

HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

Mission Statement

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

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For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

2 Tim 1:6-7



Growing in the Spirit Seminar formation for leaders

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Malacca Johore Diocese launches PROTEC 3, Stop Plastic Pollution

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'Full members of the Church' Catholics with disabilities contribute to Synod on Synodality

P 11

By Patricia Pereira

KUALA LUMPUR: The upcoming Budget 2023, set to be tabled on October 7, is expected to be held under unique circumstances.

Much hope is pinned on the national budget to resolve the many economic problems brought about by the just-abated COVID-19 pandemic, the current political instability and the inflation spike, among others.

Faced with the threat of increasing inflationary pressures, as well as the likelihood of a General Election soon, the government has to find ways to strike a balance between ensuring the well-being of the people and the country's economic sustainability for this coming budget.

Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz has given an assurance that the national budget will prioritise maintaining the current economic recovery momentum, continuing reforms to improve the people's welfare, and building resilience to ensure that we, as a nation are ready for any future challenges.

Glaringly absent is any mention about comprehensive or innovative measures to curtail corruption, the core driver of illicit trade and other unnecessary leakages to the Malaysian economy.

Nevertheless, there are calls for the prevention and elimination of corruption at all levels.

The National House Buyers Association (HBA) said that Budget 2023 needs to make homeownership affordable for the ordinary *rakyat* to have equity in this country. To make this possible, the HBA has called on the government to genuinely address corrupt practices in the industry, be it at the level of the local authority, state authority or federal authority, and remove loopholes that perpetuate and facilitate corrupt practices.

The Sultan of Perak, Sultan Nazrin Shah, addressed this depravity recently, saying that Malaysia cannot be complacent or in denial about the existence of corruption, especially after dropping five rungs in the annual global corruption perception index.

With Malaysia falling from 57th to 62nd place in Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), the Sultan said that an honest assessment of corruption should be mandatory – sincere and objective – based on facts, as proof that Malaysians are truly serious in fighting and combatting, even to the point of totally eliminating corruption.

The Sultan said that even issues like potholes, clogged drains, illegal encroachment and poorly-managed parks were a reflection of today's standard of governance.

"The attitude and response towards these issues will determine whether or not corruption is to be addressed with real determination or merely empty rhetoric that is devoid of, or not accompanied by meaningful action," the Sultan was reported as saying during a book launch on corruption recently.

Pope Francis too has spoken out against corruption on many



Let's all fight corruption

occasions and has openly denounced the "scourge" of corruption and stressed the importance of transparency among public entities, the private sector and civil society.

"Corruption is not countered with silence," the Pope once said. "We must speak about it, denounce its evils, and try to understand it so as to show our resolve to make mercy reign over meanness, beauty over nothingness."

Honesty, justice, a sense of duty and transparency are the essential pillars of a mature civil society and, as Christians,

Corruption is not countered with silence. We must speak about it and denounce its evils. For sadly, it is the poor who pay for the parties of the corrupt. (The Star filepic)

we must be actively involved in the fight against corruption.

We shouldn't speak about resolving the issue of corruption in theory. Instead we should confront corruption in every sector. It is a necessary step to ensure the dignity and wellbeing of all humanity. For sadly, it is the poor who pay for the parties of the corrupt.



FABC GENERAL CONFERENCE
Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia

Prayer for FABC 50

Blessed are You Father who in your great love, sent your Only Begotten Son to reconcile us to you and to one another by his Passion, Death and Resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit.

We thank and praise You for the birth of FABC over fifty years ago. By divine providence and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Bishops from Asia met and formed the FABC. May the FABC continue to be steadfast in its mission of love and service for Your beloved people in this vast continent of Asia.

Help us to surmount the challenges that threaten the stability of our families, the dreams of our youth, the integrity of our environment, and the harmony among peoples, cultures and religions Through the intercession and motherly protection of Mary, Mother of the Church and Star of the New Evangelization, may this occasion of the 50th anniversary celebration of FABC be a propitious time to discern

and undertake new pathways for genuine renewal in our mission of making the Gospel alive and life-giving: for the poor, deprived and marginalized, for the displaced and the migrants, and for mother earth who groans with wounds of exploitation. We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Church attendance has been declining since the pandemic. A common lament among the clergy is that church attendance is still not back to normal, that is, how it used to be pre-pandemic. We would have probably expected the faithful to return in droves once restrictions and SOPs were relaxed. But unfortunately, this is not the case.

What is the real cause? Has the pandemic simply exacerbated a trend we hadn't noticed?

The clergy and the various ministries have chosen to see this as a season of challenge, potential and renewal like we haven't seen in a long time. Parishes are organising retreats and sessions for parish leaders and the faithful (see *Growing in the Spirit Seminar formation for leaders*, pg 3; *Understanding the Eucharist & Retreat for Legionaries*, pg 5), while others are finding ways to 'attract' the crowd back by having brainstorming sessions or organising Family Day activities (see pg 6).

There has never been a season without some church departures, the common one being during clergy transfers, but this post-pandemic departure appears to be more concerning. The question is 'why?' Why are some people not planning to come back to church? And is there anything we can do about it?

Perhaps we need to leverage on the communal nature of church gatherings. Church isn't just where we worship...it's where we *worship together*. Church isn't just where we pray...it's where we *pray together*. And Church is where we create human connections, which is something many people crave for. And so, perhaps the various retreats and family days are steps in the right direction. We hope and pray these activities will bear the desired 'fruit'.

More on departures, the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur bids farewell to the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM) Sisters (see *FMDM Sisters complete mission in KL Archdiocese*, pg 3). Many will remember them for their invaluable service, especially in the areas of education, counselling, healthcare clinics and their work with the migrants and youths, among others. What happens now? Does their mission continue? Are we, the laity, ready and willing to step in and assume the responsibilities that the sisters have been shouldering these past 32 years or will we close the chapter on their works of service and relegate it to the annals of our historical archives?

Moving on to history and archives, the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur is currently on a mission to protect and preserve its

cultural heritage (see pg 7), while the Diocese of Malacca Johore will be celebrating its golden jubilee in December this year. In commemoration of the jubilee, we are featuring the history of the churches in the diocese and kicked off with the oldest church in the country – the Church of St Peter, in our September 25 issue. This week we feature the history of the Church of St Francis Xavier, Melaka (see pg 12).

While in the midst of collating write-ups from the parishes, we discovered that we are at a disadvantage when it comes to remembering our history. Every parish has a story that is worth telling but many of us (clergy and laity alike) have become so focused on the here-and-now. We become obsessed with the next page of the diary, on the current liturgical season or the latest parish project, so much so that it is easy to forget that our parishes are museums of 'unwritten history'.

Parishes are not expected to be mini-versions of the National Archive but common-sense should help us in keeping newsletters, orders of services of important events, significant correspondence and e-mails, photos, and so on.

In an often-quoted speech, Pope Paul VI once said to a group of Church archivists:

It is Christ who operates in time and who writes, He Himself, His story through our papers which are echoes and traces of this passage of the Church, of the passage of the Lord Jesus, in the world. Thus, having veneration for these papers, documents, archives, means having a veneration for Christ, having a sense of the Church; it means giving to ourselves, and to those who will come after us, the history of the passage of this phase of 'transitus Domini' in the world.

In other words, even the most mundane details of parish history – an old account book, say, or a musty newsletter – tells us something of the *transitus Domini*, 'the passage of the Lord Jesus' at a particular time in a particular corner of the Lord's vineyard.

An archive, seen with the eyes of faith, is a record of the work of God in time and a monument to the power of Him who preserves the Church despite her many human weaknesses and tensions. Let us keep our eyes open to the great museum of unwritten history that lies in front of us; let us discover it, use it and learn from it!

Patricia Pereira

Faith in God presupposes faith in ourselves

Sometimes our life is overwhelmed by many issues and by people who will shake our faith and relationship with God. Some examples are human conflicts in the community, individuals who show negative elements in faith-witnessing and the scandals within Church communities. The list can go on and on, thus, there are many times we "hear" of people leaving the faith or leaving the Church due to various reasons.

Looking at these constant struggles of the human community, our mission works and evangelisation efforts seem to be "helpless" /in vain, as things go backwards when we face negativity and bad testimonies.

Perhaps, when we are faced with all these struggles, we might, like the disciples in today's Gospel reading, ask Jesus to "increase our faith" too. We tend to push God to settle our struggles, give us the answers to all challenges and to offer us all solutions. Today as we reflect on these words: "increase our faith", let us remember and acknowledge that we need to increase our faith not in "quantity", but in "quality".

"Quantity" of our faith might refer to the ability to show we are in relationship with God outwardly but quality of our faith reflects how deep we are in connection with Him. We face different challenges in life but with the quality of our faith, we will be able to move from the expression "Lord, I have BIG problems" to "Problems, I have a BIG / Almighty God!"

Thus, the use of the mustard seed as an analogy is a great invitation to go beyond our present circumstances, to trust God and to surrender ourselves into His mighty guidance. In fact, looking at the many occasions in life, we do manifest great faith. When a couple promises to hold on to each other in good times and in bad, each is, indeed, professing his/her great faith in God and in each other. When the religious or priests profess their vows or promises during their ordination or final profession, their YES shows the quality of their faith in surrendering their life to God.

Prophet Habakkuk seems to reaffirm the words of Jesus by telling us that the upright man will live by his faithfulness. (Hak 2:4) Faith leads us to go beyond our mental understanding, our logical thinking and our way to respond. Like the parable used by Jesus in today's Gospel, the servant needs to trust, doing his best wholeheartedly as it is our faith that moves us to love and to serve God.

I remember a very powerful poster which I saw many years ago, where a little girl refused to give up her small teddy bear to Jesus, not knowing that Jesus was preparing a bigger teddy bear for her. I identify myself with the little girl in my struggles to saying YES to God because of the lack of faith and trust. In fact, many a time, God does invite us to do the same and we struggle to respond to Him with trust.

The best manifestation of trust perhaps, is ACTION. St James in his letter, chal-

lenges us with these words: faith without works (action) is dead. Yes, indeed we need to manifest our faith through our actions to testimonies. As we believe the gift from God is free of charge, we also trust the ability to be the living testimony which is itself a gift too.

So, we are challenged to live our life as Christians and live it by nurturing and developing the gift of faith. God, perhaps, also wishes to tell us: "Do your best and I will do the rest." If we are willing to share our gift, our time and our talent, we can do wonders. We can do wonders in our families, in our communities, in our churches and in society. If we are not willing to share, nothing happens.

Faith in God presupposes faith in ourselves. Down through the history of the Church, so many great men and women of God, despite their unworthiness, despite their struggles, said YES to God by living their faith, one day at a time, and by surrendering everything to God, they showed the great miracle of uprooting the mulberry tree through their live witnessing.

Today, as we listen to the challenging invitation of Jesus to go beyond, let us strive to be the "servants", acknowledging we are merely servants.... we have done no more than our duty. Let our light shine, in us and through us. The small flame of light and the small mustard seed both have the possibility to make a BIG impact in our life and in the Church.

Lord, increase our faith! As the Church

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Aloysius Tan

27th Sunday of Ordinary Time (C)

Readings: Habakuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4;

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14;

Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

walks together in the process of the Synod of Bishops 2023, perhaps this phrase of the disciples can also be our prayer as a synodal Church. Many of us are sceptical and passive about the journey of synod, we ask many questions, we express a lot of doubts over what the Holy Father proposes. Perhaps, the same negative reactions also happened during Vatican II and other moments in the life of the Church, when we needed to make decisions with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Lord, increase our faith as a Church, trusting that you are the leading force, moving us forward. The synodal Church is a listening Church, a listening Church is a Church of faith.

Reflection: How can I increase my faith in my daily life, through my prayer life, through my charity efforts and through my living testimony?



Fr Aloysius Tan from the Diocese of Penang. He is currently on sabbatical.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

October

- 2 **International Day for Sign Language – Church of the Holy Family, Kajang**
- 2 **Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Paul the Hermit, Bistari Jaya**
- 4-5 **Clergy Monthly Recollection**
- 6 **Archdiocesan Finance Meeting**
- 7 **Sri Seronok Board Meeting**
- 8 **Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of the Sacred Heart**
- 8 **Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of the Holy Redeemer, Klang**
- 9 **Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya**



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Sebastian Francis

October

- 2 **Confirmation – Minor Basilica of St Anne, BM at 8.00am (Eng) and 9.45am (Mand)**
- 3 **CWS AGM at 2.30pm – ZOOM**
- 8 **Rededication of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Silibin at 6.00pm**
- 9 **Confirmation – Church of the Sacred Heart, Kampar at 9.00am**



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

October

- 2 **Parish Pastoral Assembly – Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, JB**
- 3 **CWS Board Meeting and AGM 2022**
- 4 **South Johor Vicariate Clergy Meeting – St Joseph's Church, Plentong**
- 8 **Confirmation – Church of St Joseph, Plentong**
- 9 **Confirmation – Church of St Francis Xavier, Melaka**
- 15 **Confirmation – Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak**
- 16 **Confirmation – Kem Terendak**
- 16 **Confirmation – Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Krubong**
- 18-19 **Clergy Month Recollection – MAJODI Centre**
- 19 **Diocesan Finance Council Meeting – MAJODI Centre**
- 22 **Confirmation – Skudai Catholic Centre**
- 29 **Confirmation – Church of Holy Spirit, Jasin**

Growing in the Spirit Seminar — formation for leaders

BUKIT MERTAJAM: The leaders and members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) in Peninsular Malaysia came for a weekend experience and participation in the *Growing in the Spirit Seminar* (GSS) formation programme at the Shrine of Hope and Harmony, Minor Basilica of St Anne, September 16-18.

Episcopal Advisor to the Peninsular Malaysia Service Team (PMST) for the CCR and CHARIS, Bishop Sebastian Francis, in his keynote address reminded the participants of the bigger Vision and Mission of the Church in Asia and the importance of Unity of Continuity of the Mission — sharing resources with the old and young, the importance of service in communion. He also stressed that discipleship rooted in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist as the way forward for discipleship. We are called to be witnesses and not reporters.

Bishop Sebastian also explained the formation of CHARIS, an instrument at the service of the CCR, instituted as a commission for communities for the purpose of facilitating friendship, mutual service and communion between communities across the world. Bishop Sebastian went on to say, "What the Pope and the Church expect from this new service from CHARIS and from the entire CCR, is to share baptism in the Holy Spirit with everyone in the Church, to serve the unity of the Body



The leaders from the four languages groups at the GSS formation.

of Christ and to serve the poor and those in greatest need, physical or spiritual."

PMST chairman Simon Matthew called to mind something often repeated by Pope Francis — that the CCR is "a current of grace for the whole Church." If the CCR is a current of grace for the whole Church, we have a duty to ourselves, and to the Church, to explain what this current of grace is and why it is intended, and necessary, for the whole Church. In brief, we need to explain who we are and what we offer — or better, what God offers — to the Church through this current of grace. Growing in the Spirit Seminar will help leaders to grow in faith and in their relationship with God.

The GSS was presented by both Dr Ste-

ven Selvaraju and Fr Clement Lim to the 100 participants. The GSS aims to help those who have attended the Life in the Spirit Seminar to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the Catholic faith while continuing to grow their relationship with God and to lead them to becoming more involved in the community and in the mission of the Church.

There are nine topics for the GSS — *Revelation of God, Sacred Bible, Mother Mary, Prayer, Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist), Sacraments of Healing (Reconciliation and Anointing of the sick and Service of Communion (Marriage and Holy Orders), Life in Community, Evangelisation and Empowered to Serve.* — PMST



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #103



Greetings and Peace Dear People of God.

The GE15 is near. Our Malaysia Day celebrations are over. The declining ringgit should be cause for concern, but it does not seem to worry the ministers. The flood warnings and state preparations are underway. *Projek Bantuan Dapur*, initiated by Caritas MJDOHD, appeals for your help. The synodal Church listens to "what the Spirit is saying to the Church", the *sensus fidei* and the revealed will of God. Begin the listening at BECs and parish levels.

Blurred or Blind Times? Jesus once remarked: 'They have eyes that do not see; and have ears that do not hear.' The "Emperor's New Clothes", a story from my younger days, depicts today's multitude. It is awesome that there are so many who cannot separate the truth from the lie; the reality from the illusion; and the permanent from the passing. It took a child to point out that the emperor was naked.

What has blurred or blinded us? Greed? False pride? Racial superiority? Desperate for local heroes? False facade? Compromise for an inflated ego? Deny a failed state, failing economy and failure to admit failures?

We need more children and child-likeness to speak the truth. Do not excuse weaknesses. Face weaknesses to motivate, and to invite reliance.

A Thought for the Week: Success?

As the father, the three brothers, and two sisters stood around their mother's hospital bed, their mother uttered her

last coherent words before she died.

She simply said: "I feel so loved right now. We should have gotten together like this more often."

Missed opportunities or misplaced priorities? Attention and gestures of love ought not to be reserved for special occasions or dying moments. Do not take relationships for granted. Show love and togetherness. Jobs come, jobs go but we cannot be careless with our family, friends, health and faith. They are irreplaceable.

Announcements for this Week

1. All diocesan commissions, ministries, offices, and services are expected to **organise their own retreats or recollections by November**, to discern one's obedience to the Holy Spirit and evaluate one's effectiveness.

2. Effective September 16, the MJD together with the **Creation Justice Commission continues the Protec Campaign Year 3 — Stop Plastic Pollution.** Let's do our part.

4. **Blessed feast day greetings to the Capuchin Community of Ulu Tiram** on the feast of St Padre Pio on September 25.

3. **The MJD reminds** all Catholics and parishes, that wearing of face masks is encouraged. In many places in Malacca and Johor, it is still mandatory to wear masks. Wear masks at night markets, stadiums, malls and houses of worship. Be faithful to the earlier SOPs. Dispensation from Sunday Mass obligation remains unchanged.

This week's Question and Query.

Q asks: Have you heard about the ABCs of LIFE?

