Andres were both baptised and raised in the Church. Michelle attended Mass and catechism with her aunt, but she fell away during her teenage years once her aunt became too busy to take her to Mass. Andres said that he began distancing himself from the Church when he was in his 20s, after a priest gave a disappointing homily with a judgmental and unkind attitude at his cousin’s funeral.

“The priest at the time made a comment during her funeral. It just kind of shut me out,” he said. “She was murdered ... the comment he made was, had she not been living the lifestyle [she] was living, she wouldn’t have died. It was like I saw him almost condemn her in the Church.”

“I didn’t want to be a part of some group that would condemn people,” he further added.

The couple was civilly married in 2008, three years after their son Augustine was born and a



The Aguilar family. (CNA photo)

few months after their daughter Cheyann was born — both of whom were baptised in the Catholic Church.

The Aguilars said the family was a major reason for their desire to return to the faith, but they had tried several other denominations before finding themselves in the Catholic Church.

“We wanted to get back into church,” she said. “So we kind of tried different religions. We tried Baptist, we tried Pentecostal, we tried a nondenominational [church]. We just never really liked any of them. It didn’t feel like church.”

“Other denominations, it is beautiful there, but they don’t have structure, and I need that. I need structure and tradition. ... It is so beautiful to see even the older ladies in Mass and it just reminds me of family,” she further added.

Not having found anything that fit, the family took a break from their search. Meanwhile, Augustine started attending Mass with Michelle’s father, who would often have Augustine stay over at his house on Saturday night before Mass. She said, seeing that, she wanted to start attending Mass again as a family.

“I kind of wanted to start going as a family and I spoke to my husband about it and then we decided that we would go,” she said. “We started a friendship with a family here [Adam and Desiraye Benavidez]. They’re really devout and we liked how they put [the faith] first.

So we started talking and we decided to join them.”

Andres said the Benavidez were a big motivator for his rejoining the Church too. He said Adam is a powerful example of a good Catholic father. He said the family possessed a peace and joy he wanted for his own family.

“They have this tradition where they, after mass, all eat breakfast, and I just saw happiness in them,” he said “It just made me want that for my family as well. He owns that peace, like you can’t bring that man down. I think his faith has a lot to do with it, and being a part of the church I think really helps him be who he is as a person.”

He said, while he still disagrees with some of the things the priest said at the funeral, he has come to better understand the need to forgive and forget.

“This priest is a human and he sins just as much as I do. He made a mistake. That’s the beauty of the Church and reconciliation is that you can ask for forgiveness and start fresh.”

Michelle emphasised the important role of the RCIA classes. She said the group watched videos from the Augustine Institute and analysed scripture prior to the Sunday Mass. She expressed a love for the group, especially Deacon Pat Valdez, who heads the parish’s RCIA class.

“I miss them since I’ve made my confirmation. I really miss them because it was so fulfill-

ing. I learned so much,” she said.

“[Deacon] would give us the scriptures for the next week and he would break that down. So it was really neat to hear it there, and then on Sunday we’d go and hear it again.”

She said her decision to reenter the Church was verified during the first RCIA class. On the first day, she said, the deacon answered most of the questions she was struggling with, namely the Sacrament of Penance and prayers to the saints.

“I struggled with those growing up. I didn’t understand why we were doing that. [During] my first RCIA class, [Deacon Pat] answered both of those without me even asking the question. That was what he talked about. And I was like, okay, this is where I’m supposed to be,” she said.

Both of them described how faith has inspired meaningful interactions with their children, especially for their son who is 15 years old. Michelle said, through the use of the Catechism, she has been able to engage the children in learning, such as looking up answers to moral questions.

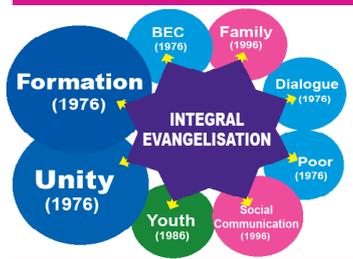
“It’s been really helpful in those aspects like discipline,” she said. [My son] had messed up and he felt really bad and I could tell it was weighing heavy on him. ... [so] he went to confession.”

“We went together and I could just tell when he got out, he felt a relief and I got to explain to him that you can mess up but you need to ask for forgiveness and then try your best not to make the same mistakes.”

Andres said the faith has given him more patience. He also said that faith has improved communication with Augustine and given him a better perspective on what it means to be a parent.

“Sometimes I can [be] pretty hot-headed and I can be a little strict with the kids, but at the same time I’m learning that being a parent is important in God’s eyes,” he said.

“I feel like it’s my job now to make sure that my kids have that happiness and the peace that they can find with the Lord and through the Church. I feel like I shouldn’t deprive them of that anymore.” — *By Perry West, CNA*



# Encounter is the key step in the journey of dialogue

MANILA: Cardinal Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle, archbishop of Manila and new prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, gave his synthesis of the 7th Philippine Conference on the New Evangelisation (PCNE-7).

The key step in the journey of dialogue is a “personal encounter” with others, he said, in particular with those who are considered “unique”, real people, “not just caricatures or a concept”.

The conference was held January 28-29 at the Smart-Araneta Coliseum in Cubao, Quezon City, centred on theme *At Sino Ang Akting Kapwa, And who is my neighbour?* (Luke 10:29).



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle at the 7th Philippine Conference on the New Evangelisation in Manila.

Cardinal Tagle’s address ended two days of meetings and testimonials.

In one of his last official actions

as Manila’s archbishop, the prelate told participants that by meeting one’s neighbours “we hopefully will learn the path of humility,

admitting our prejudice and even the injustice that we have committed.”

“Let us be converted to the truth. From humility and repentance, hopefully, I will be open to the others who are God’s creatures too,” he added.

According to the new prefect of Propaganda Fide, following the path of dialogue also means “to be a neighbour”, getting away from fears, pride and self-righteousness, which prevent us from seeing the uniqueness of our neighbours.

Someone in need is a neighbour, “and that means every person,” said the cardinal. “Everyone has needs but everyone also has a gift. Your gift is the response to the

needs of the others,” Tagle said.

A neighbour, he explained, both invites and gives compassion. “We don’t only ask who is my neighbour, we also ask can I be a neighbour to others.”

