

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 decision in the marketplace.

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:
“Death is swallowed up in victory.”
“O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?”
1 Cor. 15:54-55



Preparing for Lent

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Plea for peace



(ANSA photo)

‘May those who hold the fate of the world in their hands spare us from the horrors of war’

ROME: Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin has condemned a Russian military offensive in Ukraine, calling the move tragic and issuing an appeal for negotiation and goodwill to prevail in preventing the outbreak of further violence.

Parolin opened his February 24 message referring to an appeal made by Pope Francis at the end of his Wednesday general audience address, in which he announced that March 2, Ash Wednesday, would be a day of prayer and fasting for peace in Ukraine.

“In light of today’s developments in the crisis in Ukraine, we see even more clearly the timeliness of the clear and heartfelt appeal that the Holy Father Francis made,” Parolin said, noting that the Pope in his appeal voiced “great sorrow, anguish and concern” over the situation.

Pope Francis also “urged all the parties involved to refrain from any action that would cause even more suffering to the people,

destabilising coexistence between nations, and bringing international law into disrepute.”

This appeal, Parolin said, “has taken on dramatic urgency after the start of Russian military operations on Ukrainian territory.”

In the early hours of Thursday morning, Russia launched a formal military assault on Ukraine, crossing into its borders and launching airstrikes in the country’s capital, Kyiv, and more than a dozen other cities in a bid to “demilitarise and de-Nazify Ukraine,” according to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In response, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky invoked martial law and has encouraged citizens to stay indoors.

According to a new statement from the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, its leader, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, is currently sheltering in an anti-aircraft bunker underneath the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Kyiv along with “many other people,” as the city endures bombing from the Russian army.

In his message, Parolin said “The tragic scenarios that everyone feared are becoming a reality,” but insisted that “there is still time for goodwill, there is still room

for negotiation.”

“There is still a place for the exercise of a wisdom that can prevent the predominance of partisan interests, safeguard the legitimate aspirations of everyone, and spare the world from the folly and horrors of war,” he said.

Parolin stressed that as believers, “we do not lose hope for a glimmer of conscience on the part of those who hold in their hands the fortunes of the world. And we continue to pray and fast – as we shall do this coming Ash Wednesday – for peace in Ukraine and in the entire world.”

The military offensive comes after weeks of escalating tensions in which Russia amassed troops along its border with Ukraine and demanded that NATO forces withdraw from eastern Europe and that the organisation pledge to never admit Ukraine or any other former Soviet nation as members to its membership.

Tensions between the two countries have been building steadily since Ukrainian citizens ousted pro-Russian president Viktor Fedorovych Yanukovych in 2014. Russia then annexed Ukraine’s southern Crimean Peninsula and backed separatists who overtook large swaths of the country’s eastern re-

gions of Donetsk and Luhansk, and conflict has been unfolding ever since.

Observers warned that an invasion was imminent after Putin’s declaration on Monday of his formal recognition of the People’s Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk, causing international backlash and a swath of sanctions.

Humanitarian organisations such as Caritas International have warned that Ukraine is now headed for “a colossal humanitarian catastrophe.”

Caritas International’s Secretary General Aloysius John said in a statement that “We cannot ignore the tragic humanitarian implications of this war.”

“It is the duty of the international community to protect the Ukrainian people and ensure their access to life-saving assistance,” he said.

International leaders have pledged to impose further sanctions against Russia in the wake of Thursday’s offensive.

United States President Joe Biden held meetings with G7 leaders Thursday to discuss countermeasures to Russia’s assault. —

By Elise Ann Allen, *Cruz*

● Turn to page 2 and Back page for more

Guidance for Ash Wednesday

KUALA LUMPUR: In keeping with the current SOPs in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, ashes will be sprinkled on the top of people’s heads for Ash Wednesday.

Chancellor, Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, explained in a chancery notice released February 25, that this practice has the advantage of not requiring the priest to touch multiple people.

Hence, “this precautionary measure will

only serve in helping us protect those who attend the Ash Wednesday Mass and even their loved ones at home.”

He explains “that the season of Lent offers us a time for self-examination, repentance, and the renewal of our relationships with one another, and with God, through prayer, fasting and acts of charity.

“For many of us, the ashes of Ash Wednesday are a tangible sign of our mor-

tality and penitence, and a powerful sign of our entry into the season of Lent, a time of repentance, renewal, and reconciliation.”

Fr Clarence ends the notice by reminding everyone to remain united with Pope Francis and make Ash Wednesday a day of prayer and fasting for peace in Ukraine.

● Click [here](#) for the message in full



(photo: Catholic Sabah)

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HERALD

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SPECIAL COMMENTARY

War after the pandemic: a threat to humanity

The attack on Ukraine has begun. War in Europe in the 21st century seemed impossible. The risks of an escalation are unimaginable. Pope Francis calls us to counter the power of arms with the 'weakness' of prayer.

There are some who couldn't believe it: A war in Europe in the third millennium: it seemed improbable, almost impossible. Now, there are already many dead. There are fears of a bloodbath. The usual innocent, defenceless victims, who wanted nothing more than to live in peace with others, with everyone, even if they have a different flag. The powerful care nothing for the weak who are perishing. There are many cynical Herods about; the slaughter of the innocents has not stopped. After the suffering caused by the pandemic, we now see the grief of a conflict, and who knows how far it will degenerate?

Some have evoked the risks of a third world war. We continue to believe it is impossible. We continue to think that humanity will not be so foolish as to fall into it once more. Because war is madness, it

is irrational. It is demonic. The devil desires to destroy life, wants to destroy the world. Today, he has enough lethal arms to achieve his goal. We must not take world peace for granted.

Pope Francis, filled with anguish and worry, has called for prayer and fasting for peace, has called for the "weakness" of prayer to counter the power of arms. Who would believe it? Who would oppose the meek asceticism against the strength of cannons? Prayer unites us to the Father, and makes us brothers; fasting takes something away from us in order to share it with others – even if the other is an enemy.

Prayer is the real revolution that changes the world, because it changes hearts. We have few resources against war, without bearing direct responsibility for them, the devil foments them with hatred, cunning, wickedness. This kind of demon, Jesus says, "never comes out except by prayer and fasting." — **By Sergio Centofanti, Vatican News**



(ANSA photo)

Change yourself before trying to change others

Last Sunday's gospel from Luke ended with the exhortation to show mercy, to pardon instead of judging and condemning. Today's gospel passage continues in the same vein, with practical guidance on how to behave as disciples of Jesus. We are warned against our tendency to be judgemental. "Why do you observe the splinter in the eye of your brother or sister and never notice the plank in your own... Take the plank out of your own eye first and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye" (Lk 6:40,42).

This warning against arrogance and hasty judgement of others may seem to be just common sense. However, it is far from easy to follow this wise advice in practice. Indeed, common sense is not all that common, as one of my teachers used say. We are all inclined to be judgemental. We notice the faults of others more readily than we see or admit our own faults. Indeed, we can be completely blind to failings in ourselves that are all too evident to those who live and work with us.