1. Yes, I have heard of the ABCs of Life. It is said that if you feel STRESSED, then it is time to give yourself a BREAK. Enjoy some ... ice cream, chocolates, candy, or cakes.

2. WHY? Because when STRESSED is spelt backwards, it is DESSERTS. Enjoy. Be happy!

3. The Alphabet has some advice for you:

- **A-B-C:** Avoid Boring Company.
- **D- E-F:** Don't Entertain Fools.
- **G-H-I:** Go for High Ideas.
- **J-K-L-M:** Just Keep a friend Like ME.
- **N-O-P:** Never Overlook the Poor.
- **Q-R-S:** Quit Reacting to Silly tales.
- **T-U-V:** Tune Urself for ur Victory.
- **W-X-Y-Z:** We Xpect You to Zoom ahead in life.

As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain; and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality. — Albert Einstein

When we connect with the God-given — grace, goodness and good works — within us, we create pockets of God space wherever we are. A better Malaysia begins with you and I. Believe and Live. God bless you all.

Bishop Bernard Paul
September 23, 2022

FMDM Sisters complete mission in KL Archdiocese

By Julie Lim

PORT KLANG: The mission of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM) in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur has come to a completion. The remaining three religious sisters who are residing in Port Klang will be missioned to Ipoh and Taiping. This marks an end to the presence of the FMDM sisters in the archdiocese after 32 years.

Throughout their mission in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, the FMDM sisters had provided educational support, counselling services and health care clinics to various ministries such as the youth, family life, migrant workers, the homeless, and the poor. They reached out to people of all races, faiths and background. The sisters were also actively involved at the Church of St Anne, which their community belongs to.

In appreciation for the contributions of the FMDM sisters, and to bid them farewell, the Church of St Anne organised a thanksgiving Mass, followed by a farewell dinner at the Stella Maris Community Centre recently. Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the Mass. Concelebrants were St Anne's parish priest, Fr David Arulanantham, former parish priest, Fr Lawrence Andrew, SJ, and Fr Michel Dass.

Sr Angelin Gnanapiragasam, FMDM said,



FMDM Sisters residing in Port Klang and Ipoh attended the thanksgiving Mass on September 15. Together with them are Fr David Arulanantham and Archbishop Julian Leow.

"The FMDM sisters responded to the Lord's invitation to the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and have now completed what the Lord had set us to do. As missionaries, we need to move on to where the Lord is calling us to be and to serve next. Our journey towards completion was done in the spirit of discernment, having to put aside all selfishness, attachments and face reality."

Sr Angelin clarified that the FMDM sisters are not leaving the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur due to a lack of vocations.

"I am confident that our FMDM pioneering sisters, sisters who served in Port Klang and who had since passed away, as well as all

FMDM sisters present, will agree that the zeal for the Father's House ignited within us for the past 32 years has now brought us all to a place of peace, gratitude and surrender to God."

She added that the sisters are humbled and grateful for having been given the opportunity to serve the community in Port Klang. "Our life and mission in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, especially with the parishioners of the Church of St Anne, had enriched us and taught us to remain steadfast in our love and commitment to Jesus Christ."

Sr Angelin also expressed gratitude to Archbishop Julian, the clergy and religious.

She specially remembered the late Anthony Soter Cardinal Fernandez who had welcomed the FMDM sisters into the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur in 1990. She also noted that the late Deacon AP Thomas had never failed to render his support for the sisters.

Archbishop Julian said, "The FMDM Sisters had come to the archdiocese, they responded to the needs of the people and served the community well. However, that chapter has now come to a close. I pray that the legacy of the FMDM Sisters will inspire many others to 'pick-up and pass on the baton' by caring and being concerned for the everchanging needs in the community."

"I wish our beloved Sisters courage and wisdom as they discover new horizons to nourish the lives they touch," he added.

Fr David said that the FMDM Sisters have become friends to many of the parishioners, and have been a strong support to many. "The Sisters were present to parishioners and to all peoples in the vicinity. Many know them by name and are saddened that they are leaving. I give thanks to God for the gift of the FMDM Sisters in our home here in Port Klang."

After the thanksgiving dinner, many parishioners and well-wishers were seen expressing their appreciation and saying goodbye to the Sisters. The tears welling up in their eyes were a testament that the Sisters had touched their lives profoundly in many ways.

Moving towards a united Malaysian Church

The Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Team Assembly (PMPTA), with the theme *Listen to the Holy Spirit*, was held on Aug 23 and 24 at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre. Seventy-six delegates, representing the Arch/Dioceses of Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Malacca Johore, were present.

In this final instalment, we focus on the concluding remarks from the three Arch/Bishops and some updates on PMPC 2026.



The delegates at the Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Team Assembly.

"Some Malaysian bishops will be going to Bangkok for the 50th anniversary of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences. The inspiration for the message of the Catholic Bishops' Conference comes from the Scripture passage of the three wise men who came from the east to visit the baby Jesus in Bethlehem and avoid the tyranny of Herod. Tyranny was everywhere. After visiting Jesus, they went back, each by a different route. We will go back on different paths, moved by the same Spirit. Do not be afraid of diversity, it is part of our culture in Asia." — **Bishop Sebastian Francis**

"The living water can be uncontrolled, damaging, destructive, for example, flood waters. But it can also be managed, regulated, channelled for more effect and impact. This is why we need dams. They're necessary so powerful water can be channelled properly and utilised well. In reality, the spiralling movement of the Church is something we cannot run away from. We will continue to repeat, but each time, there are new words, new expressions and we will have to live with that and this is how we move. With each repeat, there is new direction, new synthesis. For a long time, the question of the Kingdom has appeared. For the Kingdom, we have to begin with ourselves, see big, think big and allow ourselves to become big. We must always attempt to see what God is trying to accomplish in our midst. Through prayer, silence. See the way God sees, that's when we see 'big'." — **Bishop Bernard Paul**

"Participation, Communion and Mission can be in any other sequence, but it's like a funnel. We are moving to a point where we are in communion. In Church history, it is similar – everything comes down to Jesus as the centre, and from the centre we go out to the world again. Participation, to Communion, then to Mission. After death, Mission ends and we are finally in Communion again. A funnel, we are at different levels, moving at different speeds. "If you want to go fast, go alone, go far, go together". So, we wait for each other. In the Church, we are at different levels, different speeds, different orientations, but all moving together. The spiral is not out of control, but towards the final destination. Let us reach the destination together and not leave anyone behind. *Participation, Communion and Mission* are always guided by the Holy Spirit." — **Archbishop Julian Leow**

Update on Pan-Malaysian Pastoral Convention – PMPC 2026 by Msgr Peter Ng
It is no longer Peninsular Malaysia, but Pan-Malaysia with a new vision and mission statement.

Vision: Catholic Church in Malaysia coming together as clergy, religious and laity to celebrate, listen and walk in the light of the Lord (Is 2: 2-5) from Sept 9 to 13, 2026.

Mission: The Church as the Voice of the People; Church reaching out in mercy; Church communicating fullness of life; Church growing in holiness.

Objectives of PMPC 2026

Coming together to express our oneness and celebrating our richness of diversity and uniqueness in communion with Christ as the Catholic Church in Malaysia.

Accepting challenges and opportunities, we are strengthened in communion to grow in hope, holiness and mission.

As a communion of missionary disciples, we become more the Salt of the Earth and Light of the World.

Orientation and Direction

We come together and celebrate the beauty and uniqueness in the cultures and regions of Sabah, Sarawak and Semenanjung (CELEBRATE).

Share the uniqueness of the respective pastoral progress and initiatives in Sabah, Sarawak and Semenanjung (Listen).

We focus on challenges affecting the Church in Malaysia especially Family, Church, Social and Ecological issues and in response to them, we take up the mission of the Church in Malaysia to be Salt of the Earth and Light of the World (WALK).

Journey towards PMPC 2026 (sponsored and empowered by the Bishops' Conference). We notice that the Church in East and West Malaysia are already inter-mingling. As a Communion of disciples, we become more

and more the salt of the earth and light of the world.

- **2018:** MCCA Malaysia Catholic Clergy Assembly.
- **2019:** Bishops Conference called for a Pan-Malaysian Pastoral Convention.
- **2023:** Arch/Diocese Pastoral Assembly, Pan-Malaysia Religious Assembly (9-11 June 2023).
- **2023:** Religious Synod.
- **2024:** Regional Pastoral Assemblies: Sabah, Sarawak, Semenanjung.
- **2025:** Journey of 'Salib Malaysia': journey of the Cross through all the churches in Malaysia.
- **2025:** Malaysia Catholic Young People Assembly (MCYPA2025).
- **2026:** PMPC2026 will be held at MAJODI (Sept 9 - 13, 2026).

Pastoral Assembly Handbook

This is for dioceses and parishes in preparation for PMPC 2026

How can we move forward and spiral forward?

How can we implement and grow?

Nothing is concrete, but can be adapted to the context of the parishes.

For the sake of growth.

Malacca Johore Diocese launches PROTEC 3, *Stop Plastic Pollution*

By Maria Lee

JOHOR BAHRU: The Malacca Johore Diocesan Ministry for Creation Justice launched the *Protect Our Earth, Protect Our Children* (PROTEC) Campaign Year 3, with the theme *Stop Plastic Pollution*. This is the third of a five-year campaign which will go on from September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023.

The campaign was launched on Sept 16, during the Mass celebrated for Hari Malaysia at the Church of St Theresa, Masai, followed by a “Go Green Carnival” with workshops on bio-enzyme making, composting, jumble sale of preloved goods and sales of food and drinks.

Spiritual director of the Creation Justice Ministry, Msgr Michel Mannayagam was the main celebrant.

Concelebrating were Fr Paul Sia (assistant priest of the host church), Fr Lawrence Ng (parish priest of Skudai Catholic Centre), and Fr Joe Matthews OFM Cap (assistant priest of the Church of Christ the King, Kulai), and attended by almost 300 parishioners. The Mass and launch were also live streamed <https://youtu.be/y95ep16YJhw>.

Clergy and representatives from several parishes in the dioceses were present to witness this event and to receive banners and posters of the PROTEC Year 3 campaign.

In conjunction with this launch, a set of “Guidelines for Food Catering in the parish”, approved by Bishop Bernard Paul, was announced. It is hoped that these



Msgr Michel Mannayagam celebrates Mass with Fr Paul Sia (left), Fr Lawrence Ng (third from left), and Fr Joe Matthews OFM Cap.

guidelines will further support parishes to reduce the amount of plastics used at events. Parishioners were invited to build the culture of BYOCC — Bring Your Own Container and Cutlery everywhere you go. In his speech, His Lordship ended with a CALL to “think

clean, be clean and keep clean”.

The Church of St Theresa, Masai (CSTM) has been annually organising the “Go Green Carnival” on Hari Malaysia since 2018, only interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. This year was their “Go Green Carnival 4.0”. The

diocesan committee is grateful for the generosity of the CSTM parish priest, Fr Adrian Francis Mathews, and his team led by Irene Mirandah, for sharing their Go Green event with the diocesan team, providing us with a platform to celebrate the Launch of PROTEC Year 3 in a fun filled way!

Two transitional deacons for Penang Diocese

PENANG: Seminarians Bro Desmond Jensen and Bro Raymond Raj were ordained as transitional deacons by Bishop Sebastian Francis on Malaysia Day, September 16.

The Church of the Divine Mercy was filled with over 400 faithful, including Bishop Emeritus Antony Selvanayagam, clergy, seminarians, laity from various parishes, family and friends.

During the homily, Bishop Sebastian highlighted the importance of this three-stage sacrament that includes deacon, priest and bishop. Quoting Pope Francis’ encyclical *Joy of the Gospel* that mentions the Beatitudes and the Last Judgement, known as the two hinges of the Gospel, he said, “Desire for blessedness and more holiness as you grow in the sacrament of the Holy Order, as deacon and a disciple, don’t minimise the life and ministry of a deacon and discipleship as it is the foundation of Baptism.”



Bishop Sebastian with Deacons Raymond Raj and Desmond Jansen and their parents. (Photo/MLTR)

“Diaconate is an identity, specifically the identity of Christ the Servant, and hopefully, that identity will not leave when you are ordained as a bishop or a priest. And that is why the highlight of the diaconate is charity, feeding of the orphans and widows. Enjoy your ministry as representative of Christ the Servant not only in the Church but in the community,” added Bishop Sebastian, addressing the young deacons who took eight years to complete

their formation as seminarians at College General, Penang.

The celebration ended with thanksgiving speeches by Deacon Desmond and Deacon Raymond, who had the following messages to share.

“Enjoy your life but never ever compromise your prayer life because your greatest strength is in your prayer life. Stay happy, stay humble and stay holy always” said Deacon Desmond from the Minor

Basilica of St Anne.

“Eight years of formation in seminary taught me one thing, that is ‘trust in God’ no matter what happens in your life. Today I am still learning how to trust God in every situation in my life. My message to each one of you today, for the Lord knows our desire and His will for each one of us is beautiful,” said Deacon Raymond from the Church of the Divine Mercy. — **By Pamela Vinsence**

Understanding the Eucharist

KUALA LUMPUR: Parishioners of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima recently attended a talk on *The Eucharist – Our Source and Summit* by Fr Michael Chua.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life. It is an action of thanksgiving to God for His work of creation, redemption and sanctification. All other sacraments, ecclesiastical ministries and works are oriented toward the Eucharist.

The richness of this sacrament is expressed in different names such as The Lord’s Supper which is a Memorial of the Passover of our Lord. It is by the action of ‘Breaking of Bread’ that the disciples recognise Jesus after His resurrection. The Eucharistic Assembly, celebrated amidst the assembly of the faithful, is the visible expression of the Church. The first Christians used this expression to designate their Eucharistic Assemblies. By doing so they signified that all who eat the broken bread will be in communion with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Memorial of the Lord’s Passion and Resurrection commemorates Christ’s Passover and is made present in the sacrifice Christ offered, once and for all, on the cross. The Holy Sacrifice is an act of adoration, sanctification, thanksgiving and petition. It is also the Holy and Divine Liturgy because the Church’s whole liturgy finds its centre and most intense expression in the celebration of this sacrament. It is Holy Communion because, by this sacrament, we unite ourselves to Christ and Holy Mass where the mystery of salvation is accomplished. And it concludes with the sending forth of the faithful with a mission to spread the Good News.

A similar session in Tamil was held a week earlier, presented by Fr Peter Anthony. — **By Ann Sheela**

Retreat for legionaries



A group photo of the Legionaries with Fr Paul Cheong OFM Cap.

KUALA LUMPUR: The annual Kuala Lumpur Regia retreat was held at the Archdiocese Pastoral Centre on September 17. It brought together 86 Legionaries from 17 different groups.

The newly elected President of the Regia, Ignatius Wang, welcomed everyone to the retreat, post a two-year break due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He encouraged each participant to contribute to the Curia and the

Praesidium.

The retreat director is the Ecclesiastical Assistant for the Legion of Mary, Fr Paul Cheong, OFM Cap. Fr Paul led the group in understanding how Mary can be the cause of our joy and how we can become joyful legionaries. He also mentioned that once we are joyful, we can be effective in our work of reaching out. Fr Paul explained that there is an entire spirituality in the four

Eucharistic words — Receive, Give Thanks, Break and Share and that Mother Mary received God’s grace with gratitude.

The second session focused on *Giving Thanks for Everything*. Fr Paul stated that it is difficult to endure a persevering faith without gratitude. The circle of gratitude is complete only once the giver receives thanks and becomes a receiver.

The next session was on Ex-

pressing Gratitude — that we ought to trust that God knows what’s best for us in our current circumstances, even if the situation is difficult. This concept was explained with the examples of Job and Jacob from the Bible.

Fr Paul emphasised the importance of constantly thanking God for everything and trusting God’s love for us. He also emphasised the importance of spending quiet time with God through various forms of contemplative prayer and meditation.

During the final session on *The Journey and the Goal*, the parish priest of the Church of St Francis of Assisi highlighted that, while our ultimate goal is the Kingdom of God/Heaven, the immediate goal is Purity of Heart.

Keeping in mind *Caring for our Common Home*, single-use plastic was not used during the retreat. — **By Peter J. Pereira**

Brainstorming ways to reach out to the community

By Ng Wai Queen

PENANG: Over 30 BEC coordinators and front liners from the Church of Divine Mercy (CDM) attended a weekend retreat at the Stella Maris Retreat Centre. Facilitated by a leading corporate figure and BFM talk show host, Philip See, the theme was *Touching Lives*.

Since churches re-opened for public worship following the relaxation of pandemic SOPs, parishioners have been flocking back to church. However, there is still a large number who continue to stay away, having grown accustomed to watching Mass online. Therefore, the aim of the retreat was twofold:

1. To re-energise front liners and strengthen their bond.
2. To brainstorm for ways to reconnect with existing parishioners and reach the wider community.

In the six sessions held over the weekend, familiar Bible readings were shared from a fresh perspective that encouraged reflection. For example, we discussed the different ways of expressing and experiencing love through words of affirmation, physical touch, acts of service, giving gifts, and spending quality time. Then we applied this to the story of Mary



A group photo of the BEC coordinators and front liners with parish priest Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap.

and Martha. Mary is typically presented as the one who chose “the better part” because she spent quality time with Jesus, sitting at His feet.

However, this does not mean Martha loved Jesus less; she merely expressed her love differently — through her acts of service, hospitality, and generosity. Love is not only expressed but experienced in different ways.

When working in BECs and ministry, we often feel discouraged and undervalued when we are not appreciated in ways we are used to, or when we do not receive the response we hope for. That’s when we need to remind ourselves that not everyone will perceive and respond to our acts of service in the same way. We may need to

detect the more subtle ways someone shows their appreciation. We may even need to carry out our acts of service in a different manner. Ultimately, boundaries have to be respected.