Cardinal Tagle launched the first conference in October 2013 in response to the call for a new evangelisation.

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) organised this year’s edition, PCNE-7, as part of the Year of Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue and Indigenous Peoples planned for 2021, when the Church will celebrate 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines. — *AsiaNews/Agencies*

## New sacrament formation programme released in American Sign Language

PHILADELPHIA: A new sacrament formation programme for the deaf and hard of hearing is offering adult catechetical information in American Sign Language.

Designed by Ascension Press, *Hands of Grace: The Catholic Sacraments in American Sign Language* became available Jan 6. It was developed by Fr Sean Loomis, the chaplain for the Deaf Apostolate for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Creators of the new project hope the materials, designed specifically for the deaf community, can fill in gaps left by other catechetical programmes and address some of the unique challenges faced by the hearing impaired, who may struggle with participating in Mass, Confession, and the Catholic community.

“A huge challenge among the deaf is that they are very uncatechised, and while that is certainly the case with the vast majority of Catholics, that catechesis is impoverished in a significant way” for those who are deaf, said Loomis.

“Most deaf people at this point aren’t even interested. They already feel turned off,” he said. “So like 1 per cent of deaf people even go to church because they feel like the church of any denomination really has nothing to offer them.”

The new project offers three-part videos on each sacrament. Each segment is about 6-10 minutes long, and together they discuss the presence of the sacrament in scripture and tradition, the theology of the sacrament, and the sacrament’s personal significance.

“The first video ... [introduces] them to the scriptural defence of where Christ established the sacraments so that they get exposed



Sign language. (CNA photo/Andrey Popov via Shutterstock)

to the Word of God as well as the writings of the Church fathers... So that they see what the Catholic Church believes is not something we fabricated somewhere along the way, but has been the same belief from the very beginning age of the Church all the way until now,” he said.

“The second video for every sacrament ... is about the theology of it,” he said. “It’s the catechesis behind it. It’s what’s really going on in the divine plan when this sacrament is received. So it’s sort of the dogmatic approach.”

“The third one is about living the grace. So now that you are a baptised individual, for example, what does that mean about your life? I want them to practise the mental exercise of taking theory and abstract theology and applying it concretely to their very individual and specific life,” he added.

The programme also includes a workbook, which offers quotes from saints and the catechism, as well as works of art. Loomis stressed the value of artwork as a visual stimulus for deaf Catholics to pray and learn about Church history. — *CNA*

## Court awards almost RM1.7mil in damages to Myanmar refugee in negligence suit

PUTRAJAYA: The Court of Appeal here has awarded a Myanmar refugee almost RM1.7mil in damages in a medical negligence lawsuit.

On Tuesday, Jan 28, a three-member bench comprising Justices Kamardin Hashim, Kamaludin Md Said and Nor Bee Ariffin allowed Henry Siang Len’s appeal on the quantum of damages, raising it to RM1,685,594 from RM734,000 awarded by the High Court previously.

Meanwhile, Justice Kamardin also dismissed the appeal by the respondent, Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (HUKM) and two doctors against the High Court’s ruling that Dr Caroline

Gunn could represent Siang Len and was properly authorised to act as his litigation representative.

Siang Len, 30, through his litigation representative Dr Gunn, had filed the suit in 2016 against HUKM, Dr Aminuddin Abdul Rashid and Dr Nazhatul Muna Ahmad Nasaruddin.

According to the facts of the case, Siang Len was to join his wife to resettle in the United States, but on Dec 24, 2010, the night before he was to fly to the US, he was assaulted by a group of people.

As a result of the assault, he suffered injuries in his mouth and also a fracture of his mandible and had sought treatment at HUKM.

Following a serious disastrous

event at the hospital, Siang Len suffered severe and irreversible brain damage and was given a massive overdose of a powerful anaesthetic drug, ketamine, five times the intended dose.

Siang Len is currently in a minimally conscious state and is dependent on others for all activities of daily living.

Following his discharge from hospital in 2011, he had been left under the care of Peter Favre Refugee Convalescence Home 1 (Perch 1), a nursing home for refugees.

Siang Len was represented by a team of lawyers led by P. S. Ranjan while counsel N. Sharmini represented the respondents.

Source: *Bernama*

## Velangkanni invigorates diocesan priests’ enthusiasm for service

MUMBAI: More than 700 priests from 91 of 132 India’s Latin rite dioceses spent four days at the Marian pilgrimage centre of Velangkanni Tamil Nadu to rediscover their enthusiasm to serve the Church and society.

The second congress of the Conference of Diocesan Priests of India (CDPI) addressed the theme *The joy of the priesthood*.

During the January 28-31 congress the priests found joy in celebrating Christ, in building the kingdom of God and being messengers of joy, the organisers said.

They said the Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health in Velangkanni was chosen to reinvigorate the pastoral enthusiasm of the men of the Church and to revive priestly unity.

Cardinal Oswald Gracias (*pic*), archbishop of Mumbai and president of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India who celebrated the opening Mass, recalled the



eight beatitudes of the priests, as already outlined by Pope Francis.

“Joyful is the priest who has Personal authentic solid relations with Jesus; Joyful is the priest who has the smell of the sheep; Joyful is the priest who is simple in lifestyle; Joyful is the priest who reaches out to the peripheries; Joyful is the priest who has a heart of Mercy; Joyful is the priest who is nourished by and nourishes others with the Word of God; Joyful is the priest who shuns the at-

titude of Clericalism and Joyful is the priest who puts his trust in the Lord.”

The CDPI is the association that takes care of guiding the Commission for vocations, seminarians, clergy and religious of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (Latin rite). Launched in 2001, the CDPI obtained official recognition in 2008. In 2014 it approved its internal statute.

Among the objectives of the organisation: to strengthen relationships by building unity among priests; deepen the fraternity between bishops and priests; continue formation in accordance with pastoral spirituality and the signs of the times; expand the pastoral bond between priests beyond the borders of their respective dioceses; create a network of mutual support in the realisation of the kingdom of God at the local level and in the universal Church. — *By Nirmala Carvalho, AsiaNews*



# ‘Unusual kindness’ breaks down walls and prejudices

## Hospitality, central practice of Christian life

KUALA LUMPUR: The Ecumenical Worship for the Week of Christian Unity Prayer was held at the St Paul Anglican Church, Thursday, Jan 23.