A story I came across some time ago illustrates how blind we can be to our own faults:

"In a community of monks, there was a young monk who had committed a serious fault which was brought to the attention of his brothers. Immediately, the elder monks assembled in community to cast judgement on him. However, according to their rule of life, they could not proceed until the Abbot joined them. So, they sent him a message. "Come, the community is waiting for you." So the Abbot arose, and taking an old basket riddled with holes, he filled it with fine sand.



Then he started off, carrying the basket on his back. Naturally, as he went along, he left a trail of sand in his wake. The elders came out to meet him and asked him what he meant by this strange behaviour. He replied: "My sins are running out behind me. Everywhere I go, I leave a trail of faults after me, only most of the time I don't see them myself. Now, today, you want me to sit in judgement on my brother." On hearing this, the elders felt ashamed of themselves. So they abandoned the trial and pardoned their brother."

The ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, tells us that self-knowledge is the beginning of wisdom. Few of us are truly wise in this respect. We're so focused on the faults of others – those with whom we work and those for whom we work, the members of our community or family, our leaders – that

we have little time or energy for the most fundamental and important exercise of all: truly looking at ourselves and correcting our own faults.

In today's gospel, Jesus challenges us to refocus our sharp analytical skills, so quick to diagnose the faults and failings of others, and centre them on ourselves. He is asking us to put our own house in order before trying to reform others. This is surely an appropriate invitation to all of us as we are about to begin the holy season of Lent.

Lent begins this coming Wednesday. The word 'Lent' comes from an old English word which means 'Springtime'. It reminds us of spring-cleaning and the new life in nature during the season of Spring. Lent is, therefore, a graced time, a time to do some spring-cleaning in our lives and enjoy new life as a result, a time to leave the trappings of sin behind us and grow closer to the Lord.

During Lent, we join Jesus in the desert – at least symbolically – and, with his help, we tackle our demons, our blind spots. We think we know ourselves and those around us. We think we know God and we even try to impose our will on God. Lent invites us to enter into a private desert, even in the midst of the world, and face up to our illusions about God and about ourselves.

During Lent, we use abstinence from meat and acts of penance as metaphors. In a very small way, these practices model our rejection of illusions about what we need, who we are, and who God is. Probably, we will not succeed in ridding ourselves completely of our illusion. That final cleansing

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Michael McCabe SMA

8th Sunday of Ordinary Time (C)

Readings: *Sirach 27:5-8;*
1 Corinthians 15:54-58;
Gospel: *Luke 6:39-45*

will come only when we see God face to face at the final judgement. Then, and only then, will we have no illusions about our sanctity or goodness.

All will be laid bare, and there will be no more hypocrisy, lies, or illusions. However, we must begin the journey from illusion to reality, from self-deception to self-knowledge, now. And Lent is an appropriate time to re-commit ourselves to that task.

I end with a wise prayer I received recently in a WhatsApp message from a friend. It is a prayer we should say and reflect on often, especially during the season of Lent.

"Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, the courage to change the one I can, and the wisdom to know that person is ME".



Fr Michael McCabe is a member of the Society of African Missions (www.sma.ie) and has served in Zambia, Liberia and Kenya. He is currently the Irish Provincial leader and is based in Cork.



ARCHDIOCESE OF KUALA LUMPUR

Chancery Notice

CHAN/CD/02/2022

Clergy Appointments

His Grace, Archbishop Julian Leow D.D., the Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, has hereby made the following appointments effective February 17, 2022.

1.0 Archdiocesan Curia

1.1. The **Very Rev Msgr Patrick Boudville**, Parish Priest of the Church of St Thomas More, Subang Jaya, has been appointed as Vicar General to assist the Archbishop in the governance of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur in accordance with canon 475 §1, CIC.

1.2. The **Very Rev Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam**, Parish Priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Kuala Lumpur, has been appointed as Vicar General to assist the Archbishop in the governance of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur in accordance with canon 475 §1, CIC.

1.3. **Rev Fr Dr Clarence Devadass**, Parish Priest of the Church of St Anthony, Kuala Lumpur, has been appointed as Chancellor in accordance with canons 482 §1.

1.4. The two Vicars General and the Chancellor are ex-officio members of the College of Consultors and Council of Priests.

2.0 College of Consultors

The following have been appointed to the College of Consultors:

1. **Rev Fr Eugene Benedict**

Assistant Priest of the Church of St Anthony, Kuala Lumpur.

2. **Rev Fr Gerard Theraviam**

Parish Priest of the Cathedral of St John, Kuala Lumpur.

3. **Rev Fr Gregory Chan**

Parish Priest of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang.

4. **Rev Fr Paulino Miranda**

Priest in Residence of the Chapel of St Theresa, Klang.

3.0 Council of Priests

At the recommendation of the presbytery, His Grace, Archbishop Julian Leow has appointed the following priests as Senators of their respective districts and members of the Council of Priests in accordance with canon 495, CIC, for a period of three (3) years effective 21

January 2022:

1. **Pahang Terengganu District: Rev Fr Clement Lim** Parish Priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Bentong.

2. **Negeri District: Rev Fr Philip Tay OCD** Assistant Priest of the Church of the Visitation, Seremban.

3. **KL South District: Rev Fr Bonaventure Rayappan** Assistant Priest of the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang.

4. **KL North District: Rev Fr Peter Anthoney** Parish Administrator of the Chapel of Christ the Light, Kepong.

5. **KL Central District: Rev Fr Gerard Theraviam** Parish Priest of the Cathedral of St John, Kuala Lumpur.

6. **Klang District: Rev Fr Richard Anthony Samy SJ** Parish Administrator of the Church of Ss Peter and Paul, Banting.

7. **Northwest District: Rev Fr James**

Gabriel Parish Priest of the Church of St Paul the Hermit, Bestari Jaya.

8. **Petaling District: Rev Fr Alan Pereira** Parish Priest of the Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam.

His Grace, Archbishop Julian Leow D.D. would like to express his heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to his collaborators, the outgoing vicars general, Rev Frs Leonard Lexion and Mitchel Anthony, the outgoing Chancellor, Rev Fr Michael Chua and the outgoing consultors. He looks forward to collaborating with the new Curial team, the newly appointed members of College of Consultors and Council of Priests for the spiritual growth and good of the faithful in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

Rev Fr Dr Clarence Devadass
Chancellor
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

February 18, 2022



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #77



Greetings and Peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you, dear People of God.

We welcome the newly ordained priest, Fr William Pillai to the diocese, and to the North Central Johore Vicariate. He will continue as assistant parish priest of the Church of St Henry, Batu Pahat. The Church prepares for Lent 2022 with Ash Wednesday, which falls on March 2, 2022. The Rite of Elections on March 5 and 6 will welcome 145 Elect from Malacca, North Central Johore and South Johore Vicariates.

The time for Fast and Prayer is here: Our fast and prayer has to be purposeful. It is beyond being self-centred, self-serving and self-satisfying. It is time to “stand in the breach”, the breaches in the walls of our lives, in the Church and in the nation. **Proclaim a time of fast and prayer for our fragmented nation**, for the divisions to heal, for the courageous to expose the lying and deceiving, for the shaken to be strong to bring change, for the corrupted and greedy to repent, and for the realisation that to alleviate the poor is to fight for their rights, and it is not a gift.