In the story of Jacob wrestling with God, we studied Jacob’s life and found that he went through continuous struggles and fears due to his deceit, pride, wilfulness, and self-reliance. However, he showed admirable perseverance in confronting his troubles. We reflected on the parts of his character we identified with and on how we deal with our own struggles. Can we admit our weaknesses and rely humbly on God’s grace and power? Or do we hold on to our pride and continue to struggle without God? Do we persevere, working

hard while waiting to receive the fruits of our labour in God’s time? Or do we scheme and lie because we want instant results?

Each session was interspersed with group discussions. We discussed how the pandemic affected our parish and discovered that among the negatives were many positives. For example, there are more virtual resources available; live-streaming brought Holy Mass into many more homes, and the youth group is active and energised. We can even engage with the elderly online because they have learned to use the internet.

In the final session, we shared how the in-sights and tools gained could be applied to improve the BEC’s dynamics and enhance outreach activities.

The retreat concluded with Sunday Mass celebrated by parish priest, Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap. In his homily, Fr Michael cautioned us against doing things halfheartedly. When we work in the vineyard of the Lord, good intentions are not enough, we must also be fully committed. He warned us that the road ahead would be challenging and urged us to pray for God’s guidance.

What is the Lord telling us to do? Once we have determined our mission, we must stay committed to the end, even when others do not support us. Fr Michael ended by thanking the retreatants for sacrificing family time to take part in the weekend retreat, and for always being at the service of the parish.

Family Day to bring the people back

JOHOR BAHRU: The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus organised a Family Day recently to encourage parishioners to come, celebrate and socialise as a community. Current Mass attendance has been hovering at around 60 per cent of the pre-pandemic figures. The Family Day was an endeavour of getting the parishioners back into a feeling of community.

The day began with a bi-lingual Mass celebrated by Bishop Bernard Paul. He was joined by the cathedral’s parish priest, Fr Simon Yong SJ, and Fr Sebastian Koh SJ, and Fr John Pereira.

After Mass, Bishop Bernard, special guests Kapitan Cina Datuk David Wong, and Assemblyman YB Andrew Chen, launched the day by cutting the ceremonial ribbons. They were welcomed by a 12 Drums salute.

There were games by the youth, the sale of baskets and handicrafts made from recycled plastic wrappers, and food including *nasi lemak*, *roti jala*, roasted pork, *char siew*, and chicken rice. The Filipino community prepared their dishes including a twist on the *ice kacang*. Children met clowns who fashioned balloons into hats, and animals, and they also competed in a colouring competition. There were performances by a local musician, the Catechism children, altar servers, the Filipino commu-



Bishop Bernard Paul with guests Kapitan Cina, Datuk David Wong and Assemblyman, YB Andrew Chen at the opening.

nity, and senior members of the parish.

Fr Simon took to the stage to sing a medley of Coldplay’s ‘Yellow’ and Crazy Rich Asian Katherine Ho’s ‘Water Tower’. He received rousing applause, especially when he sang in Mandarin. The highlight was the lucky draws, which ran throughout the day, with the first prize being RM5,000 in cash.

A new condition implemented was the “no single-use plastic” policy. Food stall owners rose to the challenge of Laudato Si’ when packaging food. Parishioners also brought their own cutlery, plates, tiffin carriers, and containers to

“tapau” (takeaway).

The response was overwhelming. Even the rain did not prevent people from staying until the event ended at 3.00pm. However, the food ran out within an hour or two after the opening, with many coupons not utilised. When Fr Simon discovered this, he quickly mobilised some food stall owners and announced that the following Sunday, food stalls would be available for those with coupons. Family Day Two turned out well too, with parishioners taking time to stay back after the 7.45am, and the 10.15am Sunday Masses to enjoy the array of food. — By Angila Yong, ofc

My church, my home

PENANG: The Church of the Holy Name of Mary celebrated her feast day on September 18, preceded by a triduum Sept 15-17.

It was a joyous occasion for the parishioners and devotees who came from neighbouring parishes. This year’s theme was *My Church, My Home*.

The parish organised a trilingual formation to help parishioners gain a deeper understanding of the theme. Fr Patrick Massang, CSsR, conducted the session in English, while the Chinese and Tamil sessions were delivered by Fr Simon Lau and Fr Francis Andrew respectively.

During the session, the priests explained what ‘inclusive’, ‘creative’, and ‘bridge-building’ meant. Participants gained insights into how to be inclusive and not build barriers based on race or language. They also understood how to be creative in spreading the message, and lastly, that they are all bridge-builders of relationships.

The multilingual feast day Mass on Sept 18 was celebrated by Fr Aloysius Tan. “We thank and praise God for this opportunity to gather as a community and to witness the community coming to life again,” said Fr Aloysius.



Fr Patrick Massang CSsR conducting the session in English at the Church of the Holy Name of Mary.

Young couple venture into eco-friendly, homemade soap business

By Gwen Manickam

SETIA ALAM: Sorting recyclables in Christchurch, New Zealand, changed Anna Lee's perspective of the world, as she knew it.



Anna Lee and Louis Koh

The UTAR, Kampar, English education major worked as a facilitator at a home school in Subang for a year to save enough money to travel

around the island country in Oceania for a year. There she worked odd jobs at kiwi orchards, packing lily bulbs at the factory and milking cows at a dairy farm with her then-boyfriend, Louis Koh.

"It was my last job at the recycling factory that opened my eyes," said the 26-year-old. "The mountain of trash they sorted through was astounding, and how much of it could be recycled was uncertain."

When they came back to Malaysia in 2019, Anna felt lost.

"I didn't want to return to teaching or facilitating. I wanted to do volunteer work or something close to nature," said the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Klang, parishioner. But the pandemic struck and Anna resorted to working as a freelance translator and copywriter. Along the way, she ventured into creating handmade soaps on a small scale, using essential oils and plant oils.

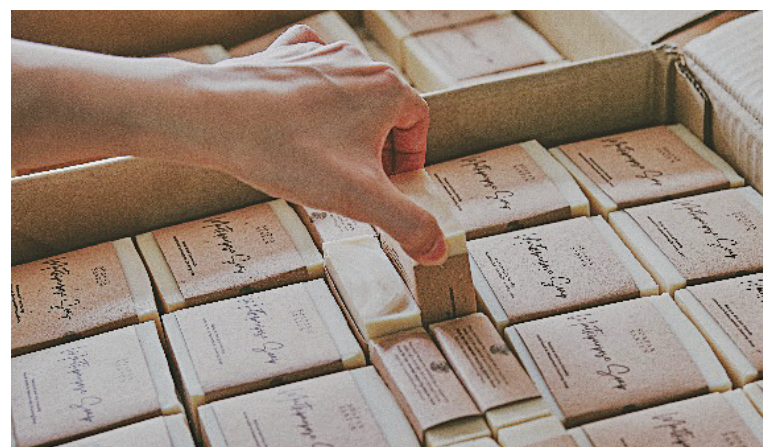
Next, her mother highlighted that they had a lot of used cooking oil

in their home, as Anna's dad could only eat food cooked in new oil due to his eczema.

This led the entrepreneur to research and experiment with making soaps with the used cooking oil. Anna eventually found a recipe that worked well. She shared the end product with family and friends and received positive feedback. The multi-purpose soap concoction is not to be used on the body but works well with washing grease from plastic containers and dishes.

The demand for the soap grew through word-of-mouth, and more people were also offering them used cooking oil. "There are large companies that collect used cooking oil, but there is always a minimum requirement. We just keep note of who offers, and when we are going to that vicinity within Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, we inform them and pick up the used oil."

Anna adds pure coconut oil and sodium hydroxide to the used oil



Multipurpose soap wedding favours.

to make the soaps. She said it takes up to two and a half hours to make one loaf of soap, which must then be cured for four weeks before it's ready for sale.

"Sometimes products run out and we are not able to supply immediately because of the curing time. We recently invested in a dehumidifier; it helps but it still takes four weeks for the water in the soap bars to dry up." A loaf weighs 1.2 kg and can be cut into 10 bars. Each bar goes for RM3.70.

Anna, who works out of her

home, takes care of the production and packing while Louis, her husband of two months, manages the marketing and finance of their business, aptly named *Soapan Santun*.

In addition to making soaps from cooking oil, she makes shampoo bars, and body and face soaps. In light of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and his call to 'love our common home', all their products are packed with plastic-free material and available on the *Soapan Santun* website, Shopee and zero waste stores.

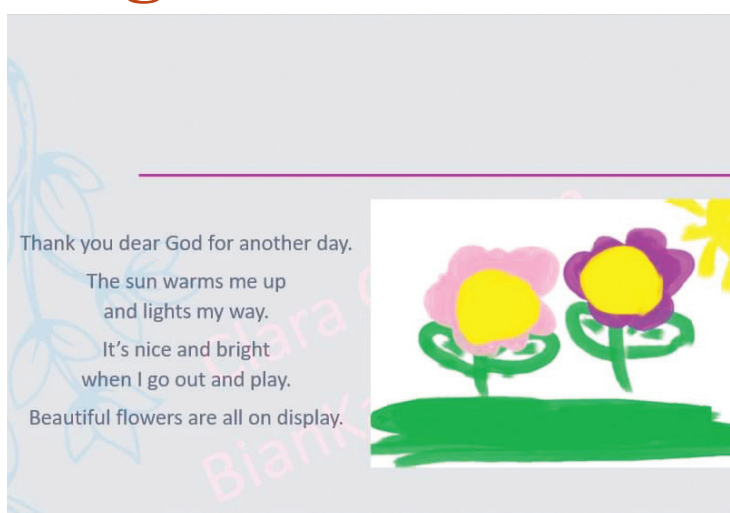
Mother-daughter duo release free e-books for kids

PENANG: Spending time within multiple lockdowns over the last two years inspired Filipina national Clara Guzman to author two Christian-based e-books for children.

In 2020, when electronic devices began playing an even bigger role in our pandemic-stricken world, the mother-of-one penned *Evenings with the Family*. It was aimed at encouraging children and families to turn off or put aside their devices and engage in more family-oriented activities and touch base with their faith.

"I also asked my then six-year-old daughter Bibiana Kalyani, who could already read and loved drawing, if she'd like to create pictures for the book. I gave BianKa (as she is called at home) some coloured pens, paper, and the words in the book, and she came up with the illustrations."

Clara compiled the text and artwork into a little booklet and shared it with family and friends via social media platforms, and it



An excerpt from the second e-book, *Grateful Mornings*. Left: Clara Guzman and her daughter Bibiana Kalyani (BianKa).

was well received. Former hotelier Clara and her Malaysian husband Yegappan Thiagarajan, the General Manager at Lone Pine, Batu Ferringhi, have lived in several countries and in various states in Malaysia. They moved to Penang in August and now belong to the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

"Last year, while living in Kuching, which was still in lockdown mode, I wrote the second e-book, *Grateful Mornings*. BianKa and I were stuck at home, once again in a new place and she was attending classes online... the book was a way of expressing our time together."

At age seven, BianKa could



read a little more, so Clara gave her the story text and a tablet to try her hand at digital art – for the first time. Once again, the little booklet was well received.

While stationed in Vietnam in 2018, Clara wrote a collection of six books titled *Little Book of Manners* with the topics: *Showing Appreciation*, *Giving Respect*,

Being Sorry, *Learning to Share*, *Saying Please*, and *Using 'Excuse Me'*. (Click here to view the books <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063743633037>)

"As my daughter was growing up, I found that most Catholic books for children were about saints or prayers. I felt there was a need to teach kids how to be well mannered in their daily lives, and I combined it with simple prayers."

The collection was published in the Philippines by St Paul's in 2019, and all books were finalists in the *Catholic Mass Media Awards*. Two of the books sold out and are now being reprinted.

BianKa wants to be a writer like her mother, so the duo aims to release one e-book a year. The little illustrator is currently fascinated with the story of Creation, so that's likely the focus of their third e-book, due this year.

To view the e-books visit <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100085598545068> — By Gwen Manickam

Endeavouring to preserve the archdiocese's cultural heritage

KUALA LUMPUR: Post-pandemic, the Kuala Lumpur Catholic Museum (KLCM) executive committee is back on its quest to protect and preserve the archdiocese's artistic-historical patrimony.

Although the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur was established only 65 years ago, parishes under the archdiocese have been around since the late 19th century. Over time, there is the possibility that much of the archdiocese's cultural heritage may have been neglected, lost, or destroyed. Thus, the urgent and desperate need to recover and protect such treasures, relevant to

the history and growth of the archdiocese.

And thus the endeavour to establish the Kuala Lumpur Catholic Museum (KLCM), and to engage the Catholic faithful of the archdiocese to play an active role in gathering priceless historical artifacts.

There are many ways for the faithful to support this cause of protecting and preserving our heritage. Some parishioners may have heirlooms linked to their resident churches like old photographs, prayer books, or religious relics stored away. We hope they would consider donating or loaning such

items to KLCM. The parishes may also boast a treasure trove of artefacts, unused or damaged, kept in cupboards, store rooms and attics. This includes old vestments and linens, sacred vessels and prayer books, statues, and pictures. Similarly, these could be donated or loaned to the museum.

KLCM will undertake the task of restoring and conserving these artifacts in an environment that ensures their preservation.

The museum venue is itself an artefact as it will be located at the first church built in Kuala Lumpur in 1900 by Fr Charles Hector Letessier MEP — the Cathed-

ral of St John the Evangelist on Bukit Nanas. Many artefacts and memorabilia from the parish are not available anymore, and the KLCM team is appealing to all who may have photographs that can help tell the story of the first mother church in the city to come forward to loan or donate them.

The KLCM aims to open its doors in 2025, the year Pope Francis has declared the Jubilee Year for the New Evangelisation. If you have anything to share with KLCM or would like to offer your services in supporting the museum, please email us at klcatholic-museum@archkl.org.



Crucifix belonging to Church of St. Theresa in Nilai that used to hang on the sanctuary wall of the now burnt down church.

Two Jesuits suspended in Jakarta archdiocese

JAKARTA: Two Jesuits serving in the Jakarta archdiocese have been suspended from priestly duties for seriously violating religious vows, says Indonesian Jesuit Provincial Fr Benedictus Hari Juliawan.

Jesuit Frs Gerardus Hadian Panamokta and Alexius Andang Listyo Binawan were suspended because of a "serious violation of their religious vows...but I cannot give the details," said Fr Juliawan.

Fr Binawan, an expert in Church laws and an environmental activist in the archdiocese, was an episcopal vicar for 11 years from 2008.

Fr Juliawan said the suspension "is temporary" and "can be revoked someday... There is no time limit as it depends on the next steps, which must be taken."

A letter circulated on social media said the Jesuits were suspended on Sept 14. They were banned from administering sacraments and carrying out pastoral service in accordance with the Code of Canon Law, it said.

The Church laws present suspension as a punitive action against scandalous violation of religious vows — poverty, chastity and obedience — or publicly acting against the teachings of the Church.

Unlike a dismissal, a suspension can be revoked following a process of atonement and apology as prescribed in the Church laws. — *ucanews.com*

Philippines to construct 100-foot Padre Pio statue

CEBU: Cebu Archdiocese in the Philippines has started construction of a 100-foot-tall statue of Padre Pio in a sanctuary dedicated to the popular Italian saint.

Archbishop Jose Palma of Cebu led the ground-breaking ceremony for the sanctuary with the contemplative community of Padre Pio, a lay Catholic consecrated group in Cebu, on Sept 17.

Titled the Santuario di Padre Pio in Pulangbato village, the sanctuary is being built on a hill overlooking the entire city of Cebu, says a report on the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) website.

The contemplative group, which promotes devotion to the saint in the country, said that the location choice was symbolic.

"It is symbolic that the sanctuary is the highest church located on the island that welcomed the early missionaries 500 years ago," said Joey Cagasero, a Padre Pio devotee from Cebu.

Christianity in the Philippines arrived in 1521 when Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his companions landed on the island in the Central Visayas region. The natives of Cebu are believed to be the first group to be baptised.

Magellan planted a cross and gave an image of the Child Jesus (more popularly known as the Santo Nino) to Hara Amihan, the wife of the chieftain of the island.

Both the cross and the image of the Child Jesus are preserved on the island attracting



The proposed sanctuary of Padre Pio in Cebu in the central Visayas region of the Philippines. (UCA News Photo/CBCP News)

more than a million devotees per year.

The archdiocese said construction of the sanctuary would end next year with the aim to make it a centre for healing, not just in the region but in the whole country.

Cebu Archbishop, Jose Palma, said it was his dream for the sanctuary to unite families, especially since devotion to Padre Pio should bring every family closer to Christ.

"The world around us is in crisis, and many forces are working to destroy the Christian family. There are those who are

working to redefine marriage, and in so doing redefine the family, according to their whims and desires... I hope the centre will bring peace to every family," Archbishop Palma said during the ground-breaking ceremony, referring to a divorce bill submitted in the Philippine parliament.

"May Padre Pio inspire every Filipino to protect every family and to raise every child according to the teachings of the Gospel" the prelate added. — **By Joseph Peter Calleja, *ucanews.com***

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First Jesuit school opens in Bangladesh



Pupils and teachers of St Xavier's International School in Bangladesh. (LiCas News photo)

DHAKA: The Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits, opened its first school in Bangladesh to help form young people to become future leaders of the country.

"We want to accompany the children in their growth, so that they become good citizens and patriots," said Jesuit priest, Fr Probash Rozario, headmaster of St Xavier's International School.

"The intent is not only to educate the mind, but also to educate the heart," said the priest.

The St Xavier's International School in Kuchilabari in the district of Gazipur, near the capital Dhaka, opened this year with 34 pupils.

Archbishop Bejoy N. D'Cruze, OMI, of Dhaka, president of the Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh, said "efforts must be made to improve the education sector" in the country.

"The Church thus offers the witness of doing good to society. In our schools we want to make students authentic human beings," said the prelate.

Bishop D'Cruze said that Catholic schools in the country "also offer moral education

and human and Christian values, training men and women who will then make a contribution to the nation."