This international Christian ecumenical observance, organised by the World Council of Churches, is held annually between Jan 18 and Jan 25 in the Northern Hemisphere. These dates were proposed over 112 years ago to include the Feast of St Peter’s Chair and the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul, to add a symbolic significance.

This year’s theme, *They Showed Us Unusual Kindness* (cf. Acts 28:2) was prepared by the Christian churches in Malta and Gozo (Christians Together in Malta). The history of Christianity in this small nation dates back to the times of the apostles. It is believed that St Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, reached the shores of Malta in AD60. This narrative is described in the first two chapters of the *Acts of the Apostles*, thus the chosen text for Christians in Malta who celebrate the Feast of the Shipwreck of St Paul on Feb 10, in thanksgiving for the arrival of the faith on these islands and this year’s Week of Prayer.

At a two-hour gathering a day before the eve of the Lunar New Year, heads and representatives of various Christian denominations made up almost 200 faithful. From the Catho-

lic Church, Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr Gregory Chan, Fr Christopher Soosaipillai, several religious and parishioners were in attendance.

Host Rev Joshua Ong, in his welcome speech, reminded everyone present that they were there to pray for unity among Christians and reconciliation in the world. He said, “Division among Christians has existed for many centuries. This causes great pain and is contrary to God’s will. Together with Christians all over the world, we offer prayers as we seek to overcome separations.”

St Paul’s choir melodiously sang the Invocation of the Holy Spirit before the Council of Churches Malaysia general secretary, Rev Dr Hermen Shastri led the Prayers for Pardon and Reconciliation, followed by the Presbyterian Church in Malaysia general secretary, Elder Mok Cheh Liang, reciting the day’s readings from Acts chapter 27:18 to 28:10.

The Psalms were sung by Church of the Assumption parish priest Fr Chan, accompanied by seminarian Bro Fabian Anand on the guitar.

The Myanmar Refugee Choir mesmerised the congregation with their soulful rendition of *Non Nobis Domine, Hallelujah* chorus, and *Amen* from Handel’s *Messiah* before Christ Methodist Church Pastor Rev Tan Chew Mae shared the Gospel of Mark (chapter 16:14-20).

Archbishop Julian Leow shared the day’s reflection emphasising how many migrants in today’s world suffer a similar fate at sea as the 276 passengers with St Paul, who were at the mercy of the elements of nature, and how they probably felt hopeless.

“On the land, different kinds of storms also rage. Since there are things all around us that could be feared, kindness and hospitality are much-needed fruits of Christian witness today. The contemporary Christians of Malta, in choosing this theme, remind us it was through unusual kindness that a divided people were drawn closer together, and the Gospel was furthered,” he said.

Hospitality was considered a central practice of the Christian life and a much-needed virtue in the search for Christian unity, as it calls for a greater generosity to those in need. “It’s no surprise, given that Christians themselves were outsiders in the Roman Empire that deemed Christianity dangerous, at worst, and misguided, at best. As part of an illegal and widely-considered subversive sub-culture, Christians practised hospitality to the stranger.

“Further, as Christianity spread across the multi-cultural Roman Empire, it took root in diverse cultural and ethnic contexts, creating a multi-cultural religion. Christians must learn to deal with ‘the other’ across lines of language, culture and ethnicity,” he said.

Archbishop Leow said the basic themes of the gospel: love, joy, peace, kindness, forgiveness, and hope should not be questioned. “For people claiming the faith of Christ, showing love and compassion to immigrants, no matter their status, is a requirement of following Jesus — there is no alternative.”

“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” (Lev 19:33-34). These are the strong words of a God who loves everyone and

desperately wants us to understand that everyone is made in God’s divine image. The way we treat immigrants and refugees is the way we treat Jesus himself. There may be political, economic, and personal reasons for an unwillingness to love immigrants, but according to Jesus, there are no spiritual ones.”

“Strangers”, ‘sojourners’ and ‘foreigners’ in our midst today include the displaced persons (those who have been forced to leave their homes (community) due to violent conflict, war, or a natural disaster), refugees (people who have been forced to leave their nation due to violent conflict or war), migrants (those who have chosen to leave their home country, mainly to escape poverty), asylum seekers (individuals who ask to live in another country to escape severe religious or political persecution or another violation of their human rights and stateless persons (those who are not a citizen under the laws of any country), he explained.

“Christianity is not merely spirituality, but a faith rooted in events in human history: the redemption of humanity and the whole of creation. The unity for which we pray therefore serves to make Christ known in the world. As we approach one another seeking unity, we recognise that we sometimes carry baggage from history, tradition and cultural expectation which can weigh us down and threaten to overwhelm us. There is the danger that, in the face of that experience, we might lose sight of the hope which first called us and so give up reaching for the light which Christ offers us.”

Archbishop Leow said, when unusual kindness is shown, it breaks down walls and prejudices. “It allows us to listen and befriend the other. This gesture restores and strengthens relationships and will result in us expressing unusual kindness in return.”

The congregation prayed and petitioned for Reconciliation, Enlightenment, Hope, Trust, Strength, Hospitality, Conversion and Generosity before a closing blessing by Archbishop Leow, followed by a light supper and fellowship. — *By Gwen Manickam*



Christian Church leaders praying during the Ecumenical Worship for the Week of Christian Unity Prayer on January 23, 2020.

## Recognise one another as assets, not threats

JOHOR BAHRU: “We have come together today as a Church, not based on race or language but on faith,” said Fr Edward Rayappan, Head of the Diocesan Ministry of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs on January 19.

“We must see and recognise one another as assets and not as threats,” he said, during the week of Prayer for Christian Unity service at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, with the theme *They Showed Us Unusual Kindness* (cf. Acts 28:2).

The main aim, he said, was to welcome people from other denominations to a meeting place to pray for Church unity, for peace in the country and the world, and for blessings on one another.

Fr Eddie mentioned that the aim for the day was achieved as there was a visible sign of unity among the Christian churches.

“We hope to further work together on common issues and encourage many more to join us in this mission to be united as one people of God,” he said.