A Thought for the Week: Light! Darkness!

A rabbi asked his students, “When is it at dawn that one can tell the light from the darkness?” One student replied, “When I can tell a goat from a donkey.” “No,” answered the rabbi. Another said, “When I can tell a palm tree from a fig.” “No,” answered the rabbi again. “Well, then what is the answer?” his students pressed him.

“Only when you look into the face of every man and every woman and see your brother and your sister,” said the rabbi. “Only then have you seen the light. All else is still darkness.”

Something to ponder? “We can’t go around measuring our goodness by what we don’t do, or by what we deny ourselves, or what we resist and who we exclude. I think we’ve got to measure goodness by

what we embrace, what we create and who we include.” (from the ‘Chocolat’)

Who is it that you are still excluding from the circle of your compassion? Who is still not your brother or sister?

Announcements for this Week:

1. **Latest on the COVID-19 SOPs:** There are no restrictions on gatherings for prayer, Masses and sacraments. Only maintain the SOPs on physical distancing, masking and sanitising. With the recent spike in new cases per day, people with symptoms, positive to personal test kit, unvaccinated and children are discouraged from the gatherings unless special spaces are set up for them. Separate Masses and drive-thru communions are permitted.

2. **Ash Wednesday Masses** are on for March 2 with sprinkling of ashes. There will be no imposition nor sprinkling of ashes on other days.

3. Rite of Election Updates:

a. The above will be conducted at three centres i.e. at the Cathedral and St Mathew, Tangkak, on March 5 at 10.00am and 3.00pm respectively; and at Our Lady of Guadalupe on March 6 at 4.00pm.

b. The catechumens number 145 in total.

4. Lenten Programmes for 2022:

a. **MJD50 Recollection Service**, will take place March 9 at 8.00pm for all parishes: The diocese goes before the Healing Lord, to reconcile with God, the Church, the priests, the religious, the parish and one another for hurting each other and breaking the Body of Christ over the many years. Let forgiveness heal us.

b. **The Lenten Campaign 2022** with the theme “Make a Stand! Be Heard As A Catholic Community and As Concerned Citizens,” appeals to your generosity. Create a Family Lenten Box to

help the poor via Caritas-Diocese of Malacca Johore. Do acts of charity and mercy to the suffering, so that “when you do it to them, you do it to Christ”.

c. **Weekly Lenten Reflections within God’s Creation** in e-booklet format are available for download from MJD’s website in all four languages.

This week’s Question and Query:

The Q asks, “Is there a way of being happy in Lent?”

The Anonymous said:

Blessed are those who remain faithful while enduring evils inflicted on them by others, and forgive them from their hearts.

Blessed are those who look into the eyes of the abandoned and marginalised, and show them their closeness.

Blessed are those who see God in every person, and strive to make others also discover him.

Blessed are those who protect and care for our common home.

Blessed are those who renounce their own comfort in order to help others.

Blessed are those who pray and work for full communion between Christians.

God bless you all. “Religion does not tolerate any questions. But Spirituality questions everything”. Let us continue “Building His Kingdom Together”.

Bishop Bernard Paul
February 25, 2022



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJK3MSHszWU>

The Arch/Dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia have released their Lenten Campaign programmes to help the people of God in their preparation for Easter.

The Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese is focusing on "Salt of the Earth, Light of the World", in solidarity with the Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Team (PMPT) theme for 2022.

Using the Christian-friendly properties of Salt and Light, we enable, empower and transform ourselves, our Families and our Communities to re-commit to co-build the Kingdom of God.

Penang Diocese is beginning a three-year Lenten theme (2022-2024), "Together WE restore, renew and rebuild".

For 2022, the focus is on restoring hope in the lost and those feeling hopeless, being Salt and Light to all and restoring freshness in Mother Earth.

Malacca Johore Diocese is in the last year of a three-year focus on ecology. This year they are highlighting advocacy i.e. standing up as a community on ecology issues with the theme "Make a Stand! Be heard as a Catholic community and as concerned citizens".

From next week onwards, we will be highlighting the weekly programme on Page 19.

Diocese of Penang

Together WE restore, renew and rebuild

Dear Friends, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, for the past two years, we have all been on an extraordinary journey, a journey of doubt and faith. In one way or another, we have experienced some of the best and the worst of what humanity has to offer. However, together, we got through some of the toughest situations and we have proven to be resilient. And now, in the year of the Lord 2022, in this Lenten journey and season, the time has come for restoration. To put things in order, to put things in priority.

While we are still battling the virus, we have to keep moving forward as we begin the process of restoration, because the Holy Spirit is moving forward, so do not be left behind. We need to restore ourselves, our family, our community, and the environment. So, we will stress on three things: the family, the community and the environment. We restore ourselves by keeping our focus on Jesus the Christ and understanding His purpose and plan for us. Nobody else's plan matters. Then, we can help restore the people around us. We do that by offering our time, our prayers, our fasting, our hearts, and through alms giving.

There are many who have lost much or lost everything and are feeling hopeless.

We, as disciples of Christ, we must be agents of hope and of peace. We are also stewards of Mother Earth. Hence, we must also preserve our environment. So much has already been lost and contaminated, but by God's grace, the lockdown allowed the environment to flourish. The air became cleaner, and the animal kingdom was able to be free. We now have the responsibility to maintain that freedom, freedom for all of God's creation. They too, as well as we, are citizens of the same planet, planet Mother Earth.

Dear Brothers and sisters, We are all in this together, walking together, journeying together, a synodal Church. It is a collaborative effort. People of all races, religions, languages, economic backgrounds and abilities. We will work together; we will walk together. It's time we put our differences aside and walk hand in hand. It begins with us. Let us in this season and journey of Lent, in the year of the Lord 2022, be the heartbeat of Jesus Christ. God bless all of you.

Rt Rev Sebastian Francis

Bishop's Blessing:

As we look ahead to our Lenten journey, may our fasting be a hunger for justice, our alms giving a making of peace, and our prayers the change of humble and grateful hearts.

Let us pray:

Loving God, you are blessed and the source of every blessing, for the whole of creation, for all humanity and for the Church. Send forth your Holy Spirit to be with us as we use this Lenten season as an opportune time to be restored, body, soul and spirit, to the likeness of Your face through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

May they be an instrument of your love, may we be an instrument of your love, and a reminder of your great desire for peace,

for justice and compassion for Fratelli Tutti, for all brothers and sisters. May they serve to unite us with our sisters and brothers around the world, and in our country Malaysia, especially those who are hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, the sick, those in prison, the homeless, and those in any kind of need. May they help us deepen our own faith in You and our love for one another as we await with joyful anticipation, the great celebration of Easter, together with the newly baptised.

May Almighty God bless you all, the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I launch the Lenten Campaign for the Diocese of Penang, Kelantan, Perak, Perlis, Kedah in this year of the Lord 2022, God bless you.