"This school will satisfy the needs of the territory and will be open to children of all faiths," said Suren Gomes, a teacher in a state school.

"Throughout the world, the Jesuits carry out their ministry and apostolate in education. We are grateful to God that this school is God's blessing for us. We hope that our children and the next generation will receive quality education from this school," added Gomes.

The Jesuits were the first missionaries in Bangladesh who landed in the Bay of Bengal in the 16th century. After leaving the country, the religious order returned in 1994 at the invitation of the bishops of Bangladesh.

The Catholic Church in Bangladesh runs a university, 13 colleges, over 200 high schools and 500 institutes including primary schools, and technical and vocational schools. — **LiCas News (from an Agenzia Fides report)**

'Be Welcoming' sculpture blessed

CHICAGO: Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, blessed a new sculpture entitled *Be Welcoming*, dedicated to migrants and refugees, saying it serves as a reminder to show kindness to those around us.

The sculpture is located at the St Mary of the Lake Catholic Church in Chicago.

Be Welcoming is by Canadian artist, Timothy Schmalz, known especially for his lifelike Homeless Jesus statues and the Angels Unawares sculpture of migrants and refugees in St Peter's Square.

The bronze sculpture depicts a stranger sitting on a bench carrying their belongings on their back. Walking to the other side, the "stranger" is revealed to actually be an angel in disguise.

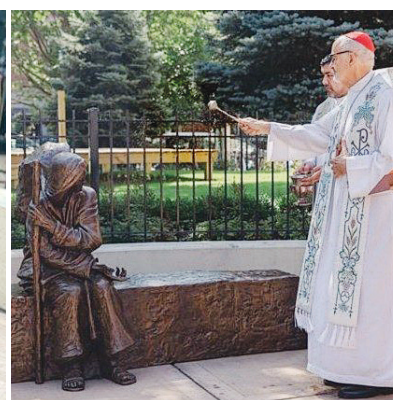


Back view (L) & Front view (R) of the "Be Welcoming" statue by artist Tim Schmalz. (Vatican News photo)

rying their belongings on their back. Walking to the other side, the "stranger" is revealed to actually be an angel in disguise.



"I hope that this sculpture will continuously keep us alert to who the angels are, alert to our invitation to be angels for others, alert



Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ blessing the "Be Welcoming" statue. (Vatican News photo)

to discovering that God sends us angels in the poor, in the lost and the neglected," Cardinal Czerny

said at the unveiling ceremony.

Artist Timothy Schmalz said the *Be Welcoming* sculpture is inspired by a Bible passage that reminds us to show kindness and hospitality to those we encounter.

The Canadian artist has spent 25 years sculpting large-scale works in bronze that are installed all over the world. Much of Schmalz's artwork focuses on timely issues of social justice, including homelessness, migration, and human trafficking.

The power of art, Schmalz said in an interview earlier this year, is "to create awareness in a very subtle and beautiful way to a whole society." — *Vatican News*

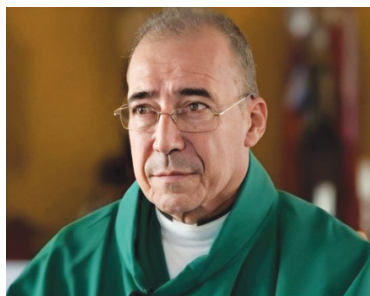
Nicaragua police place prohibition on processions

MEXICO: Police in Nicaragua have thwarted the celebration of feast day processions for patron saints in a city considered iconic for the ruling Sandinista regime, which continues increasing its repression of the Catholic Church.

Police have surrounded parishes in the city of Masaya, 18 miles (29km) south of the capital, Managua, to prevent parishioners from removing statues of their patron saints and holding processions, according to videos posted on social media.

"It's absurd that the dictatorship sees the religious celebrations of Masaya's patron saints as a threat," tweeted Fr Edwing Román, former pastor at the St Michael the Archangel Parish in Masaya. Román has gone into exile.

"This is not an attempt to measure forces. It's allowing Catholics to celebrate," he continued in a tweet dated Sept 20. "The police, instead of an aggressive attitude, should guarantee security."



Fr Edwing Román

Videos on social media showed a police officer informing parishioners of the prohibition on holding a procession, but being jeered by people inside the church. Celebrations of the Eucharist occurred, but not processions.

The prohibition on processions in Masaya continues the crackdown on Nicaragua's Catholic Church, which Ortega's regime has come to see as a political opponent amid a wider attempt at snuffing out all critical and independent voices in the Central American country. — **By David Agren, Crux**

Vatican opens new embassy in Timor-Leste

DILI: The Vatican has opened a new embassy in Timor-Leste capital Dili in an effort to strengthen ties with the Catholic-majority tiny Southeast Asian nation.

Vatican Deputy Secretary of State, Archbishop Edgar Pena Parra, inaugurated the new embassy in Dili on September 20 along with President José Ramos-Horta.

Archbishop Pena Parra said the new embassy is a "spiritual gift" from Pope Francis to the nation.

The nunciature is "another concrete sign of solicitude, care, and love that the supreme pontiffs have always demonstrated for the people of this noble island nation Timor-Leste," the Venezuelan prelate said during the inauguration ceremony. He left a message of "cordial greetings and spiritual closeness from Pope Francis."

The Pope's new home in Timor-Leste, which is a green building, he said, reflects the "excellent bilateral relationship between Timor-Leste and the Holy See" which has lasted for 20 years along with the age of restoration of independence.

He also stated that he hoped the nunciature would be a source of encouragement for the Church in



The inauguration ceremony of the new Vatican embassy in Timor-Leste on September 20, 2022.

Timor-Leste to continue working to serve marginalised groups.

"It serves as a source of encouragement and renewal for the Catholic faith and for people of goodwill to continue to serve the poorest and most vulnerable in this land," he said.

He asserted that the Catholic faith has been important for national identity in the nation, in the past and present, and added that the faith has served "as a source of strength and comfort to people through good times and bad" for over its 500-year history of evangelisation.

President Ramos-Horta said he

expects the new embassy to open the door for the appointment of the first resident nuncio in the country.

Currently, the Vatican has a charge d'affaires based in Dili. Nuncios based in Indonesia or Malaysia have been overseeing Timor-Leste since the nation gained independence from Indonesia and established formal diplomatic ties with the Vatican.

Dignitaries from the Church, state, and diplomats along with priests and nuns attended the inauguration programme including Cardinal Virgilio Cardinal do Carmo da Silva of Dili. — **By Ryan Dagur, ucanews.com**

Church groups help flood-hit Muslims in Pakistan

RAWALPINDI: Parishes in Pakistan's Islamabad-Rawalpindi metropolitan area are providing aid to Muslims following unprecedented floods that have ravaged the country.

Fr Nasir William, parish priest of St Peter Canisius Church, handed over clothes and ration bags to 50 people recently in Nowshera on the banks of the River Kabul, which surged last month.

Missionary Sisters of St Thomas the Apostle helped the priest in reaching out to burqa-clad Pashtun women.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Rawalpindi has already handed over relief packages to 350 Muslims.

"It is a gift from the Christian community to our Muslim neighbours in times of need. I felt helpless as more were coming for help. Christian families, who reached out to us, have already received help



Bishop Samson Shukardin of Hyderabad (centre) with Oblate Fr Khan Paulus (left) and flood-affected families in Khipro parish in Sindh province. (UCA News photo)

from other organisations as per the beneficiary list shared by Protestant groups," he said.

"Most local Christians are poor but not affected. We welcome foreign and local help. Humanity

comes first."

Homes, roads, railways, crops, livestock and livelihoods have been washed away in the floods, caused by record rainfall during the monsoon season and melting glaciers

in the mountains, which have so far killed 1,545 and affected more than 33 million people.

Caritas Pakistan Hyderabad (CPH) is sending 11 million rupees (RM212.190) to 550 flood-affected

people, most of them Muslims and a few Hindus, in southern Sindh province through *Easypaisa*, a mobile money service. Each of the 250 households in the Halepota area of Badin district has already received 20,000 rupees (RM1136.00).

The Church charity has registered 300 additional survivors for the cash aid in the coming weeks.

Oblate Fr Khan Paulus joined Bishop Samson Shukardin of Hyderabad in distributing food rations and mosquito nets among 300 flood-affected families in Khipro parish, Sindh province.

"There are no Christians among rural communities of southern Punjab; few reside in southwestern Quetta Apostolic Vicariate and rural parishes of Sindh. Half of our beneficiaries are Christians because of the appeals we received," he said. — **By Kamran Chaudhry, ucanews.com**

To serve, not be served

Curia called to help bishops, bishops' conferences

VATICAN: Pope Francis' reform of the Roman Curia emphasises work in the Vatican as a service not only to the Pope, but also to dioceses and eparchies and bishops and bishops' conferences around the world.

"The Roman Curia is not set between the pope and the bishops, but is at the service of both," the Pope wrote in *Praedicate Evangelium* (*Preach the Gospel*), his apostolic constitution reforming the Curia.

The work of the Curia, he said, is "organically related to the College of Bishops and individual bishops, as well as to episcopal conferences and their regional and continental groupings, and the hierarchical structures of the Eastern churches. All these are of great pastoral benefit as expressions of the affective and effective communion existing among the bishops."

The practical impact of the Pope's words became clear in early September when he announced that he had given the Latin American Bishops' Council greater responsibility for a papal fund previously controlled by the Curia and when the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development announced a radical restructuring of its office.

The national and regional conferences of bishops blossomed after the Second Vatican Council, but their stature and influence — at least in the eyes of top Vatican officials — began shrinking in the late 1990s, when St John Paul II and his closest aides tried to rein in their perceived power over the authority and ministry of a local bishop for his diocese.

In 1998, St John Paul II issued an apostolic letter, *Apostolos Suos* on the theological and juridical nature of bishops' conferences. Telling Conferences, they could issue statements on doctrinal and moral issues only if approved unanimously by conference members, the letter was seen by many observers as a caution against conferences growing too large and appearing to usurp the authority of individual bishops.

But from the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has given a higher profile to



Pope Francis speaks during an audience with members of the Roman Curia in Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican. (CNS file photo/Reuters/Claudio Peri)

bishops' conferences and their teaching authority.

Papal encyclicals and apostolic exhortations repeatedly cite passages from the Bible, from the teaching of previous popes and from ecumenical councils like Vatican II. Pope Benedict XVI's major documents also included early Church theologians, ancient philosophers and contemporary thinkers, but not a statement of a national bishops' conference.

But Pope Francis, in his 2013 apostolic exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, cited the statements of six Bishops' Conferences — the United States, France, Brazil, the Philippines, Congo and India. He also drew heavily on the work of the Latin American bishops' council, known as CELAM, particularly its *Aparecida* document, which — as Archbishop of Buenos Aires — he was in charge of drafting.

The citations were a concrete sign of the collaboration he said is essential to his ministry as Pope.

The Second Vatican Council affirmed that "episcopal conferences are in a position 'to contribute in many and fruitful ways to the concrete realisation of the collegial spirit,'" Pope Francis wrote in that 2013 document.

"Yet this desire has not been fully realised, since a juridical status of episcopal conferences which would see them as subjects of specific attributions, including genuine doctrinal authority, has not yet been sufficiently elaborated."

His 2015 document, *Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home*, gave papal status to the teaching of more than a dozen bishops' conferences on the ethical and moral importance of protecting the environment.

But also, in the name of "healthy decentralisation," he has made changes to the Code of Canon Law and to standard Vatican procedures to grant greater authority to individual bishops, bishops' conferences and synods of bishops of the Eastern Catholic churches in approving liturgical translations, setting up inter-diocesan seminaries, drafting programmes for the formation of priests and publishing national catechisms.

Pope Francis' document reforming the Curia said that with the Church embracing "a multitude of peoples, languages and cultures," it has "an immense store of successful experiences regarding evangelisation." One role of the Curia, he said, is to gather the wisdom, experiences and best practices of individual dioceses, bishops' conferenc-

es or Eastern synods of bishops and share them with others.

Announcing its new structure Sept 14, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development said, "Our mandate is to help and support the Holy Father and the bishops throughout the world; here we mean regional and national bishops' conferences and the hierarchical structures of the Eastern Churches, individual bishops and patriarchs, offices dealing with issues of integral human development issues."

Adapting the "see, judge, act" approach common to the application of Catholic social teaching, the dicastery said it now is organised in three sections: "listening and dialogue," which will promote two-way contact with bishops and Catholic groups engaged in justice and peace work; "research and reflection," which will study the issues and concerns raised by the bishops, bishops' conferences and groups; and "communication and restitution," which will share the results of the research with them and beyond.

The dicastery, led by Cardinal Michael Czerny, said its agenda would be shaped "by the challenges which the local Churches bring to our attention," challenges that can and will change over time.

In another small shift, the Vatican announced Sept 16 that Pope Francis had "suppressed" the *Populorum Progressio* Foundation for Latin America and the Caribbean, which had its administrative headquarters at the dicastery and its operational base in Bogota, Colombia. Founded by St. John Paul II in 1992 to assist the region's small farmers, Indigenous and African American communities, the foundation will be succeeded by the *Populorum Progressio* Fund, and CELAM, the Latin American Bishops' Council, will study the grant applications and monitor the projects.

"It is necessary to promote a stronger bond with the local Churches," who know better the members of those communities and their needs, the Pope said. — **By Cindy Wooden, CNS**

How does one learn to be a bishop?

While the "job" of being a bishop is particularly high-profile, the preparation for this ministry is quite limited. But the Vatican has been trying to address that.

One often hears cautious reactions from men whom the Pope has just appointed bishops, such as "I did not expect this" or "I will listen to the faithful to understand the problems of my diocese"... and so forth.

While priests go through a long and very regulated programme of formation before being ordained, the training period for bishops is limited, to say the least. A cleric who is selected for this particularly high-profile "job", especially in the context of the Church's crisis, quickly finds himself "thrown into the deep end" with only a brief preparation.

Theoretically, this preparation includes a joint six-day formation organised every year by the Vatican. The brief training course includes items such as synodality, presentation of the Roman Curia, more technical points such as "canonical experience for the administration of a diocese", etc.

After an initial session brought together more than 150 "baby bishops" at the beginning of September — the first in three years because of the coronavirus pandemic — a second session with another group was con-

cluded with a meeting with Pope Francis.

Among the French bishops who were in Rome for the training course was Bishop Gérard Le Stang, who in March was named head of the Diocese of Amiens, headquartered 163 kilometres north of Paris. The 59-year-old bishop also participated in a similar three-day session last January that was organised by the French Bishops' Conference (CEF). But in terms of practice, each bishop is discovering the job on the ground. "There is a certain solitude in the ministry of a bishop, which can be surprising at first," says Bishop Le Stang, who adds he has taken up his new duties "in an unknown land".

A very difficult ministry

Bishop Emmanuel Gobilliard, was asked by the CEF to train his new peers in the area of communications, says there is no doubt that the ministry of bishop is tough. The 54-year-old Gobilliard, who has been auxiliary bishop of Lyon since 2016, notes that one is expected "to be gifted in finance, in management, to be a good pastor, as well as an excellent communicator!" But he stresses that "it is not with ordination that the bishop acquires all the required skills". This is particularly true since the bishop is on the front

lines for crisis management, especially in the case of revelations of sexual abuse committed by one of his priests. These issues are addressed during the Roman formation programme. Moreover, a bishop may be a recognised theologian, but have only a vague notion of economics. Even if he has expert advisors, final decisions rest with him. "He is the one who decides, for example, whether to invest a million euros in such-and-such a project, which can be a bit dizzying in the current context," admits Bishop Le Stang.

Drawing on earlier experience

Finally, in the governance of his diocese, the bishop draws on his previous responsibilities and experience. For instance, Bishop Le Stang served as deputy secretary general of the CEF from 2013-2016, years when he worked closely with all of France's bishops.

Bishop Xavier Malle, who has led the Diocese of Gap-Embrun in southeastern France since February 2017, says he benefits greatly from his experience as chief of staff for the mayor of Cognac from 1989-1994. It's a post he held before becoming a priest in 2000. He has had experience dealing with budgets and economic issues, and relations with elected officials do not scare him at all. But Bishop Malle confesses

that it was initially difficult to know how to properly manage the priests of his diocese. The 57-year-old bishop has become aware of the importance of surrounding himself with the right people.

"The times I made mistakes were the times when I made decisions on my own," he confesses. He does not hesitate to ask the bishops of his province for advice, starting with the Archbishop of Marseille, whom he calls a "big brother". Bishop Malle also readily admits that he's called on a professional leadership coach at times when he's been "in difficulty".

Bishop Gobilliard, who is of the same generation, has also taken courses in management and communications. "Knowing how to accompany people is something you learn," he explains. Gobilliard, who is also vicar general and moderator of the curia in Lyon, points out that a bishop can never be prepared for all contingencies: a pandemic, or more tragically, the suicide of a priest...

"What seems essential to me," confides retired Bishop Michel Dubost, "is to know your limits and not to take yourself too seriously in order to remain yourself without being a prisoner of your role." — **By Arnaud Bevilacqua, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)



'Full members of the Church'

Catholics with disabilities contribute to Synod on Synodality

VATICAN: Catholics with disabilities delivered to Pope Francis a report they prepared for the Synod on Synodality.

The document was a synthesis of an on-line listening session held in May with 35 people with disabilities, coming from 20 countries and spanning five continents.

"I think the big message, which I think is being heard now, is that people who are disabled are actually full members of the Church," said Fr Justin Glyn, a Jesuit priest from Australia.

Glyn, who is blind, said there is a history in the Catholic Church of seeing people with disabilities as "recipients of charity, objects of pity."

"Whereas I think now the message is very much that we are full participants in the Church, we are people who are part of a Church that walks together synodally," he added.

The report from people with disabilities was hand-delivered to Pope Francis after his general audience in St Peter's Square on Sept 21 by Giulia Cirillo, an Italian woman who uses a wheelchair.