Present for the event were Pastor Andrew Goh from the Lutheran Church, Rev Edward John, Archdeacon from the Anglican Church and Rev Benammie John from the Anglican Church of Pasir Gudang and representatives from the Christian Churches.

He explained that the Epistles or the *Letters of St Paul* talk about the reality of God’s action in our everyday life.

He said, “When we read the Word of God, we must find out our disposition. The Word of God



Pastor, priests and representatives from the Christian Churches participate in the Christian Unity Week service, January 19, 2020.

will never change as what is written is written,” he said, adding that it can be interpreted in different ways.

“If we are sad, we read the Word of God to find comfort. If we are happy, we read the Word of God to find joy,” he said.

He also went on to say that if we are angry, the same word that we read can become hard to accept.

Speaking in context with the gospel reading of the day, he said we come to hear how Jesus rebuked and reprimanded his disciples and followers for their lack of faith and belief in him.

Today, the priest said, we are also reminded that Jesus is truly Our Lord and Saviour who is the only Way, Truth and Life.

“Each one of us is unique as no two people are the same. In order for us to build up the kingdom of God, we must recognise and honour each other as unique,” he explained.

He made it clear that we must outdo each other in charity and not in jealousy.

He also said we need to recognise and accept the gifts and talents each one of us has so as to work together in synergy in building the kingdom of God.

He reminded those present that religion is not meant to be taught but to be caught.

“Let the people see our way of life and come to know the unity we have as Christians,” he stressed.

Touching on the gospel of the day, he said Jesus is inviting all of us, as his disciples, to go out and baptise the world.

Expounding further, he said the purpose of our baptism is two-fold. Firstly, when we are baptised we are elevated as sons and daughters of God.

Secondly, he said, we are called for discipleship to go forth and proclaim the good news to

the world.

“Our baptism becomes redundant if we fail to carry out our mission as Jesus did by building the kingdom of God,” he said.

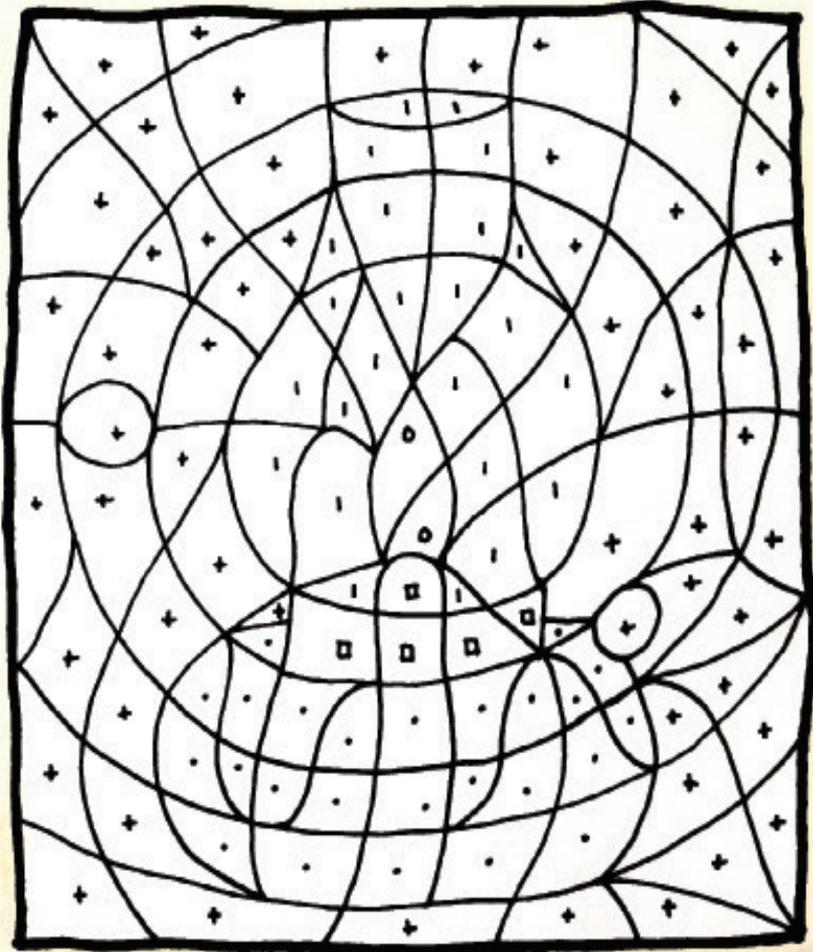
He said whatever we have heard from the gospel of the day, let us put it together for the kingdom of God, adding that “together we achieve.”

“By this, let the people know and be surprised by the way we show our unusual kindness and may they proclaim ‘they showed us unusual kindness’ which is the theme of today’s Ecumenical Prayer Service.”

He concluded the service by thanking all the participating churches, the congregations and their pastors for making this eventful and blessed evening.

The event ended with a group photo after which everyone was invited for a simple fellowship dinner. — *By Vincent D’Silva*