Diocese of Malacca Johore

"Make A Stand! Be Heard!"

This headline Tiananmen Tank Man: Faced down the Chinese army flashed throughout the world. A lone figure stood directly in the path of oncoming tanks, near Tiananmen Square in China, on June 6, 1989, the day after China's bloody crackdown on student protesters. No one knew who he was but he became a symbol of resistance. We remember him as the "one who made a stand".

Someday, somewhere or for something, each of us has to make a stand. It can be for oneself or for others or for the voiceless. It may require of us to speak out for what is right or expose injustices or stand unbending for what we believe in.

Why is it important to stand up for something? This act builds self-respect, gains respect of and from others and indicates the values we live for. It is witnessing to our belief.

The most renowned example of "biblical heroes who made a stand" are the three young men in the Book of Daniel, who were cast into a fiery furnace. They did not bow down, nor give in to the King's order to worship another god. They could not be persuaded to do anything contrary to God's will. They witnessed to the one God of the Israelites. The king and the palace



were in awe.

Today, every single person, concerned citizens, Catholic and others, Catholic communities and nations must make themselves heard on what happens to the poor and to the earth. We must be convicted to convert; convert to cultivate a new way of life; **cultivate to commit ourselves to care for our common home.**

You who love what God loves, **MAKE A STAND.**

Make a stand for sustainabil-

ity via recycling and zero waste; Make a stand to heal the ravaged earth and sea with the friends of the earth.

Make a stand to report polluters, exploiters and lawbreakers who damage our common home, our earth.

The Lord glorifies Himself when we make a stand for Him and His will. We are not alone.

Together Building His Kingdom,

Rt Rev Bernard Paul

The Fruits of Lent

JOHOR BAHRU: *Make a Stand! Be heard* as a Catholic community and as concerned citizens is the final part of the three-year series of the Malacca Johore Diocese's Lenten Campaign, based on Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* message.

In order to prepare the people, a Lenten recollection on the theme was held on different days in the different languages. Montfort Brothers of St Gabriel's Bro Dominic Yeo Koh gave the recollection in English on February 21.

In the first section, on the 'Fruits of Lent', Bro Dominic said, Lent is a time to ensure our lives are in harmony with God. While the main criteria of a fruitful Lent is prayer, fasting and almsgiving to prepare ourselves for Easter, the brother reminded the faithful that it is not just doing more and giving of our extras, but the attitude which we take in performing these acts, we must give till it hurts.

Our Lenten acts must help us enter the divine mysteries of God, at which we are reborn into our baptism, reaffirming our position as a child of God. He said Baptism is sometimes referred to as a sacrament of friendship, in that we become sons and daughters of God and part of the bigger Christian family.

As we return to living a life guided by the fruits of the Holy Spirit, we must remember our omnipresent God is in all of creation, not just in people. There is a difference be-

tween feeling God is not present in our lives and the feeling that God is far away, because it is sin that turns us away from God. It creates a sense of negativity in our lives which, in turn, becomes poisons that are toxic to our lives. In addition to learning to spot toxic people or situations, we also need to discern if we ourselves are toxic as well.

The second part was on the Community of Creation (life). We must realise that all of God's creation has a purpose and are interconnected, so our actions have a drastic impact on our planet. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soul, in the water, in the air and all forms of life. Therefore, earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she groans in travail, said Bro Dominic.

He also shared that Patriarch Bartholomew, during his meeting with Pope Francis said, "inasmuch as we all generate small ecological damage", we are called to acknowledge "our contribution, smaller or greater, to the disfigurement and destruction of creation. To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God".

Therefore, we need to make amends to be united with God and His creation. — **By Gwen Manickam**

Hallowed be Thy name

By Gwen Manickam

BATU PAHAT, Johor: The sacerdotal ordination of Rev Deacon William Pillai was held at the Church of St Henry on February 22, 2022.

Bishop of Malacca-Johore diocese, Rt Rev Bernard Paul, was the main president. Msgr Peter Ng was tasked with testifying the Perak-born deacon's worthiness to be a priest.

In his homily, Bishop Bernard said, William Pillai and all those ordained or waiting to be ordained, come from the people, and are returned to them as priests, prophets and pastors, as men of prayer, as men of the Word, and as men of service.

As priests, they pray not only for themselves but for the people and the world. As prophets, they are to break the Word without fear or favour, without compromise. And as pastors or servant kings, they wash one another's feet. That is the example Jesus left his disciples and he said, follow this. It is to service without prejudice and to not have double standards.

As priests of God, as pastors and servant kings, we serve without fear

or favour. As Jesus was sent by Father, the ordained are sent by the Church for the Church, as shepherds, as witnesses and as examples for the flock.

He then asked Deacon William about his understanding and readiness to take on his new role. Bishop Bernard added that while many claim that Christ is their image of priesthood – do they choose to be the one who washes the feet, or do they want to be a tyrant ruling over people? "The image you choose is important, as it defines your priesthood."

Bishop Bernard said three things are the driving force behind good priests, religious or missionaries – they must be people of goodwill, people of love, people of service upholding the golden rule of doing unto others what you want to be done unto you, the unconditional, agape love of the Father, and the mercy of God in which we have been forgiven multiple times. "I too check myself regularly on what drives me because, without these three drivers, we may become conditional, calculative, or crooked, and all our good works fiz-

zle out," said the prelate.

Fr William thanked Bishop Bernard, Bishop Emeritus Paul Tan, parish priest Fr Louis Chin, his fellow brethren, family, and friends for attending his ordination in person and those watching online. He also thanked his Rector, Fr Philip (Canon Philip Gillespie), professors and formators at the Pontifical Beda College in Rome, the local organising committee, and all involved in making the ordination possible.

"I am honoured to have my ordination in this town, as Batu Pahat means 'chiselled rock'. Today, we also celebrate Peter - the rock of the Church, and this signifies my entire journey to the priesthood – painful, powerful, and glorious.

"Just like stones chiselled away to form a nice sculpture, I too have been chiselled away to be formed, and it's a continuing process," said the priest who found Christ in Feb 1992, after a laborious 16-year search for proof of God's existence.

Fr William said that during one of his lessons, he accidentally discovered the true meaning of the phrase, 'Hallowed be thy name' from the



Bishop Bernard Paul lays his hands on the Elect. Inset: Fr William Pillai. (Malacca Johore Diocese facebook)

Lord's prayer – which is to provoke God to show his love for us and his power. Reciting the prayer regularly did not reduce or remove his problems but it gave him the strength and power to overcome all difficulties and challenges, especially during the last few months of his ordination

preparation.

"It is very powerful, please try it," said the newly ordained priest.

In his closing speech, Bishop Bernard thanked Fr William's family for supporting his decision and declared that he remains at St Henry's Church, to be further chiselled at.

Making missionary disciples

PENANG: The Penang Diocesan New Evangelisation Commission (PDNEC) kickstarted its formation for 2022 with the first part of the *ChristLife Series - Discovering Christ* programme on February 16. The remaining two segments under the series are *Following Christ* and *Sharing Christ*.