Cirillo said that she thanked Pope Francis "because he gave all of us the opportunity to speak, that is, even us, persons who live firsthand with disabilities."

Sr Marie Claire Rolland, a French religious sister with Down syndrome, also participated in the listening session and the drafting of the synthesis. After hugging Pope Francis — the third pope she has met during her life — Rolland blessed him, making a sign of the cross on his forehead.

The Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life organised the virtual listening session in May and the preparation of the final report on what was shared.

Vittorio Scelzo, who oversees the dicastery's area on the care of people with disabilities, said the synthesis was delivered Sept 20 to the committee tasked with pre-



Sister Marie Claire Rolland blesses Pope Francis on Sept 21, 2022. (Vatican Media)

paring the synod's first working document for the continental phase. The committee began its work at a religious house near Frascati, Italy, on Sept 21.

The Laity, Family, and Life Dicastery wanted the disabled to be "taken seriously," Scelzo said. "The synod was perfect," he noted, "the right moment, a *kairos*," for hosting a listening session.

Fr Glyn from Australia said his experience in the Church as a disabled man has been varied, but his experience as a priest with a disability is "hugely advantageous actually."

He pointed to the problem of clericalism, explaining that "if you are a priest who knows that you are vulnerable, knows

that you are weak, knows that you have the need of support of others, the temptation towards [clericalism] is not as strong because we know that we need each other."

Cirillo, the woman who uses a wheelchair, said, "as a believer, I think each of us has a vocation that we need to discover; none of us is useless."

"We can thus make a contribution for a more and more inclusive Church, also for people with disabilities," she said.

"We all need help. Asking for help is not an embarrassment, it is our mission," she continued. "Even when the condition of disability brings us extra difficulties, we have to remember that Jesus wants us to be joyful, and when we are sick, he is also

sick for us. However, our mission is to be joyful."

Glyn said there are ways the Church still needs to improve accessibility to the sacraments and church buildings for the disabled. Still, it is also about people with disabilities being seen as full members of the Church, not as outsiders or a "them."

"I think sometimes there's been this view of disability as either a hangover of original sin [that] someday it'll be made better — or on the other side, people privileged to suffer," he said. "Whereas for most of us our lives are not suffering and our lives are joy. Our lives are made of the same things, made of the same fabric and stuff." — **By Hannah Brockhaus, CNA**

Synthesis report complete, but bishop finds synodal path is just beginning

WASHINGTON: While the report summarising tens of thousands of US listening sessions in the first phase of the Catholic Church's synodal process has been submitted to the Vatican, the experience of synodality is just beginning.

"The local work doesn't become obsolete because we published a national synthesis," said Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, who is overseeing the effort for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

"There are many things that can be addressed immediately. ... There are some issues raised that can be resolved at the local level. We don't have to wait for the outcome of the Synod of Bishops," said Flores, who chairs the USCCB Committee on Doctrine.

"There are some issues raised that can be resolved at the local level. They cannot be resolved at the national level. The great gift of the synodal style, which the Holy Father keeps insisting, is a manner of expressing the style of Jesus, which is always listening and always attentive and always responsive," he explained.

The bishop compared the Pope's invitation to synodality to the act of planting a seed.

"If we can plant the seed once again of being the Church that understands its own identity as the body that has many voices but has cohesion that is given by the Holy Spirit, then we're better fit to fulfil our mission in the world, which is a witness that we don't always have to be fighting each other and that we can, at the very least, assist each other in what is a very difficult life," he said.

The synthesis report was developed in much the same manner as the reports prepared by parishes and dioceses: through prayer, listening and inspiration from the Holy Spirit. The team of writers convened by the USCCB gathered in August to discern what common themes emerged in the 290 documents received from throughout the country, shared two of the coordinators of the effort at the USCCB.

Flores said that early scepticism about the synodal process among some participants "thinking this is another programme that we're going to do and we're going to put it on the shelf" gave way to an openness and "peace with it."

He credited the willingness of people to listen and to welcome inspiration from the Holy Spirit for the change of mind.



(photo/Synod.va)

The next step in preparation for the Synod of Bishops is the continental phase. The North American report will be written by Canadian and US Church representatives once the *instrumentum laboris*, or working document, to guide continental or regional ecclesial assemblies that will take place by March.

Flores expects that the synthesis reports generated at the continental level will greatly vary in their message to the Church as a whole. He said he understands the invitation to synodality from the Pope has been "ultimately about conversion."

"Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit in that you've got to understand the suffering of the other person and not just a number that you see on a newscast," he said.

"We can learn a lot once the national syntheses and the international ones come out, what the priorities are from some of our poorer parts of the world," he said. "I myself think that a Church that is more affluent needs to pay particular attention to how the Church that is poor lives its faith and how it hopes because that is something that we desperately need to hear." — **Crux**



GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THE DIOCESE OF MALACCA-JOHORE (DECEMBER 3, 2022)

Church of St Francis Xavier

St Francis Xavier arrived in Malacca on September 25, 1545, making this port a transit point for his missionary work in the Far East from 1545 to 1552. His missionary zeal laid the foundation for the many Catholic communities extant in South East Asia today.

With the fall of Portuguese Malacca to the Dutch in 1641, parishes were lost and churches were destroyed during the siege. Also, the Dutch disallowed the open practice of the Catholic faith, resulting in the Church operating clandestinely from 1641 to 1700. The War of the Spanish Succession saw the Dutch allowing the faith to function publicly resulting in the formation of the Church of St Peter, thus continuing the Portuguese "Padroado" coming under the jurisdiction of Goa and later, Macau.

It was in the Pontificate of Gregory XVI (1831 – 1846) that the Papal See decided to strengthen the missionary outposts of the Church, especially to the Mission in Asia. The Malay Peninsula and Singapore, one of the five districts of the MEP Mission of the Malay Peninsula on January 3, 1840, came under the charge of the Apostolic Vicar of Siam Occi-

In conjunction with the golden jubilee celebrations of the Diocese of Malacca-Johore, we requested the parishes to provide us with their history - much of which has been garnered from various sources and put together by the clergy and parishioners of the respective parishes. This week's history is on the church named after a great Jesuit missionary.

dental, Malacca Bishop Courvez. There were 2000 Catholics then under the Portuguese Mission in Malacca.

An attempt was made in 1841 by Frs Beurel and Brigandet to begin a Mission in Malacca. They purchased a house within the old Fort Area which served as their residence and chapel. The effort to begin the Mission met with hostility and jurisdictional ecclesiastical



disagreements from the Portuguese Mission in Malacca. Without having any success in the first attempt, Frs Beurel and Brigandet left Malacca.

The Administrator of the Vicariate of Siam Occidental, Msgr Boucho sent Frs Favre and Dastugue in 1845 to make another attempt to set up the Mission in Malacca. The year 1845 coincided with the Tricentennial Anniversary

of the first arrival of St Francis Xavier in Malacca in 1545. Fr Favre found 15 Catholics who were loyal to the Vicar of Siam Occidental and they became the first parishioners of the new parish, dedicated to St Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies and the Missions. The Parish was established in the house purchased earlier in the first failed attempt and it was probably located at Church Lane.

The first parish priest

Fr Favre was the first parish priest. By the end of 1845, the parish grew from 15 to 200 members. Efforts to obtain land to build a church were made while working from their house. The Resident Councillor of the English East India Company in Malacca offered to sell a parcel of land in 1849. The parcel of land was the site on which the Dominican Church of Our Lady of the Rosary and the ramparts of the Fortaleza of Malacca once stood, close to the Bastion San Domingo, the first section of the Fortaleza to fall to the Dutch in 1641. The sale of the land was on the condition that it was to be used for a religious building. Bishop Boucho agreed to the terms of purchase and Fr Favre immediately drew up plans to build a neo-Gothic styled church on the site. As work commenced for the construction of the church, Fr Dastugue passed away in 1849 and he was buried in St Anthony's Cemetery on Fort Terrace.

Progress on the building of the new church moved slowly due to insufficient funds. It took about 10 years to raise enough funds, from both locally and overseas, to complete the construction of a newly functioning church.

There were three parish priests who were involved in the building of the church, Frs Favre, Barbe and Allard. Fr Favre drew up the plans and raised funds locally and from overseas; Fr Barbe stood in for Fr Favre while he was away; Fr Allard was the one who saw to the ultimate completion in 1859.

In 1846, Fr Favre embarked on expeditions

in the hinterland of Malacca and up the Muar and Benut Rivers in search of aboriginal tribes (Mantras) which resulted in Bishop Boucho approving a new mission for the Mantras to be made. Fr Borie was appointed to this new mission that was first situated in Rumbia in 1848. The Mission was named 'Dusun Maria' (Mary's Village) and it consisted of a chapel, two schools and a settlement for some Mantra families. The land reverted to the colonial authorities in 1860 who provided 1,000 acres of land at Ayer Salak for the relocation of the mission. Fr Borie built a new settlement there and called it Maria Pindah, which is the present Ayer Salak Village and Parish of St. Mary.

Alfred Russel Wallace, a British naturalist and contemporary of Charles Darwin visited Malacca in 1854 to collect scientific specimens. He wrote a letter to his mother, "I am staying with a Roman Catholic Missionary The gentleman we are with is building a large church, of which he himself is the architect, and superintending the laying of every brick and cutting of every timber."

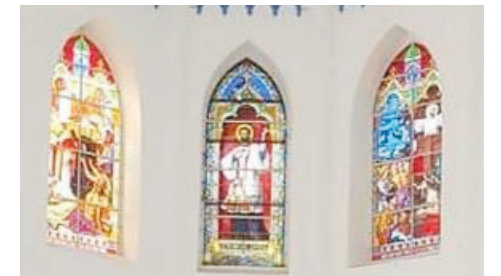
By the end of 1855, the Church of St Francis Xavier was completed for general use. Fr Allard invited Bishop Boucho to consecrate



Fr Favre, the first parish priest of the Church of St Francis Xavier, Malacca (1845)



The stained glass panels and the two bronze bells installed by Fr Delouette in the 1880s.



the church on January 13, 1856. In a despatch dated February 22, 1856 to the MEP's Headquarters in Paris, Bishop Boucho reported

"The fine church of Malacca on the point of being completed, my presence to bless it was requested It was on January 13, that I had the pleasure to bless this beautiful building, which is the glory of Catholicism, not only in the Straits but even according to the best experts in the art of building, in the whole of India. The ceremony took place with all pomp we could display. The Mantras in great numbers were in one wing and the Chinese in the other, whereas the main nave was filled with the "hat" people. There were no less than 500 people."

The finishing touches to the Church was completed in 1859 by Fr Allard. The Chapel of St John the Baptist was also built by Fr Allard on the present site of the Saturday Ice Café and adjoining shophouses at Banda Hilir/Praya Lane. An entry in the parish register shows that the total cost of building the Church of St Francis Xavier amounted to Spanish Dollars 9778.00. Fr Allard served a total of 16 years in Malacca from 1850 to 1866. During his tenure here, the Sisters of St Maur (IJ) started a school at Banda Hilir by the Straits in 1860. The school closed due to financial and health deprivations in 1867.

It was in the tenure of Fr Mazery as parish priest (1868 – 1875) that the finishing touches to the church were done. An entry in the church records stated that \$1911.50 was paid for the ceiling works from January to June 1874. Fr Mazery built the presbytery (Maisons da Rapport) and eight houses on the site next to the church in the same year. He welcomed the return of the Sisters of St Maur in 1875 to Malacca where their first school was housed in the Military Hospital at the foot of St Paul's Hill. In 1879, the Sisters moved their convent to the house by the sea in Banda Hilir which they had occupied in 1860.

Fr Delouette arrived in Malacca in 1880 as parish priest and also was in charge of the Man-

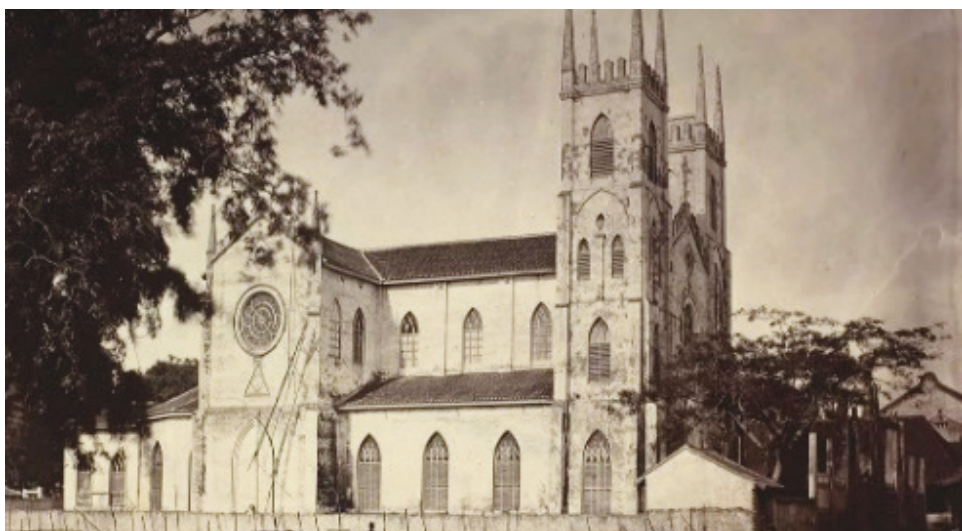
tra/Chinese Parish of St Mary at Ayer Salak. He moved the boys' school at Banda Hilir in 1880 to a house opposite the church, where he taught and managed. This marked the founding of St Francis Institution. Fr Delouette enhanced the church by adding two bronze bells from Eugene Bondouin Fondateurs and also three stained glass panels, depicting St Francis Xavier and his deeds, and crafted by Verrier of Hanoi. The centre panel bears this inscription "Martin Angers Peintre 1882".

There is a strong possibility that Fr Delouette commissioned an exquisite wooden pulpit and the life-sized crucifix that arrived here when Fr Damais was the parish priest. The *Malacca Weekly Chronicle* reported on January 5, 1889:

"A new pulpit for St Francis Church, Malacca has just been received from Europe. It is costly and beautiful in design. It will be placed in position during the course of the week." In a later report dated March 7, 1889, this account was given "St Francis Church – There was a large congregation at the 8 o'clock Mass at the above church on Sunday last to witness the ceremony of the blessing of the new pulpit by the Very Rev Canon Delouette formerly the Pastor of the Mission – assisted by Rev Damais The Pastor and the community are to be congratulated on their, at length, possessing a new and beautiful pulpit magnificent of its kind and worthy of the splendid addition of a few more stained-glass windows, of a new High Altar and an organ. St Francis Church would stand second to none out in this part of the world, for it would then be as fair inside as it is noble and imposing in its exterior appearance".

● To be continued

● Editor's Note: If you have spotted any factual/historical inaccuracies in the article, do let us know. Kindly provide us with the relevant citations/ documentation/links etc to substantiate your assertions and send to: editor1@herald.com.my



An early photograph of the Church of St Francis Xavier (circa 1860s)

Anger, irritability and aggression in Children

In my last article (Adolescence and Mental Health, *HERALD* Sept 11), I mentioned that there is no escaping the stressors and distractions of modern society with mental health issues on the rise. In this article, I want to delve deeper into some common challenges that children face in their lives as they move into the big modern world.

According to clinical psychologist Dr Denis Sukhodolsky, it is not unusual for children to have as many as nine tantrums a day. However, for children whose tantrums continue as they get older and become something that is not developmentally appropriate, it calls for professional help.

Anger that derives from frustration seems to be the most common issue that has been identified by psychologists. This happens for example, when a child does not get what he/she wants or if asked to do something and the child is not in the mood for it. Everyone gets angry, both child and adult alike but the anger is an emotion that can range from slightly irritated, to moderately angry and full blown rage. When this happens, we as parents get angry at their anger, either by "bringing down the hammer" or punishing the child. The fact of the matter is, children will experience situations that trigger anger and you cannot stop it. However, you can be "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to answer" (James 1:19). Furthermore, you can only give them tools to understand their anger and manage it before it warrants professional help.

So, if you are faced with a supernova explosion of anger, how are you going to address it? Firstly, remember that "a soft an-



Purposeful Parenting
Christine Fernandez

swer turns away wrath but a harsh answer stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1). Secondly, do not try to appease your children, give in to their demands or avoid situations so that their anger goes away. Just help them to recognise when anger is building and deal with it appropriately.

Here are some tips that can be useful for parents and carers when dealing with children with anger issues. Think of your child as your neighbour's kids. This can give you a little emotional distance. Reason being, your child's rage will often trigger your own emotions. Therefore, try and control your own emotions by taking a deep breath, count to ten and take a step back.

Besides understanding where you are at, the ability to control your emotions can give you empathy about where your child is in developing this skill. Whatever responses you make, just try not to escalate the situation by arguing. This does not mean that you are giving in but just giving them some space to cool down so that it doesn't become an emotional "tsunami". You can always hold your child accountable when the situation is calmer. When anger is building up, help your child recognise it. Physical signs that your child can tune into are: stomach clenching, a feeling of tension, feeling flushed, clenching teeth and even holding

the breath without realising it. Once these signs are detected early on it can prevent anger from escalating to rage which is worth a pound of cure.

In Genesis 4:6 God never asked questions to gain, but to help the person to think about the situation from God's perspective. In the same way, as parents and carers with your purposeful parenting, ask your child why he/she is angry and talk about it when you are both calm. In most cases, children will express genuine remorse after a major meltdown.

I remember a child telling me after a rage that she did not know why she did that and felt that something was wrong with her. Therefore, if your child is open to talking and willing to learn, teach them anger management skills by helping them work backward from the incident. That would entail - what happened right before the rage was triggered / what was said / what he/she was feeling/was there disappointment, embarrassment, frustration, fear or anxiety?

We need to remember that there is always another emotion underneath the anger and recognising these underlying emotions can be a powerful tool throughout your child's life. However, if your child's anger is extreme, seek counselling. Even if the child resists participation, go as a parent/carer to get support and guidance from the counsellor.