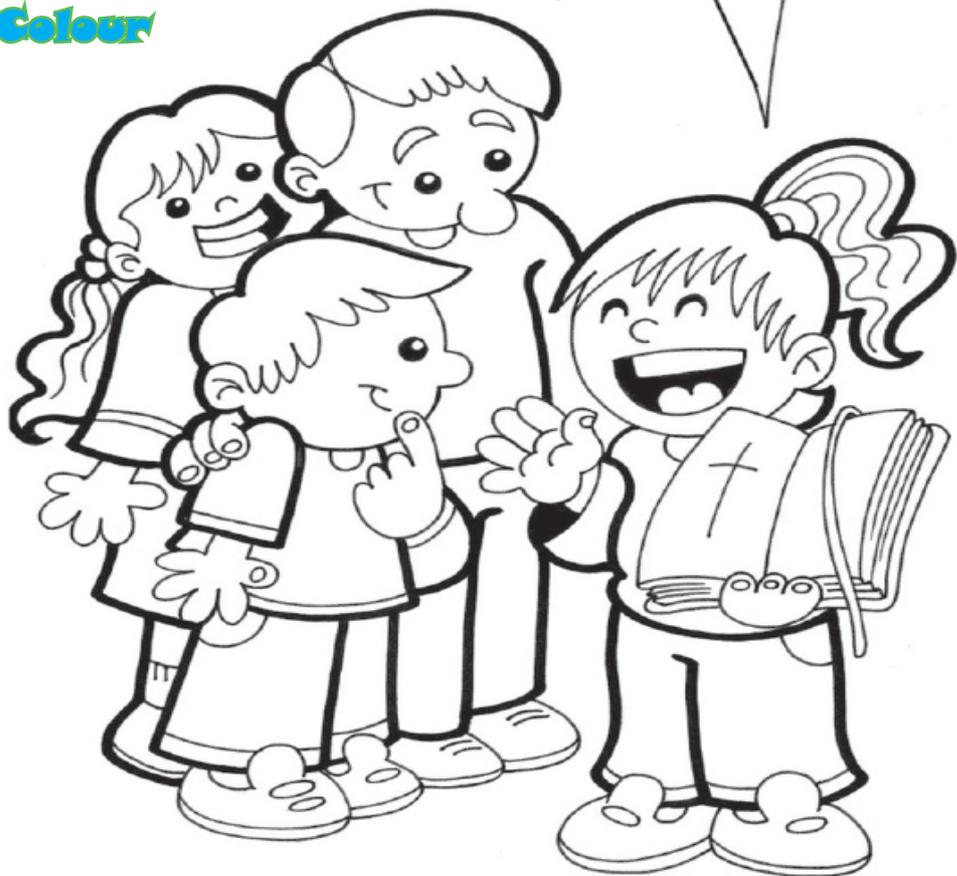
# Little Catholics' Corner



You are the light of the world; Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Mat 14-16)



Let's Colour



What did Jesus tell us we should be like?  
Colour in the spaces according to the code to find out!

- + blue
- white
- orange
- ◻ brown
- red

## WORD SEARCH

T	L	U	N	D	E	R	D	O	S
B	O	A	E	I	C	E	I	S	E
U	L	O	M	T	L	Y	E	E	I
T	H	E	F	P	H	L	T	N	G
E	L	I	M	R	E	G	O	I	H
A	S	A	L	T	E	T	I	H	C
R	R	I	S	L	H	D	O	S	T
T	Y	A	A	I	T	G	N	O	U
H	T	I	N	R	O	O	I	U	F
B	U	G	C	U	P	I	P	L	E

- SALT
- EARTH
- TASTELESS
- NOTHING
- TRAMPLED
- CITY
- LIGHT
- UNDERFOOT
- HILLTOP
- LAMP
- TUB
- SHINES
- SIGHT
- MEN
- PRAISE



Dear children,

Jesus says we are the salt of the earth. Have you ever tasted food that wasn't salty enough? It can taste pretty bland. But do you notice when food has the right amount of salt?

Usually, we don't think about it. It's sort of hiding in the food and making it taste good. Jesus wants us to be like the "salt" in the world, with the goodness and truth that He gives us. Jesus also says that we are the light of the world. Can you imagine a completely dark world; no sun or light or anything? It would be pretty scary. You'd never know what was happening or where you were going. That's what the world can be like for people who don't have the light of God's truth. It's our job to bring the truth to the world so that everyone can see that God loves them.

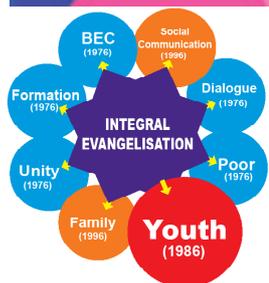
We have to bring God's light everywhere we go. But we must be gentle with people who can't grasp the truth. Otherwise, it would be like shining a torch into someone's eyes and he/she may feel blinded.

We need to start like little candles, lighting the way so that people can follow us towards God.

Aunty Eliz

# YOUTH

February 9, 2020



## YOUNG ADULTS

# Get involved in your parish

**F**or many young adults, parishes are an enigma. They experience them as young children, and some may have been involved in their catechism class. Then they went off to college. Half of those involved teenagers stayed engaged in their faith, while others simply “took a break” from parish life all together and came to believe that the Church had very little to say that was relevant or realistic in their daily lives.

Throughout that process, these young men and women were rarely asked to take part in parish life. In fact, if you were to ask a young adult, “What is a parish?” They would probably struggle to answer.

Young adults are seeking more, and they deserve a community that is seeking them. So, for those young adult seekers, we offer these five ways to get involved in your parish, coupled with five ways parishes can involve young adults.

### Young Adults:

1. Pray regularly with your parish. Go to Mass every week and participate in the celebration of the Eucharist. Join in opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly.
2. Find your niche. Most parishes offer a variety of ministries, committees and councils that do good work in the community and for the parish. There is almost always some ministry that will truly speak to your heart and fit with the type of person God has made you to be.
3. Volunteer your expertise. Sometimes, the work you do outside the church is needed within the church. Volunteer to lead a project repairing something, planting, weeding a flower bed or maybe even teaching as a catechist or coaching the youth sports teams.
4. Make friends. Many young adults feel alone until they look around at Mass and find people in the pews like them. Stick around for the coffee morning after Mass, say hello and invite them to your place for brunch, or just start with exchanging phone numbers. And if that doesn't work, then sit closer to them at next week's Mass and catch them before they fly out the door.
5. If it isn't happening, make it happen. Churches do not need to encompass all that is going on in the life of the parish. If you don't see something you would love to see happen, start doing it! Start a small group at your home, begin a zumba session with fellow young adults at a local park, develop a running club or begin doing regular ministry for the homebound at your parish. Start doing it, and invite others to join you.