The *ChristLife* evangelisation process is proven to make missionary disciples by helping people discover Jesus Christ personally, follow Him in their daily lives as Catholic disciples, and share Him with others.

Seventy participants from the dioceses of West Malaysia, East Malaysia, India, and Singapore covering 31 parishes registered for this programme. This is the second time the PDNEC is running this series. The programme, held once a week, runs from Feb 16 to April 5.

It begins with a praise and worship session followed by a snippet related to the topic of the evening. Participants

then listen to a 25-30 mins video talk presented by *ChristLife* founder and director Dave Nodar and *ChristLife* liaison for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Fr Erik Arnold. This is followed by a facilitated breakout session where small groups share on the talk and some discussion questions.

The session was launched by Bishop Sebastian Francis who warmly welcomed participants and congratulated them on their hunger and enthusiasm to know more about Jesus. He said he felt blessed to be with them and complimented them on being a safe and matured community who were not afraid to "put out into the deep" – reminding the group of Pope John Paul II leading the Church into the Third Millennium with the Bible verse from Luke 5:4 – Putting out into the deep not in shallow but in "deep water".

Bishop Sebastian said he was drawn to the words 'curiosity' and

'seekers' from the programme. Curiosity or quest for meaning is infinite with no room for boredom, and of being in the company of seekers awaiting the right answers and asking the right, provoking questions. He emphasised that our relationships with Jesus was always personal, unique, intimate, deep and an individual decision or choice. Jesus on the other hand, always stresses the relationship with the Trinity and not with him alone.

Bishop also sang the short hymn based on the traditional invocations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus ... "Heart of Jesus; Burning with Love for me; In flame my Heart; With Love His Love for me", before concluding the brief session with a blessing and assuring the participants his prayers.

The session continued with participants viewing the video and the breakout small group session. — **By Iruthaya Das Arulanadam, PDNEC**

Fr Anthony Pillai celebrates 32 years as a priest

PARIT BUNTAR, Perak: Parishioners of Our Lady of Good Health celebrated its parish priest, Fr. Anthony Pillai's, 32nd sacerdotal anniversary with a thanksgiving Mass and dinner reception on February 14, 2022.

Bishop Emeritus Anthony Selvanayagam concelebrated the Mass, with Deacon Charles Lazarus assisting. This was followed by a reception at the church hall, with local artistes and catechism students' cultural performances.

The bishop, in his speech, congratulated the parishioners for their care and concern towards their parish priest and urged them to consider sprouting more priests from their midst, ensuring the future generation will also be blessed with clerics. At present, the path to the priesthood is less travelled in our country.



Fr Anthony Pillai

Fr Anthony's mother, 98-year-old Loorthamah, proudly watched on as parishioners honoured her son with garlands and Valentine's Day gifts. The function was organised by the Spg 3, BEC and concluded before midnight.

Homelessness: Circumstance or Choice?

The rising number of homeless folks in the city has sparked questions on whether they are pushed to this way of life by circumstance or by choice. To shed light on the issue, *Catholics@Home* podcast had a conversation with Gary Liew, a film producer; and George Fernandez, a pastry chef by profession. Both gentlemen have vast experience working with the homeless community in Kuala Lumpur.

Gary's call to the ministry began as a child of 11-years when he helped his mother serve at Carl's Kitchen, a now defunct soup kitchen that was located at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist. The programme ceased operations in

2018. In 2011, Gary started a feeding programme in Kuala Lumpur, which has since expanded to ten cities around the world. Similarly, George's first encounters with the underprivileged began when he was a child. He had impoverished classmates who wore dirty and unkempt uniforms. While helping at his grandfather's sundry shop in Salak South, George also encountered folks from the squatter area who suffer from poverty. These encounters sparked a desire in George to help the underprivileged.

According to Gary, the homeless community, or 'street friends' as he calls them, are craving love. "Even though they're in different parts of the world, even though they come



from different backgrounds that led them to where they are on the streets, the connecting factor or trait in every street friend, is love. It is either the reason of love, or the lack thereof that causes them to become homeless," he says.

Gary explained that in certain cases, the person had left their home town to work in the city. After sending money back to their family, insufficient income is left to live with basic needs, such as having a proper dwelling place. Be-

cause of these circumstances, they end up becoming homeless. "It is by choice they send money back to a family who doesn't know they are living on the streets. Therefore, because of love for their family, they are homeless," he says.

On the lack of love amongst the homeless community, Gary explained that every street friend has family, to some degree. However, the relationship with their family members could have strained due to disagreements, fall outs, lack of love, etc. that caused them to live on the streets. "Love is the greatest factor that affects everyone. Every human being, and even animal, craves love. To love and to be loved," says Gary.

A typical day for George begins at 6.00am when he roams the streets and alleys of Kuala Lumpur to distribute around 50 packs of food, including items such as medicine, toiletries and clothing. George says that apart from feeding the homeless, it is also important to listen to them, as each person has a story to tell. Echoing George's comment, Gary says, "If you can't give them anything, give them a listening ear and an open heart. Maybe they need more than that, but a fundamental thing we all can do, is to be there for them." — **By Julie Lim**

To view this podcast, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2zf-A_OBrU

SHC celebrates 40th anniversary

By Angila Yong of

JOHOR BAHRU: The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SHC) celebrated its 40th anniversary this year. The launch of the year-long celebrations was subdued due to difficulties in planning amidst the pandemic.

To avoid overcrowding, Rt Rev Bernard Paul DD, Bishop of the Malacca Johore Diocese (MJD), began the festivities with a Eucharistic celebration with members of the clergy on the evening of Tuesday, February 15. This was followed by a three-day nightly adoration from Wednesday to Friday, culminating with a bilingual Sunset Mass on the actual day, Saturday, Feb 19.

Sixteen flag banners of the parishes from the diocese were placed around the sanctuary as a reminder of the union between the mother church and her children, between the Cathedral and the parishes.



The clergy with Bishop Bernard Paul during the Eucharistic Celebration on February 15, 2022. (photo/Odilia Choo)

In his homily on Feb 15, Bishop Bernard said, "SHC has reached 40 years, but I want it to be 40-carat, which is the measurement of pure gold. Be pure in faith, in worship, in charity and in mission work. May the Lord God fill this Cathedral, the Temple, the mother of all parishes of MJD, with His open-arm presence."

The parish commemorated the anniversary on the actual day, Feb 19, with a bilingual Mass. Fr Sebastian Koh, SJ was the main celebrant, with Fr Simon Yong SJ, parish priest of the Cathedral, concelebrating.

In his homily given in Mandarin, Fr Sebastian spoke about the importance of the anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral, since it is the mother church of the diocese. He echoed Bishop Bernard who referenced the reading of the day, "that the church, the cathedral or the diocese, is a holy place of praise, the presence of the 'kabut yahweh' (the cloud of God) and the house of the Lord." He advised the people to show the appropriate reverence when in church, knowing that it is a holy place. "Our posture is impor-

tant as it is a manifestation of our internal disposition."