Managing emotions does not happen overnight for all of us. But, as a parent or carer, you can help your child/children improve their coping skills with consistent support and encouragement. If you are seeking help from a professional, behavioural intervention would be the first line of treatment for

childhood anger and aggression. They can be helpful as they focus on changing the interpersonal dynamics that lead to results from angry outbursts. They also address the child's behaviour problems from different directions. The ones I use in my sessions and am comfortable with are Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Parents Management Techniques (PMT).

CBT is an approach which helps a child acquire new and more effective strategies for regulating emotions, thought and behaviours. It is a three-pronged approach that teaches regulation of emotion, ways to express and address frustration, and develop new communication strategies. The beauty is, parents can actively participate and support their child's progress.

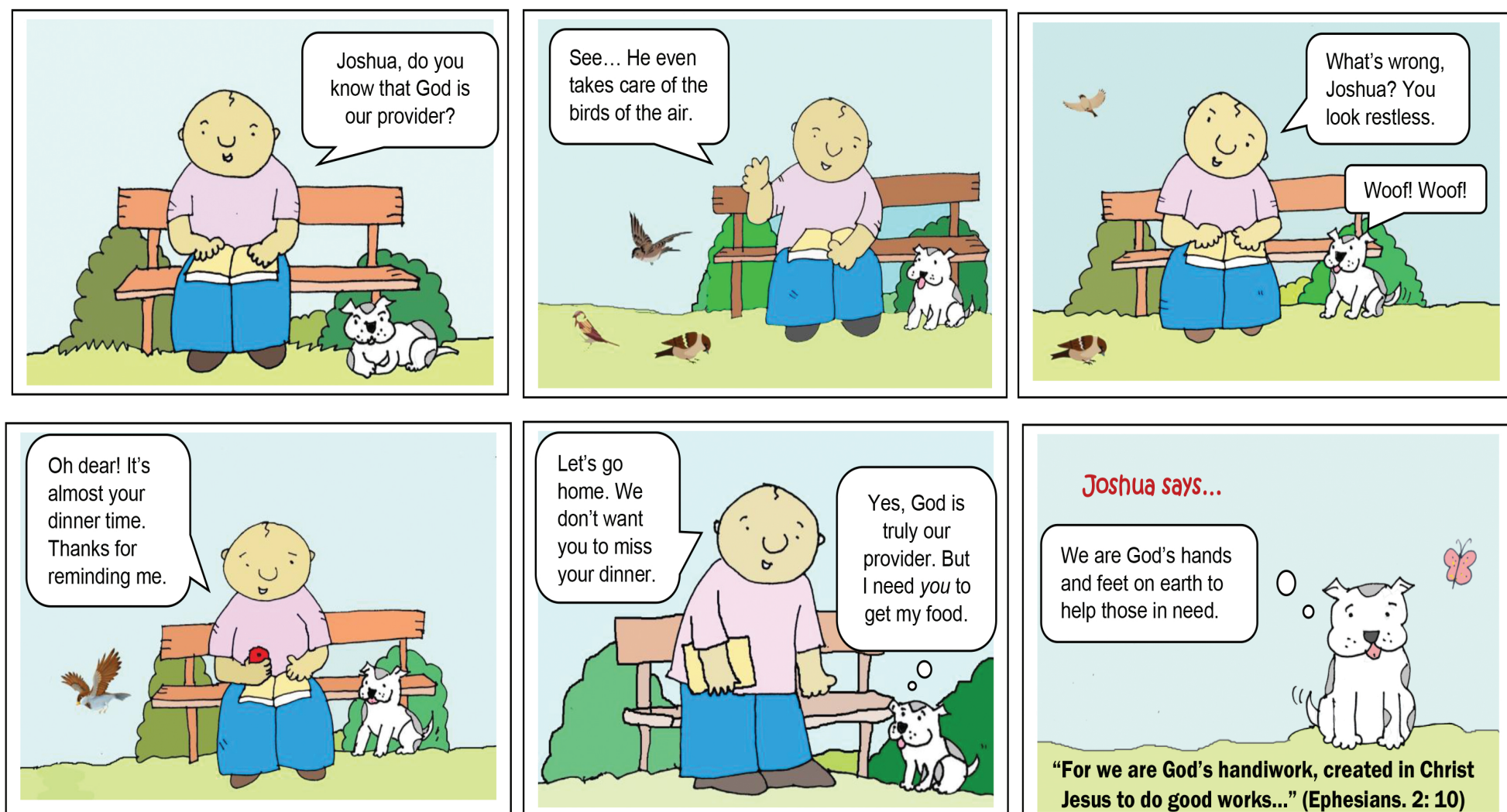
PMT, on the other hand, helps parents limit outbursts by teaching alternative ways to handle misbehaviours. Positive reinforcement is the focus here for what your child did right, rather than punishment for transgressions. With this technique we help families spend time together.

There is a wide range of mental health services for children and parents alike. Please do not be embarrassed to access it or even seek help if you really need it for yourself or your children. As Scripture says, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).

● **Christine Fernandez** is a social worker, counsellor, chaplain, parent and grandparent. She would love to hear your parenting stories. Do drop her a line at: chris55sebi65@yahoo.com.au

THE SIMPLE LIFE... by Dr. Steven Selvaraju

Created by Dr Steven Selvaraju, this is a comic strip that wishes to tell simple stories of life and faith.



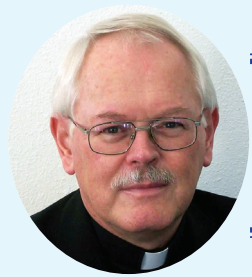
Being jealous of God's generosity

“The cock will crow at the breaking of your own ego – there are lots of ways to wake up!”

John Shea gave me those words and I understood them a little better recently as I stood in line at an airport: I had checked in for a flight, approached security, saw a huge line-up, and accepted the fact that it would take at least 40 minutes to get through it.

I was all right with the long wait and moved patiently in the line – until, just as my turn came, another security crew arrived, opened a second scanning machine, and a whole line-up of people behind me, who had not waited the forty minutes, got their turns almost immediately. I still got my turn as I would have before, but something inside of me felt slighted and angry: “This wasn’t fair! I’d been waiting for forty minutes, and they got their turns at the same time as I did!” I had been content waiting, until those who arrived later didn’t have to wait at all. I hadn’t been treated unfairly, but some others had been luckier than I’d been.

That experience taught me something beyond the fact that my heart isn’t always huge and generous. It helped me understand something about Jesus’ parable concerning the workers who came at the 11th hour and received the same wages as those who’d worked all day and what is meant by the challenge that is given to those who



Fr Ron Rolheiser

grumbled about the unfairness of this: “Are you envious because I’m generous?”

Are we jealous because God is generous? Does it bother us when others are given unmerited gifts and forgiveness?

You bet! Ultimately, that sense of injustice, of envy that someone else caught a break, is a huge stumbling block to our happiness. Why? Because something in us reacts negatively when it seems that life is not making others pay the same dues as we are paying.

In the Gospels we see an incident where Jesus goes to the synagogue on a Sabbath, stands up to read, and quotes a text from Isaiah — except He doesn’t quote it fully but omits a part. The text (Isaiah 61,1-2) would have been well known to His listeners and it describes Isaiah’s vision of what will be the sign that God has finally broken into the world and irrevocably changed things. And what will that be?

For Isaiah, the sign that God is now ruling the earth will be Good News for the poor, consolation for the broken-hearted,

freedom for the enslaved, grace abundant for everyone, and vengeance on the wicked. Notice though, when Jesus quotes this, He leaves out the part about vengeance. Unlike Isaiah, He doesn’t say that part of our joy will be seeing the wicked punished.

In heaven we will be given what we are owed and more (unmerited gift, forgiveness we don’t deserve, joy beyond imagining) but, it seems, we will not be given that catharsis we so much want here on earth, the joy of seeing the wicked punished.

The joys of heaven will not include seeing Hitler suffer. Indeed, the natural itch we have for strict justice (“An eye for an eye”) is exactly that, a natural itch, something the Gospels invite us beyond. The desire for strict justice blocks our capacity for forgiveness and thereby prevents us from entering heaven where God, like the Father of the Prodigal Son, embraces and forgives without demanding a pound of flesh for a pound of sin.

We know we need God’s mercy, but if grace is true for us, it must be true for everyone; if forgiveness is given us, it must be given everybody; and if God does not avenge our misdeeds, God must not avenge the misdeeds of others either. Such is the logic of grace, and such is the love of the God to whom we must attune ourselves.

Happiness is not about vengeance, but about forgiveness; not about vindication, but about unmerited embrace; and not

about capital punishment, but about living beyond even murder.

It is not surprising that, in some of the great saints, we see a theology bordering on universalism, namely, the belief that in the end, God will save everyone, even the Hitlers. They believed this not because they didn’t believe in hell or the possibility of forever excluding ourselves from God, but because they believed that God’s love is so universal, so powerful, and so inviting that, ultimately, even those in hell will see the error of their ways, swallow their pride, and give themselves over to love. The final triumph of God, they felt, will be when the devil himself converts and hell is empty.

Maybe that will never happen. God leaves us free. Nevertheless, when I, or anyone else, is upset at an airport, at a parole board hearing, or anywhere else where someone gets something we don’t think he or she deserves, we have to accept that we’re still a long way from understanding and accepting the kingdom of God.

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

Seeking God through imaginative prayer

One of St Ignatius’ favourite ways of praying was to step into a Gospel story imaginatively. Although Ignatius was not the first to pray in this way, he gives imaginative prayer an important place in the Spiritual Exercises.

Starting in the second week, and from then on, those engaged in the Exercise journey enter the different Gospel scenes as though they are part of it. They learn how to live in the story, to be with the different characters involved, and to interact with Jesus as they are drawn to do so. Afterward, they reflect on their prayer experience and make notes on how it was for them.

On my most recent eight-day retreat, I was directed by a Jesuit familiar with this way of prayer. At nine o’clock each morning, I would meet him in his little office to share how my time in the past day of prayer had gone. He would then suggest a Scripture passage with which I could pray during the coming day.

One morning I came into the session, my head full of insights about the Gospel passage in John 21 he had given me the previous day. Besides praying with this encounter between Jesus and Peter, I had found a Bible commentary in the library and made some notes in my journal of some fresh discoveries about this passage. I wanted to share these insights with my veteran retreat guide.

As we took our seats, he asked me how my prayer had gone the day before. I told him about going to the library and how I had come across these helpful insights into the passages that he had given me. I started reading my notes to him.

Instead of sharing my excitement about

my new learnings, he looked decidedly unimpressed. Halfway through what I was sharing, he interrupted me. With a twinkle in his eyes, he leaned over and said, “Trevor, insight is the consolation prize. The first prize is encounter with Jesus.”

Again, I realised how easily I turn my times of prayer into a head trip, where I collect more insights about Jesus rather than personally interacting with him.

With a smile, my retreat guide suggested that I return to the Gospel encounter between Jesus and Peter, dwell within it imaginatively, and let Jesus encounter me in whatever way He chooses.

For the rest of that day, I lived in this Gospel story. The scene came alive for me as I looked and listened with my inner eyes and ears. I found myself drawn into conversation with Jesus about where I found myself in my life, and I sensed His presence with me, inviting me to stay close to Him and to follow Him into the unknown future.

The following morning, I shared with my companion how I had interacted with Jesus in my time of imaginative prayer. Our conversation had a completely different quality of aliveness and energy compared to the day before, when I had read aloud my carefully collected list of intellectual insights.

In imaginative prayer, we place our imagination at the service of our faith. Through this God-given faculty, we can interact with Christ and He can connect with us. Of course, we know that the image is not the reality. Exercising our imagination in this way simply deepens our participation in the reality that it seeks to describe. Nor do we assume that everything that happens in our imagination comes from the Lord. Much



(Unsplash/Harli Marten)

can be put down to our own projections and wishes. But I am learning to pay careful attention to those surprises that come to me in my times of imaginative prayer, especially those that reveal Jesus more intimately to me and cause me to love Him more intensely and follow Him more closely.

Take a few moments to experiment with imaginative prayer. Choose your favourite Gospel story. Read through it a few times to reacquaint yourself with the details.

Put the Bible down and ask God for the grace to come to know, love, and follow

Christ more deeply. Step into the scene as a participant rather than as a spectator. See the persons involved, hear the words spoken, watch the actions performed. Pay attention to where you find yourself in the story. What do you see? What do you hear? How do you feel? What goes through your mind? Above all, interact with Christ as He meets you in this story, share whatever is on your heart with Him, and listen to what He may be saying to you. Afterward make a few notes of how it went for you. — **By Trevor Hudson, Crux**

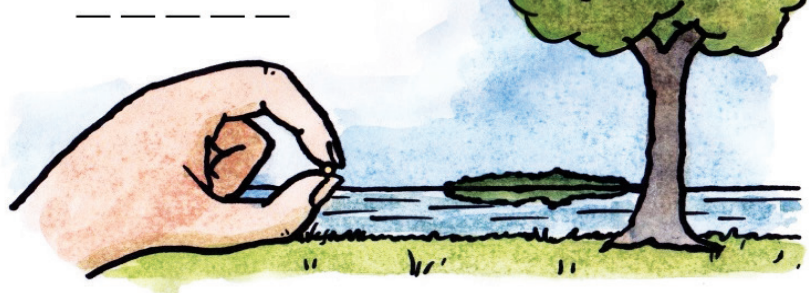
Little Catholics' Corner

Mustard Seed Word-Find

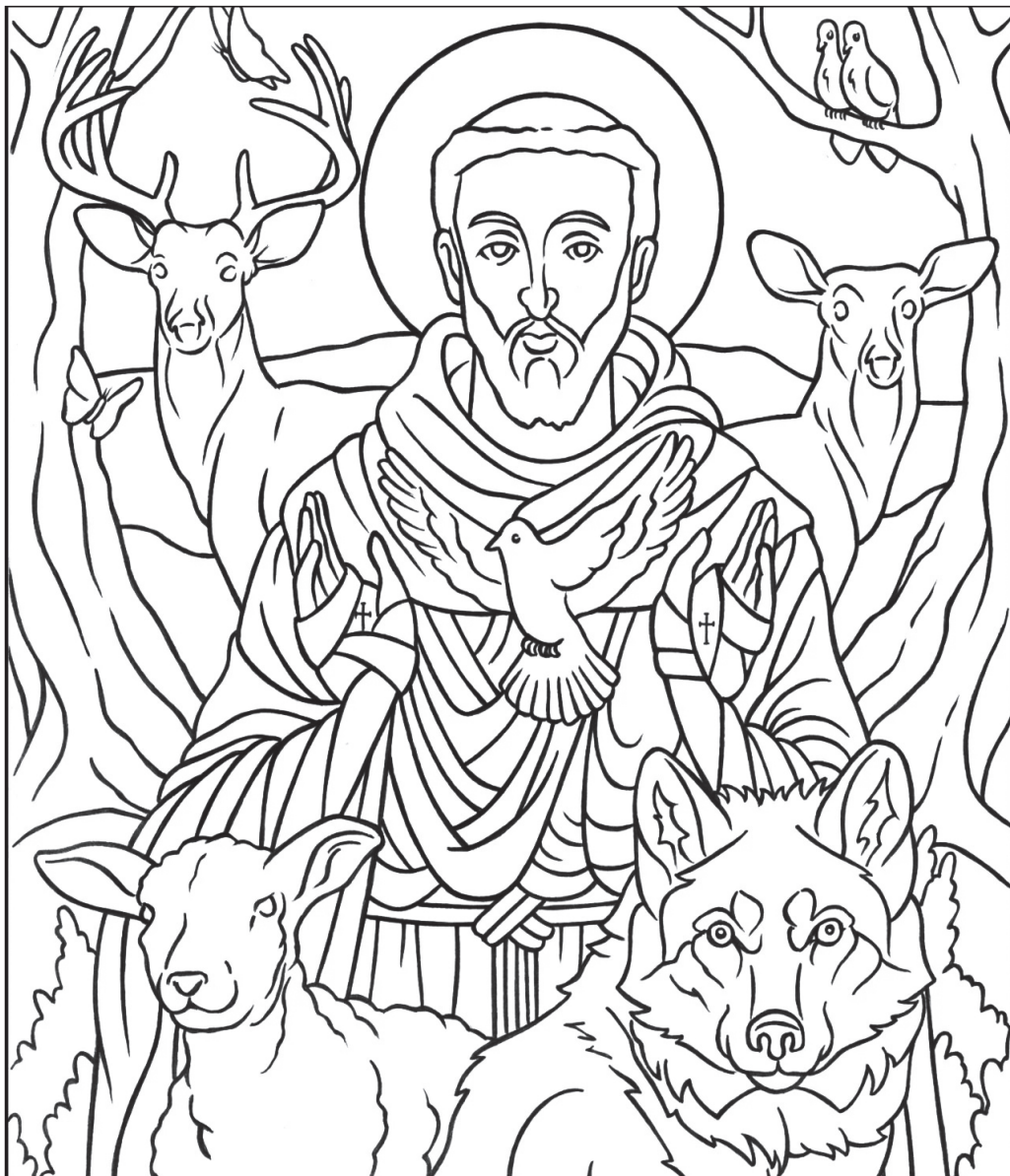
M U S T A R D F A
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R N I F A I T H E
Y T O U R Z L S D
O E T T R E E H
U D H A V E S A Y

Here is part of today's Gospel reading. See if you can find all the words written in CAPITALS. Use the leftover letters to fill in the blanks at the end.

The APOSTLES SAID to the Lord, "INCREASE OUR faith." The Lord REPLIED, "If you HAVE FAITH the SIZE of a MUSTARD SEED, YOU would SAY to THIS MULBERRY TREE, 'Be UPROOTED and PLANTED in the SEA and it would OBEY you.