(HERALD file photo/PDCSD)

### Now, for those who don't fall in the young adult category, but want to see more young adults active in the parish:

1. Make them feel welcome. Take the time to notice the single young adult when he or she walks in on Sunday morning, and notice them again when they sit in your pew. At the end of Mass, include them in the conversation, the invitation to the coffee morning or Sunday brunch. Initially, they will probably find it a bit awkward and will likely decline the invitation for breakfast, but they will feel welcomed and noticed. That's good!
2. Invite young adults to have a voice in parish ministries. Do you see the great gifts young adults can offer to the parish? Take the time to personally invite the young married couple to join in witnessing to those couples who are newly engaged. Invite the single young woman to share her insights on the parish council. Help those who will one day be the “elders” of the Church to have a hand in guiding her into that future.
3. Trust the Holy Spirit. Pray to the Holy Spirit that He will enkindle in these young men and women a zealous response to the great plan He has for your parish and for the Catholic Church. Don't doubt the desires of our young adults to help the Catholic Church to be the kingdom of God on Earth.
4. Provide opportunities for connection. Young adults may not see each other at Mass. After all, there are three or four Masses each weekend, and there are hundreds of other people around. There isn't a designated “Young Adult” section in our parishes, so think creatively about events directly focused at getting young adults connected with one another, and plan those events with at least one young adult!
5. Be open to new ministries. Not everything within the parish has to be put on by the parish. The goal of every parish community should be to encourage every person to be a missionary disciple. We are fed by the Eucharist for the purpose of being sent out. Encourage that, especially in our young adults! Allow them to run ministries that come from the unique vocation each of them has been given, and cooperate to make the ministry grow into a real movement led by the Holy Spirit.

Young adults are a great gift to our Church. While they may be struggling to understand their path in this world, our cooperation with them and our willingness to be attentive to them and the movement of the Holy Spirit within their hearts will only help our Church to do the work of Jesus Christ across the world. — By Wayne Topp, *Catholic Telegraph*

# KAYA 28 begins!

**KOTA PADAWAN:** Kuching Archdiocesan Youth Apostolate (KAYA), in its 28th season in 2020, is back. And it began in a simple but meaningful way... with the celebration of the Mass by Fr Felix Au, the advisor of the Kuching Archdiocesan Youth Commission, and with Fr Leonard Yap, Fr Pratap Baskey, Fr Robert Jissem, Fr John Direk and Fr Ramon Borja concelebrating.

For those who are not famil-

iar, KAYA... is a youthful and holistic FAITH FORMATION for young people organised by the Kuching Archdiocesan Youth Commission – that the youth may experience Christ, get to know Him (not just things about Him) more deeply, love Him more devoutly and serve him more diligently. This leads the young to know and appreciate themselves better and be moved to live a life of service to others especially in the Church.



Sharing session. (photo/KAYC)



Participants all fired up and ready for KAYA 28. (photo/KAYC)

For this year's KAYA, we have 130 young people who generously said 'yes' to this challenging but hopefully life-changing experience. Twenty of them serve as facilitators. They are all so admirable! They are housed in St Lukas Centre from Jan 13 to Feb 17. Five full weeks, and six for the volunteer facilitators. Wow! Big deal, right? All for

Jesus! Kudos to our Kuching youth!

Join me in supporting them with our prayers, our praises and our presents. We appreciate any gift you would offer this cause. Food, drinks, cash, goods. Your generosity would be so appreciated.

May KAYA be a truly enriching experience for all these

young people, their families and dear ones, surely our local Church as well... and why not... for you too as you show your support.

After all, isn't that what KAYA is? Richness... in God's bountiful grace!

KAYA has begun. Never let it end without you getting enriched by it. — **By Fr Ramon Borja**

## WELCOMING THE SABAH YOUTH DAY CROSS

**KOTA KINABALU:** The St Simon Catholic Church community welcomed the 5th Sabah Youth Day Cross and Marian Icon on January 12.

The cross was brought to the Likas parish by 91 delegates, led by its Youth Coordinator Jonathan J, from Holy Trinity's Inobong parish.

They were joined by ten other delegates from St Catherine's Inanam parish. On hand to welcome the visitors were parish Youth Ministry head Denis Tsen, Parish Pastoral Council Chairperson Anne Wong, other leaders as well as parish rector, Fr Cosmas Lee.

During the Sunday morning service, Fr Lee said the parish was "very privileged" to welcome the cross during the Mass of the Baptism of the Lord, which was also the last day of Christmas.

"If there were no crib, there would have been no cross, no Word of God and no Mother Mary. "Jesus was born for us... to die for us. The first one to receive the Word was Mother Mary," he said, adding that in answer to the angel's greeting, Mother Mary simply replied: "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word."

Mary's answer, found in Luke 1:38, is also the theme of this year's Sabah Youth Day.

"Without faith, the cross is meaningless. By accepting the cross in our daily life, it becomes the centre of our faith, hope and strength, that leads us closer to God," he said, adding that he hoped young people would be enlightened by

the Word of God during the ongoing Sabah Youth Day events.

Fr Lee welcomed the Sabah Youth Day Cross and youths from Penampang and Inanam.

Fr Lee also said he was impressed with the Inobong youths' solemn procession as they entered the parish compound to hand over the SYD cross. He added that besides behaving well, they were also way ahead of the 7.30am schedule.

After Mass, the parish-level event continued with fellowship at the parish hall comprising praise and worship, testimonies and performances by the Holy Trinity Inobong youths, St Simon Sunday School Children and the Likas youth.

At the end of the programme, Fr Cosmas thanked everyone who supported and attended the event.

The SYD Cross and icon will be kept in the parish for a week before being passed on to St Catherine's Inanam parish next week.

Meanwhile, since its inception in 2004, Sabah Youth Day (SYD) was created with the purpose of gathering Catholic youths around Sabah with the concept of "from

the youth, for the youth".

Organised by the three dioceses of Sabah, the event is held once in every four years with previous hosts comprising Keningau (2004), Ranau (2008), Tambunan (2012) and Tawau (2016).

The main event this year will be held in Limbahau, Papar on July 25-31.

The theme was inspired by the World Youth Day 2019 which coincided with the goals of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on youth, faith and vocational discernment, held in 2018.

The aim of the 5th SYD is also to help the Catholic youths in Sabah to emulate Mother Mary in being faithful to their call and to stand firm as witnesses of Christ in this generation.

The Sabah Youth Cross accompanied by the Marian icon had been moving from parish to parish around Sabah on a weekly basis.

As the future pillar of the Church, may our young people be faithful in serving God in their endeavour to build a better world. —

**By Tracy Lim**



Parish youth leader Denis Tsen receiving the SYD cross from Inobong youths during the handing over ceremony.