Fr Simon, in his homily, noting the absence of statues in the Cathedral wondered, "if the scarcity of statues, apart from the usual Marian type, is possibly emblematic of a fragmented appreciation of our sacramental economy".

He remarked that the anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral is a celebration of a seemingly "dead" building, not a celebration of us. For although the stress is on the Church as people, the building — the physi-

cal structure — serves two sacramental purposes.

Firstly, it is the house of God, pointing out that the Jews carried the Ark of the Covenant wherever they went as a concrete reminder of God's presence. And secondly, the building is also sacramentally the external symbol of the people inside — a beautiful building is a reflection of the graced people inside. Therefore, we need a solid building that is beautiful, and the saints in their alluring splendour remind those of us who are labouring here that the journey to heaven that we are making is possible. They have been here and they have done that and now they are in glory. Where they are, is now our hope. An empty Cathedral is really a poor reflection of heaven.

At the end of Mass, a gift of a tote bag with the 40th anniversary logo, a shaker bottle and a pack of two cupcakes baked by two parishioners were distributed to all.

Ministry of the Deaf shares group synodal conversations

KOTA KINABALU: The deaf ministry at the Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish met recently to embark on their group synodal conversations. Known as the Sacred Heart Ministry to Deaf People, the consultation process was held in person and via Zoom, to facilitate those unable to attend physically.

On behalf of parish priest Fr Paul Lo, seminarian Matthew Lo briefed them on the synodal consultation process before reciting the Synodal Prayer. He then guided the participants on the conversation questionnaire to help them in their reflection.

The three themes the parish chose to focus on were *Communion – Companions on the journey; Participation – Dialogue in church and society; and Mission – Sharing responsibility for our common mission.*

Those present in person said their experience of being Church was a positive one as they felt companionship/fellowship, kindness and sharing of both material needs (food) and spiritual needs (RCIA, Alpha, catechism). They expressed their openness in wanting to promote collaboration with the different hearing groups in the parish, such as the choir, to participate in preparing songs for Mass interpretation, join-

ing hearing groups in charity drives to raise funds for the needy and or to help clean Mother Earth. They were also willing to help organise retreat programmes, and events for deaf and hearing children, to help foster friendships.

As for mission, the group accepts they are co-responsible for the mission of the Church in serving others and sharing the Good News. To optimise their service, the group hopes the parish will promote sign language and encourage more signing priests and religious who can communicate well with them.

However, due to the lack of deaf ministries in other parishes and in residential schools in the rural areas (outreach to Catholic deaf children), the Sacred Heart Ministry to Deaf People has, over time, become trans-parochial in nature and extended its outreach beyond the Cathedral parish.

Those who participated online, highlighted other challenges, including that the deaf people/children have difficulty processing and understanding the order of written language, used by the hearing to communicate because of the lack of signing knowledge. This is because the poor families in the rural areas, particularly



Seminarian Matthew Lo, assisted by an interpreter, briefs members of the Deaf ministry.

those who are deaf, lack education for various reasons. Some drop-out, some feel it is unnecessary to send their deaf child/children to school, some are simply not aware that there are special schools for the deaf, while some register too late.

In following the synodal path of Pope Francis, the Deaf Ministry cherishes the hope that the time has come for the Church to fully recognise and address the special needs of the Disabled Community (deaf, blind, developmental disability, wheelchair, etc).

The deaf community inadvertently falls into the category of marginalised as their special needs are more often forgotten or set aside by their hearing families, community, church, society due to the lack of understanding. Not being able to hear cuts them off from people who hear, thus affecting their relationships, and being

excluded from daily communication in the family, church, community, and social events.

Through this "listening and walking together" process, the group hopes that, with the parish/diocese, they may overcome some of many the challenges faced. Some of the challenges include, recognising that deaf people are people too; bridging the deaf and hearing worlds; creating more community awareness; promoting sign language as one of the "spoken" languages besides Bahasa Malaysia, Kadazan Dusun, Chinese and English; to making sign language a necessity for priests, religious and lay, especially in ministering the Sacraments of Eucharist, Confession, Anointing of the Sick, and Matrimony thus making it more meaningful for the hearing impaired; — **By Agnes Chai, Catholic Sabah**



For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

Prayer for the Synod

Adsumus Sancte Spiritus

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

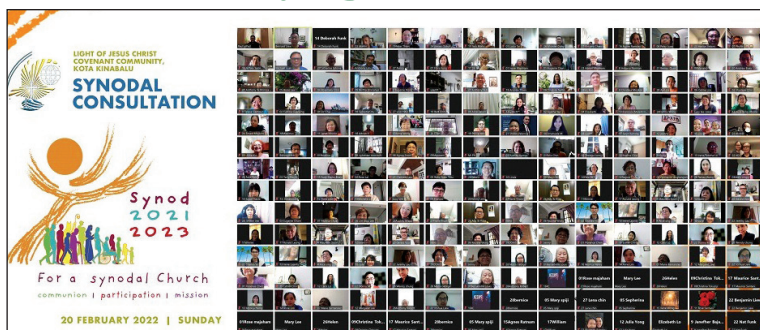
Covenant community gather to share on the synodal process

KOTA KINABALU: On February 20, the Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish saw its largest group, the Light of Jesus Christ Covenant Community (LJCCC), embark on the Synodal conversations, which began across the universal Church last October.

Originally set as a hybrid process, the Synod Consultation turned completely online, in view of the soaring COVID-19 infections in the city.

The process was conducted in parts over two Sundays with presiding elder Anthony Lim, giving a detailed introduction, explaining the path taken by Pope Francis in declaring that the new way of being Church is Synodality.

To encourage the widest partici-



A screen grab of the covenant community during their synod consultation process.

pation in the process, the community helped members understand the purpose and the uniqueness of the synod, the consultation process by way of listening to each other and listening to the Holy Spirit in jour-

neing together through a prepared set of questionnaires, and ultimately, listening to what God is saying to the Church through the process.

On the second Sunday, 160 members were assigned into 28 breakout

rooms to walk through the prepared questionnaire and gather the individual sharings to be submitted as a report to the parish.

Parish priest Fr Paul Lo reminded the community that the consultation is not a decision process, but an exercise to gradually become a Synodal Church by walking together, listening to one another, and listening to the Holy Spirit. He also shared words of encouragement from the Bible and recited the Prayer for the Synod *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus* before the sessions began.

The community members found that, unlike other conversations, they are a people on a journey together, learning to listen to one an-

other on concerns about the future of the Catholic Church, rather than attempting to solve the problems by offering advice or giving comments. The listening required a conscious slowing down and pausing to listen to thoughts, experiences, challenges and hopes of others, without forming an opinion, or being afraid to voice up without the fear of being assessed.

Overall, the members went through the process prayerfully and thoughtfully, relying on the Holy Spirit to guide them in the final submission of its findings, gathered from the enriching conversations encouraged by the community leaders. — **By Agnes Chai, Catholic Sabah**

Philippine parish 'unplugs' to get closer to God

MANILA: A Philippine parish has begun a monthly practice of spending an entire day in silence and prayer, without enjoying all modern conveniences.

Parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Manila's Quezon City began observing a 24-hour silence by unplugging and freeing themselves of their gadgets on February 23.

Organisers said they hope to continue the practice every last Wednesday of the month.

"Let us change our lives for 24 hours through silence. Let us unplug ourselves from social media, television and the use of cell-phones. Let us also avoid going out and engaging in chit chat. Let us spend our time of silence with the Lord," the parish said in a recent Facebook post.

Instead of their usual routine, parishioners were asked to attend Mass at 7.00am, mid-day prayer, a novena to the Divine Mercy at 3.00pm and the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 5.00 to 7.00pm.

The project was spearheaded by the parish priest and human rights activist, Fr Robert Reyes.

Noise is so rampant that it already prevents us from growing a deeper relationship with God. We need to seek silence to pray.

"This day of solitude on the last Wednesday of the month, we will change our old habits by not using our gadgets, no shopping. Once a month, we go back to silence for 24 hours ... we will say goodbye to



Fr Robert Reyes celebrates Mass at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Quezon City. (UCA News photo)

our gadgets, we will unplug them," said Fr Reyes.

He said the move was based on the United States' National Day of Unplugging that promotes a 24-hour respite from technology.

Fr Reyes said his parish aims to "unplug" every month since many Catholics, including religious institutions, use electric gadgets to an extent where people become detached from actual relationships and what is going on around them.

Around 40 parishioners initially signed up to participate in the day of silence but Fr Reyes said they expect hundreds more to take part.

"More are inquiring about how to join,

maybe because many have realised the importance of silence in today's world. We live in a world of noise. Noise is so rampant that it already prevents us from growing a deeper relationship with God. We need to seek silence to pray," Fr Reyes added.

Organiser and parishioner, Bernie Benedicto, said it was important to step away from gadgets once in a while.

"Unplugging gives us a break from the noise of the world and allows us to bask in silence to meet God. This is consistent with the Gospel when Jesus always went away to pray, when he would withdraw to deserted places to do so," he said. — **By Joseph Peter Cajella, ucanews.com**

Bangladesh holds theology workshop to reflect on phenomenon of migration

DHAKA: Catholic Church leaders in Bangladesh held a workshop from February 10-12 to reflect on the phenomenon of migration and the concept of solidarity.

The activity, which was organised by the Episcopal Commission for Theological Concerns, aimed "to develop theological thinking" and deepen the knowledge of participants on migration.

Bishop Gervas Rozario of Rajshahi described the seminar as "a fruitful venture" for the local Church's "theological concern."

"The participants found it useful," said the bishop, adding that "they have learned the method of theologising."

"They have committed themselves to look at things with the eyes of faith and to living a life inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ," said Bishop Rozario.



Fr Emmanuel K. Rozario, executive secretary of the commission, said the programme was "very effective" because it "enhanced theological thinking."

"Migration did not happen suddenly. It was in the very blessing of God after creation," said the priest.

He said that from the historical perspective, migration is "the very nature and essence of the Church," adding that the Bible "speaks of the fact that God is always in favour of the migrants" and even commanded us to safeguard their dignity, values, and right as human beings.

"This is our moral obligation," said Fr Rozario. "Theologically speaking from the creation perspective, God is the first migrant," he said.

"Without migration, God would not be in the world. From the incarnation perspective, without the migration of the Word of God made flesh, Christ would not be one of us, and without the mission of the Holy Spirit, the migrants would not get the power and courage to move for a better place," he said.

Fr Rozario said the migrants are "not simply the image of God, but rather, the image of the Migrant God, and by welcoming the migrants one welcomes God who is present in them."

"So, the migration perspective inspires us to rethink our beliefs and to theologise accordingly," he said. — **licas.news**

Vatican envoy lauds Vietnamese volunteers' care for COVID patients

HO CHI MINH: The pontifical representative to Vietnam has complimented religious volunteers in a northern diocese on their joining frontline forces in taking care of COVID-19 patients.

On February 20, Singapore-based Archbishop Marek Zaleski, the non-resident representative of the Holy See to Vietnam, and Archbishop Joseph Nguyen Nang of Ho Chi Minh City met 400 priests and religious who voluntarily served at field hospitals for Covid-19 patients in the city.

Some 719 priests, deacons, sisters, brothers and seminarians from various congregations based in the city, which was the epicentre of the country's pandemic, tended patients at nine hospitals for seven months.

Participants watched a 30-minute video on Catholics providing basic food for people in need and religious volunteers in medical gear working hard in hospitals, consoling

and caring for patients, administering last sacraments to dying people, and holding funerals while the city was imposing movement restrictions and all people were isolated to contain the contagion.

Many were deeply moved to tears by the video.

Lovers of the Holy Cross, Sr Cecillia Vo Thi Loan Anh, representing religious, said she learned valuable lessons from her serving at a hospital for one month.

"I had a new family whose members are patients, a new community that includes healthcare givers and volunteers from many religions, and wore medical clothes replacing my habit," she said.

She and other volunteers worked hard and prayed everywhere instead of in chapels, as they do in convents.

"Under the circumstances, we always carry in our hearts God's love, with the baggage

of love and service, bringing joy and hope to all people, especially the sick," she said.

"This is a special meeting as you are special," Archbishop Zaleski said. "What you did for those patients and vulnerable people, you did for Christ."

The archbishop said he gratefully thanked them for making great sacrifices and doing courageous things during the pandemic.

He said he would share a copy of the video with Pope Francis and people in the Vatican to show them something interesting in the Vietnam Church, which is young and enthusiastic about making sacrifices. Not many countries have religious willingly serving COVID-19 patients like in Vietnam. — **ucanews.com**



Archbishop Marek Zaleski and Archbishop Joseph Nguyen Nang with participants at a meeting in Ho Chi Minh City on Feb 20, 2022. (UCA News photo)

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Pope's cardinal advisers discuss role of women in the Church

VATICAN: Pope Francis' cardinal advisers have discussed a report on the role of women in the Church.

The Holy See press office said on February 23 that during the three-day meeting, the seven cardinals heard and commented on a report by the theologian Sr Linda Pocher, FMA, on "the role of women and the 'Marian principle' in the Church."

Pocher, a member of the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco, is an adjunct professor at the Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences "Auxilium" in Rome.

Pope Francis spoke of the "Marian principle," which theologians often contrast with the "Petrine principle," in a homily at St Peter's Basilica in 2019.

He said: "Mary is our Mother. She is the Mother of our people. She is the Mother of us all. She is the Mother of the Church, but she is also the image of the Church. And she is the Mother of our hearts, of our souls."

"There is a Holy Father who says that



The Council of Cardinals with Pope Francis on Feb 21, 2022. (Vatican Media)

what can be said of Mary, can also be said in its own way of the Church, and in its own way of our souls. Because the Church is feminine and our soul has this ability to receive grace from God, and in a certain sense, the Fathers saw the Church as a woman. We cannot think of the Church without this Marian principle."