Colour this picture of St Francis of Assisi



MAKE A ST FRANCIS BIRD FEEDER FOR HIS BELOVED ANIMALS.

Supplies Needed:

- * Empty toilet paper tube
- * Black marker
- * Sharp knife
- * Ice cream stick/ tongue depressor
- * Peanut butter
- * Butter knife to spread the peanut butter
- * Bird seeds

OPTIONAL: Hole punch and string

To prepare St Francis Bird Feeder:

1. Using the knife, carefully cut two slits in the toilet paper tube for the arms. These slits should be a little less than halfway down the tube. (For safety purposes, have an adult do this or prepare this step ahead of time.)
2. Slide the ice cream stick through both slits to look like outstretched arms.
3. Use the marker to draw a face for St Francis.
4. Spread the peanut butter all over St Francis' "body and arms". Sprinkle bird seed all over the peanut butter. You could also gently roll the toilet paper roll in the bird seed and then just sprinkle it on the arms.
5. Set the feeder over a branch for birds to enjoy.
6. Now, St Francis' outstretched arms are waiting for his friends, the birds, to come visit.



Recite the Prayer of St Francis for Animals and Pets:

Good St Francis,
you loved all of God's creatures.
To you they were your brothers and sisters.
Help us to follow your example
of treating every living thing with kindness.
St Francis, Patron Saint
of animals,
watch over my
pet and keep my
companion safe and
healthy. Amen.



HELLO CHILDREN,

IN TODAY'S GOSPEL WE LEARN A LITTLE BIT ABOUT FAITH. JESUS SAYS WE ONLY NEED A TINY BIT OF FAITH TO DO AMAZING THINGS. IF YOU HAVE FAITH THE SIZE OF A MUSTARD SEED, HE SAID, YOU CAN TELL A TREE TO THROW ITSELF INTO THE SEA AND IT WILL!

BUT WHAT IS FAITH? FAITH IS BELIEVING. WE HAVE FAITH IN OUR PARENTS AND TEACHERS. THAT MEANS WE BELIEVE WHAT THEY TELL US AND WE TRUST THEM. WE HAVE FAITH IN OUR FRIENDS TOO.

FAITH IN GOD IS A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT, THOUGH. IT IS A GIFT HE GIVES US SO WE CAN BELIEVE IN HIM.

WHEN WE WERE BAPTISED, GOD GAVE US THE GIFT OF FAITH. WE USE THAT GIFT WHEN WE DECIDE TO BELIEVE IN GOD AND WHAT HE TELLS US IN THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE.

LOVE,
AUNTY GWEN

Here is a great way to help you memorise God's words.
Cut out and compile these alphabetical cards every week.

Dd

Do not be anxious about anything...



Philippians 4:6

Ee

Every good and perfect gift is from above.



James 1:17

Ff

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...



Ephesians 2:8

Gg

God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.



Psalms 46:1

YOUTH

OCTOBER 2, 2022

KENINGAU YOUTH SING IN THE SPIRIT OF THE SYNODAL CHURCH

MEMBAKUT, Keningau: Three hundred youth from nine parishes and one Mission gathered to glorify the name of God through songs they composed under the theme *Living in Harmony with God's Creation and Marriage*. The 2022 Youth Choir Festival took place at the Church of St Patrick, September 3.

Youth Choir Festival Coordinator 2022, Roney Alfred Eming, in his speech explained that the theme *Living in Harmony with God's Creation* was chosen considering the world today - we need to walk together to care for God's creation which is coming to destruction and it becomes a responsibility as youth and Catholics to care for God's gift that was given to us. The second theme, *Marriage*, aims to increase the collection of wedding hymns that can be used during wedding Masses and the blessing of marriage since songs like this are still lacking in our church.

Before the Choir Festival began, parish priest of St Patrick Church, Fr Benedict



Fr Ronnie Luni hands over the prize to choir members of St Theresa Parish, the winners of 2022 Youth Choir Festival.

Daulis, celebrated the Mass with Fr Ronnie Luni, Spiritual Leader of the Catholic Youth Apostolic Commission of Keningau Diocese concelebrating.

In his homily, Fr Ronnie said, "Your presence here will make the Youth Choir Festival a success. The spirit of togetherness has brought about this sense of belonging. Winning or losing is secondary. We can live out the call of Pope Francis towards a synodal Church by walking together in the spirit of preserving the harmony of God's creation and appreciating everyone as God truly loves us."

The 2022 Keningau Diocesan Youth Choir Festival is the first large gathering by the Youth Apostolate Commission since the pandemic. The youth felt blessed by the choir's performance which reached thousands of viewers through the Keningau Diocesan Youth Commission's Facebook and Youtube.

Roney expressed his hope that this Choir Festival will renew the spirit of our youth, especially in the Keningau diocese. "Serve the Lord with your gifted talents through songs, melodies, music and voices". He also thanked them for saying "Yes, let's serve

God and glorify His name by motivating one another".

Indeed, the Youth Choir Festival 2022 has brought vast experience from every participant to be the best among the best. St Theresa Parish, Tambunan, was crowned as the winner of the 2022 Youth Choir Festival. They were the defending champions for the fifth time in the Keningau Diocese Youth Choir Festival. Runner-up and second runner-up went to St Francis Xavier Cathedral and Holy Spirit Parish, Sook.

The best song lyric award for *Living in Harmony with God's Creation* went to St Francis Xavier Cathedral and the best song lyric award for *Marriage* went to Holy Cross Parish, Toboh. There were also special awards given for Best Conductor (Holy Cross Parish, Toboh), Best Presentation (St Yohanes Pembaptist, Sipitang) and Best Ethics (St Patrick, Membakut).

Roney expressed his gratitude to the people who directly and indirectly have made this festival a success. At the end of the festival, he announced that the host of the upcoming Keningau Diocesan Level Choir Festival was St Anthony Parish, Tenom. — *By Caroline Liew*



300,000 YOUTHS MAKE PILGRIMAGE to Virgin of Itatí in Argentina

DENVER: Under the theme *Together with Mary, we meet again as a synodal Church*, more than 300,000 young people from north-eastern Argentina made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Virgin of Itatí in the Archdiocese of Corrientes on September 17.

The youth, representing different dioceses, gathered together again in person after two years, expressing concerns, expectations, and a commitment to the reality that they have to live in that region of the country.

"We are experiencing a true festival of brothers because we are family. A Church that journeys, makes noise, as Pope Francis proposes to us," said Marianela Villar, the coordinator of youth ministry for the Diocese of Posadas.

The young people walked the more than six

miles (9.6km) between Corrientes and Itatí, accompanied by 100 support vehicles.

"We are celebrating that the youth embrace our Mother who cares for and protects them. She shows the way, giving us strength and hope every day," Villar said.

In this encounter with the Mother of Itatí, the pilgrims arrived at Mary's shrine expressing their joy: "We feel great joy in our hearts because after two long years of waiting and disorientation, we can once again shelter under your mantle," a teen from the province of Entre Ríos commented excitedly.

Bishop Hugo Nicolás Barbaro of San Roque de Presidencia Roque Sáenz Peña, who gave the homily for the central Mass of the 43rd pilgrimage to the shrine, said that "the Virgin is

not indifferent to a child who allows himself to be corrupted."

"Listen to her sweet motherly voice; she wants you to be happy, capable of loving," for you to share "the richness of your healthy, good life," he encouraged.

"I place myself in your hands, Mother; guide me so that I may always do the will of God. You are the cause of my joy, of my peace. Do not ignore our supplications, Mother; deliver us from all danger, oh glorious and blessed Virgin," the prelate prayed.

Some of the young pilgrims commented: "We look forward to this time with hope and joy. We want, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to walk together, build bridges, and embody the solutions proposed by our region." — *CNA*



The pilgrim image of Maria de Itatí and the multitude of pilgrims in front of the basilica at the Shrine of the Virgin of Itatí in the Archdiocese of Corrientes, Argentina, on Sept 17, 2022. (Photo/ Noticias Itateñas facebook)

Touch My Heart young people of Miri

SG ENTULANG, Miri: Indai Maria Bukit Peninjau Parish organised a three-day camp themed *Touch My Heart*, at a long-house in Sungai Entulang for several Miri youth to learn about the Church's mission and to bring them closer to Jesus Christ, their friend.

The retreat masters were two young priests, Fr Sylvester Ngau, Fr Henry Saleh, and Sr Dorothy Kuek from the Human Life Service team.

Fr Sylvester led the first session on *The heart that worships*. He said, "Our Saviour is our refuge and our friend. At times, we are lost, with no one to listen to us, and our hearts are troubled. He is our friend, whom we can talk to. Spending more time with God will lead us closer to Him."

Fr Henry touched on *A loving heart* in the second session. They were divided into groups and given a chapter from the Bible to study together. It was the first time many learned more about the Bible.

Serve with a Good Heart in our ministry was the next session, led by Fr Henry. He elaborated on the keywords: Words, Action, Faith, and Sanctity. Retreatants were reminded to talk and act with good manners and behave well. He also told them to be firm in their faith and not be shaken by their weaknesses. Finally, Fr Henry shared about sanctity and reiterated the temptations of the world, namely lust, and not to follow these desires. "Be wise and let the Holy Spirit guide you," said the priest.



Fr Henry Saleh celebrates Mass with the youth.



The youth and facilitators at the Touch My Heart camp.

Zimbabwe launches preparations for Portugal World Youth Day

ZIMBABWE: Zimbabwe's World Youth Day celebrations were launched recently in the presence of Bishop Raymond Mupandasekwa of Chinhoyi Diocese, secretary to the Nuncio, Msgr Felipe Fabiane, Portugal's Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Miguel De Calheiros and a representative of the Zimbabwean Minister of Youth, Sports and Recreation.

A gathering of 500 young people

The youth celebrations took place at Harare's Rockwood Spiritual Centre. About 500 youths, from eight dioceses, turned out for the function. The event was also used to prepare some of the young people who will travel to the WYD 2023 event in Lisbon, Portugal.

World Youth Day is an international gathering of Catholic youths in the presence of the Pope. It takes place every three years in a different country. Youth from all over the world converge to share the Good News of the Gospel and to promote communion, participation and mission. WYD provides an opportunity for young Catholics worldwide to participate in a cultural exchange, an interaction that builds relationships and oneness. The theme of the World Youth Day is, *'Mary arose and went with haste' (Lk 1: 39)* which encourages all young people to live the Gospel.

An experience of grace

The Zimbabwean World Youth Day started with the celebration of Holy Mass, presided over by Bishop Raymond Mupandasekwa.

"My dear young people, today we begin that long journey to Lisbon. We begin it with haste, just as Mary hurried with joy to the house of Elizabeth. We, too, begin



Some of the young at the Zimbabwe World Day Youth celebrations. (Vatican News photo)

this journey with great joy, hurrying to Lisbon. We want to begin this pilgrimage with prayer, and we ask the Lord to help us make this pilgrimage an experience of grace and of encountering him," Bishop Mupandasekwa said.

The bishop encouraged the youth to take up the Lisbon experience as a way to renew their hope, faith and love for Jesus Christ.

"If you were to go to Lisbon without the courage of faith, the strength of hope and the fire of love, your journey would not be a pilgrimage but just a visit," he said.

Look to the future with hope

Bishop Mupandasekwa said that young people, today, face many challenges and tribulations. These include exclusion at different levels of society, unemployment, school dropouts, drug and substance abuse. Only God can rescue them from this predic-

ament. He called on young people to look to the future with hope and trust in God.

Government supports WYD

Mudarikwa, attending on behalf of the Minister of Youth, Sports and Recreation, Dr Caste Coventry, appreciated the Church's good work in forming young people. He said the Government of Zimbabwe fully supports the pilgrimage to World Youth Day. Mudarikwa also said the young people travelling to Portugal would do so as the country's torchbearers, promoting the country's image.

The guest of honour, Miguel De Calheiros, the Ambassador of Portugal to Zimbabwe, unveiled the World Youth Day banner.

"Rise in haste and solidarity and meet others in Lisbon," Miguel said. — **By Sr Mufaro Chakuanga LCB – Harare, Zimbabwe, Vatican News**

CAMPUS STUDENTS, MARI BERHUBUNG!



Malaysian Catholic Youth & Campus Ministry 2022/2023

If campus life is new and out of your comfort zone, you are not alone! Look for your youth minister whenever in need! They will be there for you.

The Malaysian Catholic Youth Ministers Committee (MCYMC) has come up with the list of the nine (9) arch/dioceses' own Youth and Campus Ministry's person-in-charge and contact details. We will feature each diocese in the coming issues.

Diocese of Keningau

Catholic Youth Commission

Spiritual Adviser:

Fr Ronnie Luni

Youth & Campus Ministers:
Roney Alfred Eming
Felsie Felix

+6013-8557611

kbkkgau@gmail.com

Komisi Belia Keuskupan Keningau

@komisibeliakeuskupan keningau

https://keuskupankeningau.org/

P. O. Box 256, St Francis Xavier Cathedral, 89008 Keningau, Sabah

Be Alive, as Christ is always alive!

Cardinal prays at queen's funeral, signaling Charles' openness to dialogue



The funeral of Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey. (Vatican Media)

LONDON: An English cardinal took part in the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, in an indication of openness of the British Royal family to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.

Some observers believe the involvement of Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster (*pic*) represents the first time for possibly hundreds of years that a cardinal or Catholic bishop has taken a role in a royal funeral.



Cardinal Nichols, president of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, was one of a number of non-Anglican Christian leaders asked to lead the congregation in prayers for the queen during the September 19 state funeral in Westminster Abbey.

The cardinal expressed thanks for the monarch's "commitment to the Commonwealth throughout her reign" and prayed for a "spirit of mutual honour and respect" and that figures in authority "may promote justice and the common good."

Among prominent Catholics in attendance were Archbishop Leo Cushley of St Andrews and Edinburgh, representing the Catholics of Scotland; Archbishop Mark O'Toole of Cardiff, the most senior Catholic leader in Wales; and Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican's Liverpool-

born foreign minister, representing Pope Francis.

Gavin Ashenden, a former Anglican royal chaplain to Queen Elizabeth who became a Catholic in 2019, said no Catholic leaders were involved in the funeral of the King George VI, the queen's father, in 1952.

He said that, for him, "seeing Cardinal Nichols standing by the high altar dressed as a cardinal during the queen's funeral service gave birth to a complex mixture of emotions, amongst which joy and nostalgia were combined."

The last British Catholic monarch was King James II, who died in France in 1701 after he was deposed in a coup in 1688.

His elder brother, King Charles II, converted to the Catholic faith on his deathbed in 1685, and in the previous century, Queen Mary I, the eldest daughter of King Henry VIII, used her five-year reign in the 1550s to force England to return to the Catholic faith.

Since the 18th century, all British monarchs have been obliged, under oath, to be Anglicans and to discharge the office of the supreme governor of the Church of England.

Queen Elizabeth and her husband, Prince Philip, were interested in ecumenism and welcomed St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI to the U.K.

On Sept 16, during a reception for religious leaders at Buckingham Palace,

King Charles III signalled he would continue to pursue dialogue.

He said he recognised his "duty to protect the diversity of our country, including by protecting the space for faith itself and its practice through the religions, cultures, traditions and beliefs to which our hearts and minds direct us as individuals."

The king said: "The beliefs that flourish in, and contribute to, our richly diverse society differ. They, and our society, can only thrive through a clear collective commitment to those vital principles of freedom of conscience, generosity of spirit and care for others which are, to me, the essence of our nationhood."

"I am determined, as king, to preserve and promote those principles across all communities, and for all beliefs, with all my heart," he said.

During the reception Cardinal Vincent Nichols had a personal conversation with the King. He said: "I assured him that the Catholic community had continued, during these days of mourning, in heartfelt prayer for his mother. He expressed his gratitude for this. And then, turning back to me, he asked me to ensure that the Catholics of our diocese know of his thanks and gratitude for these prayers."

Commentators are predicting that the coronation of Charles in 2023 is likely to include members of non-Anglican churches and possibly other faiths for the first time. — *CNS/ICN*

Nearly 100 die in Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan clashes

CENTRAL ASIA: Authorities say at least 94 people have died and more than 100 injured in clashes on the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border – the deadliest in years. The battles come as regional power Russia focuses on its invasion of Ukraine.

Footage has emerged of combat troops in a military plane. Kyrgyzstan's President Sadyr Japarov urged his nation to trust its army and strategic partners following massive border clashes with neighbouring Tajikistan.

He said there was no need for volunteer forces at the border with Tajikistan, but concerns remain that the fighting will escalate into a full-scale war.

Violence regularly erupts between the two former Soviet republics, whose border has been contested since the collapse of the Russia-led Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

But with at least nearly 100 killed in recent days, the clashes between these

mainly Muslim nations were the deadliest in recent memory.

On September 18, Kyrgyzstan reported more than a dozen deaths taking its total death toll to at least nearly 60. It added that more than 100 people had been injured and declared the following day (Monday) a day of mourning for the victims.

Kyrgyz Security Council Secretary Marat Imankulov said, "There was a shootout all day at the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan."

He added: "We believe that this is a provocation. The armed forces, border guards, and other service members of Tajikistan carried out the shooting. Our border guards acted adequately; they also fought back in response."

More than 30 people are also believed to have died in Tajikistan recently.

The latest fighting involved using tanks, aviation, and rocket artillery on a disputed section of the border in Kyrgyzstan's Bat-

ken province.

Both sides blame each other for the outbreak of violence. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan share a 1,000-km (600-mile) border, a third disputed.

With violence continuing, many were displaced by the fighting: Kyrgyzstan said some 137,000 people had been evacuated from the conflict area.