Parish youths performing during the event at the hall on Jan 12



Youths from St Simon Likas and St Catherine's Inanam parish.

For more enquiries, please contact:  
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Tel: 03-2026 8290 / 03-2026 8291

MEMORIAM

4th Year Anniversary

In Ever Loving Memory of  
**Benjamin Joseph Vergis**

"Surely goodness & kindness will follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever"



Born: 4-10-1976

To God: 8-02-2016

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by:  
Father: Vergis, Mother: Theresa, Wife: Dilashini,  
Daughter: Natasha, Sister, Brothers-in-law,  
Sisters-in-law, Nieces, relatives and friends.  
"Love You Benny"

40th Day Memorial  
In Loving Memory of



**Amlor Mary Savari Muthu**

Wife of the Late Maria Joseph  
(Ex-KTM CI and MRT Singapore)

From the Lord: 04-05-1935  
To the Lord: 01-01-2020

For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we will certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. - Romans 6:5

The 40th day memorial Mass will be celebrated on Saturday, 8th February 2020 at 6.00pm at the Church of St Louis, Taiping and thereafter Prayer and dinner at 7.45pm at our residence No. 84 Jalan Muzzafar Shah 34000 Taiping, Perak.

Deeply missed and forever cherished by Children and In-laws, Grandchildren, Great-grandchild, Sisters, Nephews, Nieces, Relatives and Friends.

6th Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of  
**Hazel Renee**



16.04.1958 - 14.02.2014

We knew little that morning that God was going to call your name. In life we loved you dearly, in death we do the same. It broke our hearts to lose you, you did not go alone For part of us went with you, the day God called you home. You left us peaceful memories, your love is still our guide And though we cannot see you, you are always at our side. Our family chain is broken, and nothing seems the same But as God calls us one by one, the chain will link again.

Deeply missed and forever loved.

In Loving Memory of

7th Anniversary

4th Anniversary



**Claudia Theophilus**  
Departed:  
2nd February 2013

**Alfred Theophilus JR**  
Departed:  
9th January 2016

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

Forever in our hearts and thoughts;  
cherished and missed by loved ones.

THIRD ANNIVERSARY

Joseph Nathan

26th February 1931 - 11th February 2017

In loving memory of our beloved Dad and Grand-Dad Christmas will never be the same again, Birthdays and Fathers Day will never be the same, Your singing, your drumming of the tabla, playing of your favourite songs We miss you dearly Dad. In the Lord's House you find love and peace For that we are joyous for you have returned Home to the Lord.

Just a Memory Away

I'm no longer by your side, But there's no need to weep; I've left sweet recollections, I'm hoping you would keep. Eternal joy and memories, Stay in our hearts forever, Strengthening our special bond that parting cannot sever. Now it's time to journey on, So let your faith be strong, For I am in a better place...I'm home where I belong. And if times of loneliness bring sorrow and dismay, Don't despair, for I am there...Just a Memory Away  
Rita S. Bee



Remembered by Fatima, Patrick, Philips, Peter, Lawrence, Ann, and all the grand children, great grand children, relatives and friends.

Honour your Father and Mother  
(Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16)

Our Beloved Parents

7th Anniversary

38th Anniversary



**B. A. Elizabeth**  
Departed:  
17-02-2013

**M. C. Paul**  
Departed:  
23-05-1982

Always cherished by your sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, relatives and friends.

9th Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of



**Steve Jeremiah Pakiesamy**

Born: 18th January 1984  
Departed: 4th February 2011

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by:  
Father: S. Pakiesamy  
Mother: Janet Maria  
Sister: Sandra Jaqueline  
Brother: Mr & Mrs Sean Jamie & Family.

15th Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of



**W. Roy Augustine**  
Called to the Lord:  
11-02-2005

"May his soul rest in peace. Amen."

Always cherished, loved and remembered by son, daughter-in-law, daughters, sons-in-law, grandchildren and all loved ones.

31st Day Memorial Service



**MARY SAVARIA FERNANDO**  
27/08/1933 - 12/01/2020

Husband: Arulanantham Joseph (Deceased)  
Son: Anthony Ravindra (Deceased)  
Daughter: Shanthini Martha  
Son: Joseph Ganandra (019-2656350)  
Deeply missed and forever loved by family and loved ones.

A requiem mass will be held on  
**9th February 2020 (Sunday) at 10:15 a.m** at the  
**Church of Our Lady of Lourdes Klang, Selangor.**

Thereafter you and your family are invited for  
**prayer and lunch at 12:30 p.m** at  
**No: 1 Jalan Sembilang Satu off Jalan Teluk Pulai, 41100 Klang, Selangor.**

Please treat this as our personal invitation from the family. We wish to express our deepest appreciation and heartfelt thanks to all for your support during our recent bereavement.

For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

- 1 Thess. 5:9-11

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Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."  
Psalm 91:1-2

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# Structure of catechesis needs to change

## Focus on evangelisation and not sacramentalisation

SINGAPORE: There is a need for change at the way our local Church gives religious instruction to young people.

The Church's current focus is for our young people to receive the Sacraments such as Holy Communion and Confirmation. However, this approach assumes that their faith would grow as they age. But, is this the case?

"The same applies for the RCIA catechumens in their journey," said Archbishop William Goh. In his address to about 250 catechists, youth and RCIA coordinators at the Launch of the Catechetical Year, His Grace outlined the issues and challenges facing catechesis in the Church.

"One big frustration in the Church is that our catechists have not made our young people truly fervent Catholics. Our youth are being sacramentalised, not evangelised, and we think because of this, we have done our part," said Archbishop Goh during the January 4 event at the Catholic Archdiocesan Education Centre.

But, it is not possible to form people who are not interested in God because they haven't encountered Him. Why teenagers are always so bored during catechism is not because the sessions are not planned well. It's simply because they are not interested, he said.

To illustrate, he drew parallels between this and parishioners who attend Mass every weekend. Those who are forced to go would want a short homily and for Mass to end quickly. Those who have truly encountered God would



Archbishop William Goh speaking during the Launch of the Catechetical Year. (Catholic News Singapore/VITA Images)

yearn for a fruitful and insightful homily.

"If you don't cooperate with God and get to know Him, nothing is going to change when you receive the Sacraments. When you try and form people who don't know God, it's going to be a challenge," he said.

Christianity is all about relationship, about belonging. "Unless you have a relationship with Him, there can be no catechesis ... there will just be head knowledge."

This can be seen clearly by the paucity of young people who return to serve in their parishes after Confirmation or the number of catechumens who serve in the ministries.

Although there are no quick-fix solutions, Archbishop Goh suggested having more re-

treats for young people and for catechists to re-think their curriculum to focus on how their teens can first be evangelised.

Another suggestion was to make the catechism classroom environment a more community-centred one.

"A community is where there is love, sharing and fellowship ... peers are often the best witnesses of Christ because through their actions, their friends will be inspired to want to know God more."

Archbishop Goh added that classes should be held in smaller groups of 15 to make it easier to build community and promote sharing, where doctrines can then be introduced.

He also reminded everyone that "catechesis

is the work of the whole community, not just catechists. Parents and even schools have a part to play."

Young people today are very smart, they have many questions and need to talk about them in order to understand what they are searching for in life, he said.

Fr Terence Kesavan, Catechetical Director of the Office for Catechesis (OFC), said catechesis "cannot just be head knowledge but more towards making disciples" and the most important people for this are catechists themselves.

"Catechists are first called to be discipled, then be a disciple to others," he said.

He said to be a disciple, catechists must be part of a community, evangelising, have a strong prayer life and know Scripture. "We need to have these in our lives before teaching others to do the same."

Fr Terence emphasised that catechesis should be for everyone and not just young people and that parents should set the example for their children in this area.

"When your children see you praying, going for Bible courses and growing in your faith ... they take the example and will not see their faith as a chore," he said.

He urged all Catholics to pray for "a Church that is growing in its catechesis, a Church where the people are growing in their faith and knowledge." — **By Jared Ng, Catholic News Singapore**

## Church must recognise the gifts of older Catholics

VATICAN: Old age "is not a disease, it's a privilege," and Catholic dioceses and parishes miss a huge and growing resource if they ignore their senior members, Pope Francis said.

"We must change our pastoral routines to respond to the presence of so many older people in our families and communities," the Pope told Catholic seniors and pastoral workers from around the world.

Pope Francis addressed the group Jan 31 near the end of a three-day conference on the pastoral care of the elderly sponsored by the Vatican Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life.

The Catholic Church at every level, he said, must respond to the longer life expectancies and changing demographics evident around the world.

While some people see retirement as mark-

ing the time when productivity and strength decline, the 83-year-old Pope said, for others it is a time when they are still physically fit and mentally sharp but have much more freedom than they had when they were working and raising a family.

In both situations, he said, the Church must be there to offer a helping hand if needed, benefit from the gifts of the elderly and work to counter social attitudes that see the old as useless burdens on a community.

When speaking with and about older Catholics, the Church cannot act as if their lives only had a past, "a musty archive," he said. "No. The Lord also can and wants to write new pages with them, pages of holiness, service and prayer."

"Today I want to tell you that the elderly are

the present and tomorrow of the Church," he said. "Yes, they are also the future of a Church, which, together with young people, prophesies and dreams. That is why it is so important that the old and the young talk to each other. It is so important."

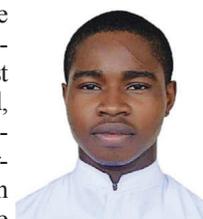
"In the Bible, longevity is a blessing," the Pope noted. It is a time to face one's fragility and to recognise how reciprocal love and care within a family really are.

"Giving long life, God the father gives time to deepen one's awareness of him and to deepen intimacy with him, to draw closer to his heart and abandon oneself to him," the Pope said. "It is a time to prepare to consign our spirit into his hands, definitively, with the trust of children. But it also is a time of renewed fruitfulness."

— **By Cindy Wooden, CNS**

## Kidnapped Nigerian seminarian killed

SOKOTO, Nigeria: One of four Nigerian seminarians kidnapped last month has been killed, reportedly by his abductors. The three seminarians kidnapped along with him were released in the weeks following their kidnapping.



"With a very heavy heart, I wish to inform you that our dear son, Michael was murdered by the bandits on a date we cannot confirm. He and the wife of a doctor were arbitrarily separated from the group and killed. The Rector identified the corpse this afternoon," Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto, Nigeria, said in a statement released Feb 1.

Michael Nnadi (pic) was 18 years old. Information about the woman killed with Nnadi is not yet available.

Nnadi himself was taken by gunmen from Good Shepherd Seminary in Kaduna, around 10:30 pm on Jan 8.

With him were Pius Kanwai, 19; Peter Umenukor, 23; and Stephen Amos, 23. The four seminarians were at the beginning of their philosophy studies.

The gunmen, disguised in military camouflage, broke through the fence surrounding the seminarians' living quarters and began shooting sporadically. They stole laptops and phones before kidnapping the four young men. — **CNA**

## Admiration as Pope extends Indian cardinal's term

NEW DELHI, India: Pope Francis has extended the tenure of Cardinal Oswald Gracias (pic) as the archbishop of Bombay after he crossed his canonical retirement age, which leaders say will benefit the Church in India.



A letter from the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples said Pope Francis had asked Cardinal Gracias to remain "until other provisions are made."

"It is a laudable decision. The Christian community stands to benefit immensely," said Father Babu Joseph, former spokesman of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India.

Cardinal Gracias turned 75, the canonical age of retirement from the office of the archbishop, on Dec 24. He had submitted his resignation to Pope Francis on Nov 30.

The cardinal is a member of the team of cardinals whom Pope Francis handpicked to help him in renewing the Vatican Curia.

The Vatican congregation's Dec 6 letter, which has become public recently, expressed "gratitude" to the cardinal for what he is doing

"for the service of the Church in Bombay, in India and in the universal Church."

Father Joseph said Cardinal Gracias has been leading the Church in India at a crucial time "when Christians in the country are increasingly facing a hostile atmosphere amid growing demand to make India a Hindu-only nation."

The cardinal heads the national bishops' conference, and his "international stature and leadership qualities will certainly benefit the Catholic Church in India immensely," said Fr Joseph, a Divine Word priest based in Indore city in central India. — **ucanews.org**