Kyrgyz media claimed that some people had already started returning to their homes, but it wasn't clear for how long they would be able to stay there.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin called for a de-escalation of tensions in phone calls with Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon and Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov on Sunday. But with Russia focused on its invasion of Ukraine, there is international concern that tensions will rise across the Central Asian and Caucasus regions of the former Soviet Union. — *By Stefan Bos, Vatican News*

MEMORIAM

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In Ever Loving Memory of
26th Anniversary 14th Anniversary



N. E. AROKIASAMY
Departed:
05-10-1996



ANNAMARY
Departed:
30-09-2008

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by:
Sons, Daughters, Son-in-law, Daughter-in-law,
Grandchildren, Relatives and Friends.



1st Anniversary
In Ever Loving
Memory of

Rita Gertrude
Nathen

Called home to be
with the Lord on
4th October 2021

*The warmth of your sweet smile is gone forever,
but the memories will last a lifetime.*

*Goodness and kindness will follow me
all the days of my life.*

Psalm 23:6

Deeply missed and always remembered by your:
Loving husband, son, daughter-in-law, mother,
brothers, sisters, relatives and friends.

17th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



John Baptist Yeo Ah Han
Called to the Lord: 07-10-2005

*"In God's care you rest above,
in our hearts you stay with love.
We will always love and remember you."*

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by
Family, relatives and friends.



10th Anniversary
In Loving
Memory of

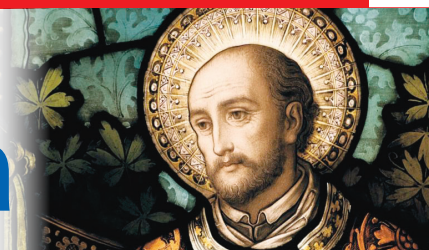
MARIANNE CHUAH
LIAN IMM

Called home
to the Lord on
6th October 2012

*I thank my God in
all my remembrance of you.
(Philippians 1:3)*

Deeply loved and missed by
Nee (Josephine), Sim (Stephanie) and Li (Helen).

Catechesis On Discernment: An example: Ignatius of Loyola



We are continuing our reflection on discernment — during this time, we will speak about spiritual discernment every Wednesday — and in doing so, referring to a specific witness can be helpful to us.

One of the most instructive examples is offered to us by St Ignatius of Loyola, with a decisive episode in his life. Ignatius was at home convalescing after injuring a leg in battle. To dispel the boredom, he asked for something to read. He loved tales of chivalry, but unfortunately, there were only the lives of the saints at home. Somewhat reluctantly, he adapted, but in the course of reading, he began to discover another world, a world that won him over and seemed to compete with that of knights. He was fascinated by the figures of St Francis and St Dominic, and felt the desire to imitate them. But the world of chivalry also continued to exert its fascination on him. Thus, he felt within himself this alternation of thoughts — those of chivalry and those of the saints — which seem to be on par with one another.

Ignatius, however, also began to perceive some differences. In his autobiography — in the third person — he wrote: “When he thought of worldly things” — and of chivalrous things, of course — “it gave him great pleasure, but afterwards, he found himself dry and sad. But when he thought of journeying to Jerusalem, and of living only on herbs and practising austerities, he found pleasure not only while thinking of them, but also when he had ceased” (Chapter 8); they left him a trace of joy.

In this experience we note two aspects, above all. The first is time: that is, the thoughts of the world are attractive at the beginning, but then they lose their lustre and leave emptiness and discontent; they leave you that way, empty. Thoughts of God, on the contrary, rouse first a certain resistance — “But I’m not going to read this boring thing about saints” — but when they

are welcomed, they bring an unknown peace that lasts for a long time.

Here, then, is the other aspect: the end point of thoughts. At first the situation does not seem so clear. There is a development of discernment: for example, we understand what is good for us not in an abstract, general way, but in the journey of our life. In the rules for discernment, the fruit of this fundamental experience, Ignatius laid down an important premise, which helps to understand this process: “In the persons who go from mortal sin to mortal sin, the enemy is commonly used to propose to them apparent pleasures” — to reassure them that everything is fine — “making them imagine sensual delights and pleasures in order to hold them more and make them grow in their vices and sins. In these persons the good spirit uses the opposite method, pricking them and biting their consciences through the process of reason” (Spiritual Exercises, 314). But this will not do.

There is a history that precedes one who discerns, a history that it is indispensable to know, because discernment is not a sort of oracle or fatalism, or something from a laboratory, like casting one’s lot on two possibilities. The great questions arise when we have already travelled a stretch of the road in life, and it is to that journey that we must return in order to understand what we are looking for. If in life we make a little progress, then: “But why am I walking in this direction, what am I looking for?”, and that is where discernment takes place.

When he found himself wounded in his father’s house, Ignatius was not thinking of God at all, or of how to reform his own life, no. He had his first experience of God by listening to his own heart, which presented him with a curious reversal: things that were attractive at first sight left him disillusioned, whereas in others, less dazzling, he perceived lasting peace. We too have this experience; very often we begin

to think about something, and we stay there, and then we end up disappointed. Instead, when we carry out a work of charity, do something good and feel something of happiness, a good thought comes to us, and happiness comes to us, something of joy. It is an experience that is entirely our own. He, Ignatius, had his first experience of God by listening to his own heart, that showed him a curious reversal.

This is what we must learn: to listen to our own heart, to know what is happening, what decision to make. To make a judgement on a situation, one must listen to one’s own heart. We listen to the television, the radio, the mobile phone. We are experts at listening, but I ask you: do you know how to listen to your heart? Do you stop to ask: “But how is my heart? Is it satisfied, is it sad, is it searching for something?”. In order to make good decisions, one must listen to one’s own heart.

This is why Ignatius would go on to suggest reading the lives of the saints, because they show God’s style in the lives of people who are not very different from us, in a narrative and comprehensible way; because saints were made of flesh and blood like us. Their actions speak to ours, and they help us understand their meaning.

In that famous episode of the two feelings that Ignatius had, one when he read about knights and the other when he read about the lives of saints, we can recognise another important aspect of discernment, which we already mentioned last time. There is an apparent randomness in life’s events: everything seems to arise from a banal setback — there were no books about knights, only about the lives of saints, a setback that nonetheless held a possible turning point.

Only after some time would Ignatius realise this, at which point he would devote all his attention to it. Listen carefully: God works through unplanned events that happen by chance, but

by chance this happened to me, and by chance I met this person, by chance I saw this film. It was not planned but God works through unplanned events, and also through setbacks: “But I was supposed to go for a walk and I had a problem with my foot, I can’t...”

Setback: what is God saying to you? What is life telling you there? We have also seen this in a passage from the *Gospel of Matthew*: a man ploughing a field accidentally comes across buried treasure. A totally unexpected situation. But what is important is that he recognises it as the lucky break of his life and decides accordingly: he sells everything and buys that field (cf. 13:44). I will give you a piece of advice: beware of the unexpected. He who says: “But I wasn’t expecting this”. Is it life speaking to you, is it the Lord speaking to you, or is it the devil? Someone.

But there is something to discern: how I react when faced with the unexpected. But it was quiet at home and “Boom!” — my mother-in-law arrives. And how do you react to your mother-in-law? Is it love or something else inside? And you must discern. I was working well in the office, and a companion comes along to tell me he needs money: how do you react? Seeing what happens when we experience things we were not expecting, and learning to know our heart as it moves.

Discernment is the aid in recognising the signals with which the Lord makes Himself known in unexpected, even unpleasant situations, as the wounded leg was for Ignatius. A life-changing encounter can arise from them, forever, as in the case of Ignatius. Something can arise that makes you better along the way, or worse, I don’t know, but being attentive: the most beautiful narrative thread comes from the unexpected: “How do I act in view of this?” May the Lord help us listen to our hearts and see when it is He who acts, and when it is not and it is something else.

Saints of the week

St Francis of Assisi

The patron saint of Italy, Francis of Assisi was originally named Giovanni (or John), but his father chose to call him Francesco (or Francis). He was born one of the several children to the wealthy merchant Pietro Bernardone and his wife Pica, in the early 1180s.

Unlike many medieval saints, St Francis was neither studious nor pious in his youth. His father’s wealth gave him access to a lively social life among the upper classes, where he was known for his flashy clothes and his readiness to burst into song. Later a patron of peacemakers, he aspired to great military feats in his youth and fought in a war with a rival Italian city-state.

He returned to Assisi due to illness in 1205, and there began a life of voluntary poverty.

Three major incidents confirmed Francis in this path. In Assisi, he overcame his fear of disease by kissing the hand of a leper. Afterward, he made a pilgrimage to Rome, where he deposited his money at St Peter’s tomb and exchanged clothes with a beggar. Soon after he returned home, Francis heard Christ tell him in a vision: “Go, Francis, and repair my house, which as you see is falling into ruin.”

Francis used his father’s wealth to restore churches but this led to a public quarrel in which the cloth-merchant’s son removed his clothing and declared that he had no father except God. He regarded himself as the husband of “Lady Poverty,” and resolved to



Feast day: October 4

serve Christ as “a herald of the Great King.”

At Mass one morning in 1208, Francis was inspired to start the Franciscan movement when he heard the Gospel reading in which Christ instructed the Apostles to go forth without money, shoes, or extra clothing. This way of life soon became a papally-approved rule, which would attract huge number of followers within Francis’ lifetime.

Through his imitation of Christ, Francis also shared in the Lord’s sufferings. He miraculously received Christ’s wounds, the stigmata, on his flesh in September 1224. His health collapsed over the next two years, a “living sacrifice” made during two decades of missionary preaching and penance.

St Francis of Assisi died on Oct 3, 1226. Pope Gregory IX, his friend and devotee, canonised him in 1228. — *CNA*

St Maria Faustina Kowalska

Helena Kowalska, born on August 25, 1905, was the third of 10 children in a poor but devout Polish family. She worked as a housekeeper in three cities before joining the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in 1925, after being rejected from several other convents because of her poverty and lack of education. She took the name Sr Faustina and worked as a cook, gardener, and porter in their houses in both Poland and Lithuania.



Feast day: October 5

In addition to carrying out her work faithfully, and generously serving the needs of the sisters and the local people, Sr Faustina also had a deep interior life. This included receiving revelations from Jesus, messages that she recorded in her diary at the request of Christ himself, and of her confessors. Throughout her life, Jesus appeared to Sr Faustina. He asked her to become an apostle and secretary of His mercy, by writing down His messages of Divine Mercy for the world, in her diary. Jesus also asked Sr Faustina to have an image painted of his Divine Mercy, with red and white rays issuing from his heart, and to spread devotion to the Di-

vine Mercy novena.

Even before her death on October 5, 1938, devotion to the Divine Mercy began to spread throughout Poland. This little nun and Jesus’ message of Divine Mercy impacted Karol Wojtyla greatly, which became obvious to the world when he was elected Pope.

“It is truly marvellous how her devotion to the merciful Jesus is spreading in our contemporary world and gaining so many human hearts! This is doubt-

lessly a sign of the times — a sign of our 20th century. The balance of this century, which is now ending, in addition to the advances which have often surpassed those of preceding eras, presents a deep restlessness and fear of the future. Where, if not in the Divine Mercy, can the world find refuge and the light of hope? Believers understand that perfectly,” Pope St John Paul II wrote.

On April 30, 2000, Pope John Paul II canonised Sr Faustina in what he was widely reported as saying was “the happiest day of my life.” He also instituted the Feast of Divine Mercy, which Jesus had asked for in his messages to Sr Faustina, on the first Sunday after Easter. — *Agencies*

'To dust you shall return,' but human composting?



ST LOUIS, Missouri: California Governor Gavin Newsom on September 18 signed a bill into law that will allow the composting of human remains — a bill that the state's Catholic Conference had opposed.

The process of human composting — also known as natural organic reduction (NOR) — is a relatively new phenomenon in the US and is legal in a handful of other states. When a body is composted, it is placed in a reusable container where microbes and bacteria decompose it into soil over the course of 30 to 45 days.

The resulting soil can then be used on private land, such as on a farm or garden, and otherwise

would be subject to the same restrictions as scattering cremated remains in the state.

The state's Catholic conference had expressed opposition to the bill in a June letter.

Kathleen Domingo, executive director of the California Catholic Conference, said the use of a body composting method originally developed for farm animals creates an "unfortunate spiritual, emotional, and psychological distancing from the deceased." In addition, she said, the process "reduces the human body to simply a disposable commodity."

The process will be available in California beginning in 2027. The bill's sponsor, Assembly member

Cristina Garcia, D-Bell Gardens, argued that the process is more economical and eco-friendly than traditional burial methods and could help to reduce overcrowding in cemeteries.

The Catholic Church does not have an official teaching on the composting of human bodies but has weighed in many times over the years on the practice of cremation. While strongly discouraged, cremation can be permissible under certain restrictions; notably, the remains are not to be scattered and must be kept in a sacred place, out of reverence for the Church's teaching on the eventual resurrection of the body.

"We believe that the 'transfor-

mation' of the remains would create an emotional distance rather than a reverence for them," Steve Pehanich, a spokesperson for the California Catholic Conference, told *Religion News Service* in 2020.

"Even with cremated remains, they directed that they remain in a communal place befitting of the dignity inherent in the human body and its connection to the immortal soul," Pehanich said.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's October 2016 instruction *Ad resurgendum cum Christo* states that while cremation "is not prohibited," the Church "continues to prefer the practice of burying the bodies of the de-

ceased, because this shows a greater esteem towards the deceased."

In that same document, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith clarified that a person's ashes are not to be scattered, nor kept in the home or preserved in mementos or jewellery, but instead must be "laid to rest in a sacred place," such as in a cemetery or church. As the document explains, "by burying the bodies of the faithful, the Church confirms her faith in the resurrection of the body and intends to show the great dignity of the human body as an integral part of the human person whose body forms part of their identity."

— **By Jonah McKeown, CNA**

Competition for Jubilee 2025 Hymn kicks off

VATICAN: With preparations beginning in view of the Holy Year 2025, the Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelisation, in charge of coordinating the Holy See's efforts for the Jubilee Year, is launching a competition, open to all, for the composition of the Jubilee hymn.

Interested participants in the competition are invited to set to music a text proposed by the Dicastery's Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelisation in the World, which expresses the essence of the jubilee event.

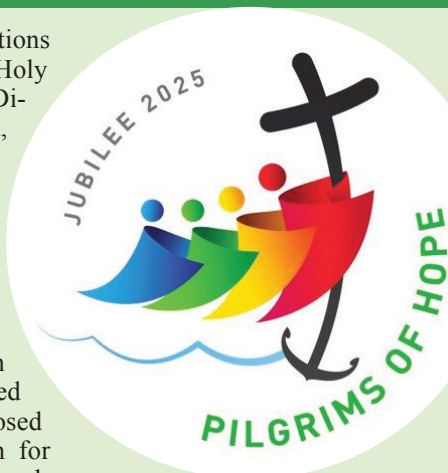
The hymn is intended to have a liturgical purpose and should be capable of being sung by a Church congregation and by a *schola cantorum*.

Entries in the competition are required to be sent in by March 25, 2023.

The Dicastery for Evangelisation stipulates some conditions for entries in the Jubilee Hymn competition.

Compositions must be original by the author and unpublished, and must have the added embellishment for the part for the *schola cantorum*, for the four-voice singing of the refrain and stanzas.

Participants are also required to submit the score for



Official Logo of Jubilee 2025

voice and organ, and the entry must not be the work of a paid commission, and must never have been performed before in a concert or public event, or transmitted by any broadcast media.

Further conditions for the entries are contained on the webpage created for the Jubilee 2025 Hymn competition

Application forms for the competition will be accessible at www.iubilaum2025.va/en/inno.html, starting January 16, 2023 and ending at 8 p.m. (Italian time, CET) on March 25, 2023.

After that date and after the selection has been completed, only the winner of this competition will be contacted. — **By Benedict Mayaki, SJ, Vatican News**

Malaysia confirms pledge to end death penalty

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will abolish the mandatory death penalty and replace it with alternative punishment, said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Parliament and Law) Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar.

Wan Junaidi in a recent statement said the decision was made after two series of meetings held in September by the Substitute Sentences for the Mandatory Death Penalty Task Force Technical Committee which he had chaired.

The government in principle had agreed to a proposal to substitute the sentences for 11 offences that carry the mandatory death penalty.

The minister also announced a moratorium for 1,337 death-convict inmates in Malaysia.

He also reiterated his stand on abolishing the death penalty and bringing in punishments that match the gravity of the offence.

"I remain committed to fighting for fairer and compassionate laws on the issue of whipping and the death penalty," the minister stated in a Facebook post.

The decision of the task force would be submitted to the Cabinet to be tabled at the Cabinet meeting for approval and to pass amendments at the Third Meeting of the Fifth Term of the 14th Parliament in the *Dewan Rakyat*.

The first reading of the Bill is expected on Oct 4 and the second on Nov 22.

In June, the Malaysian government initiated the process to abolish the mandatory death penalty, which was a long-standing demand



A 2019 file photo of Shamini Darshni Kaliemuthu (left) and Brian Yap, representatives from Amnesty International Malaysia who attended the launch of a report on the death penalty in Malaysia. (UCA News photo)

from activists. The move was hailed across the globe.

Amnesty International Malaysia's executive director Katrina Jorene Maliamaud hailed the move as "a welcome step in the right direction, and we urge [the government] to go further and work towards full abolition of this cruel punishment," *AFP* news agency reported in June.

In Malaysia crimes punishable by death include drug trafficking, terrorism, murder, rape resulting in death, kidnapping, and the possession of firearms wherein the judge does not have the option to give any alternate or lesser punishments.

The Catholic Church in Malaysia has been vehemently opposing

capital punishment and is vocal in supporting its removal from the justice system.

Malaysians Against Death Penalty and Torture (MADPET) is an abolitionist campaign supported by people from all levels of society including Christians.

In Oct 2018, Charles Hector, a member of MADPET voiced his support for the then government's move to end capital punishment.

Hector said that they were "waiting for the day when we can celebrate the abolition of the death penalty, and death row will disappear in Malaysia," the Vatican's *Fides* news agency reported.

Malaysia carried out its last execution in 2018 and then imposed a moratorium. — **Agencies**