He went on: "When we research the role of women in the Church, we can follow the

path of functionality because women have functions to perform in the Church. But this is only half the journey."

"Women in the Church achieve more with this Marian principle which 'maternalizes' the Church and transforms it into Holy Mother Church."

The role of women in the Church is one of four main topics of the controversial German "Synodal Way." Members voted

last month in favour of a draft text calling for the ordination of women priests.

During an in-flight press conference in 2016, Pope Francis was asked whether there were likely to be women priests in the Catholic Church in the next few decades.

"As for the ordination of women in the Catholic Church, the last clear word was given by St John Paul II, and this holds," he replied.

Pope Francis has asked two commissions to study the question of a female diaconate in the Catholic Church.

The first, established in 2016, examined the historic question of the role of deaconesses in the early Church but did not reach a consensus. He instituted a second commission in 2020, following discussion of the female diaconate during the 2019 Amazon synod.

He changed Church law in January 2021 so that women can be formally instituted to the lay ministries of lector and acolyte. — *CNA*

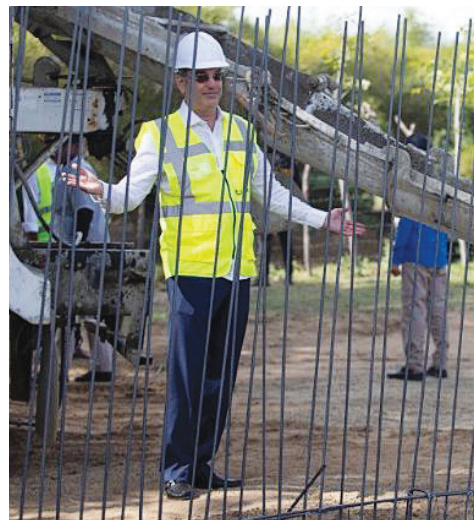
Dominican Republic and Haiti build separation wall

CARRIBEAN REGION: Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the Island of Hispaniola, but soon they'll become more distant neighbours.

At the push of a button applying the sting of a switch, Dominican Republic President Luis Abinader, started the one-way downward flow of concrete, establishing a rock-solid foundation of separation, reinforced by steel meshes of rods. The timing is no accident, as the anniversary of the Dominican Republic's Independence from Haiti, was February 27, 1844, 168 years ago.

This wall will stretch 164 km and take nine months to complete. It will straddle about half of the 300km of border between two nations, which are respectably blessed and cursed by different economic states and status. It'll be 3.9 metres tall and topped with sensors, cameras, complemented by 70 watch towers, 41 heavily guarded access gates and drones will overfly in regular coordinated sweeps.

President Abinader predicts it'll prove to be of great importance, stemming the flow of taxless commercial goods, guns and drugs, which currently blight both nations. In effect, it will also prevent flight, sealing another escape route for desperate Haitians,



Dominican Republic builds a border wall with Haiti. (Vatican News photo)

who are fleeing in droves to the Dominican Republic, Chile, Brazil, Honduras, Guatemala, and yet further afield to the perceived El Dorado of the United States.

Instead of cementing the future, it'll cause more problems than it's intended to solve because inevitably, walls divide instead of uniting. Concrete and steel contain very little appeal. — *Vatican News*

Chinese Catholics seek to deepen their faith

BEIJING: Catholics in various dioceses of communist China are being encouraged to read the Bible and to contemplate more on the life of Jesus as they make efforts to deepen their faith in the synodal spirit.

The Archdiocese of Beijing in the national capital has announced 2022 as the *Year of the Son of God* following the *Year of God* in 2021, reported the Vatican's *Fides* news agency.

In his Christmas message, Beijing Archbishop Joseph Li Shan had encouraged the faithful to dedicate the year in Bible reading so that they can "meditate on the life of Jesus, draw closer to his cross and make Jesus more visible in their daily lives."

In February, each parishioner in Beijing Archdiocese read a chapter from the Gospel of Mark.

Moreover, parishes and other church groups have been arranging year-long Bible-related programmes involving reading, study sessions and quiz competitions.

In the Diocese of Jian, capital city of Jiangxi province, parish priests have distributed Bibles to Catholics during a Mass marking the Chinese New Year. The diocese is celebrating 2022 as the *Year of the Word of God*.

Church officials say distributing Bibles is a gesture to recall the importance of the Word of God in the everyday lives of Christians to make the Scripture relevant.

Meanwhile, the Diocese of Shantou in Guangdong province is observing the *Year of the Rosary* from Feb 11 to Feb 11, 2023, to

mark the 164th anniversary of the apparition of Our Lady of Lourdes in France.

Diocesan officials have encouraged Catholics to recite a rosary every day with different intentions such as peace in the world, end of the pandemic, unity of the Church, growth of vocations and consolidation of the life of faith.

Nestorian missionaries, who had their origins in Asia Minor and Syria, are believed to have brought the Christian faith to China after their arrival in the then Chinese capital of Chang'an (Xi'an) during the rule of the Tang dynasty in 635 AD.

Franciscan friar Giovanni da Montecorvino, who arrived in what is now Beijing in 1293, established the first Catholic mission in China. The Russian Orthodox Church marked its footprint in China in 1715 and Protestants started their mission in 1807.

In 2010, a nationwide survey by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences found the nation had 23 million Protestant Christians out of a total population of 1.3 billion.

Official figures in China estimated some 6 million Catholics, which only includes members of the state-sanctioned Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

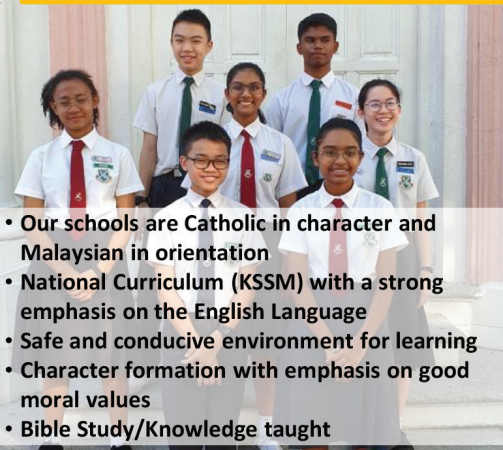
The Holy Spirit Study Centre of Hong Kong Diocese estimated in 2012 that China has about 12 million Catholics in both the state-sponsored church and the unregistered church that pledges allegiance to the pope. — *ucanews.com*



A parish priest in Jiangxi province of China gives a Bible to a parishioner. (UCA News photo/Fides.org)

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Toward a Fundamental
Theology of the
Priesthood

February 17-19, 2022

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE PRIESTHOOD

Evangelisation isn't complicated, it's 'a conversation about Jesus'

VATICAN: Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle has encouraged people not to be intimidated by the concept of "evangelisation," but to remember that it can be a simple human interaction or conversation among friends, family, co-workers, or social media followers.

"Sometimes we make things very complicated – 'evangelisation'. It is a conversation. It is a conversation about Jesus," Card Tagle said, in his closing remarks for the Vatican's priesthood conference.

"Simple human interaction or conversation centred on the Word of Life that fosters unity, I think, needs to be encouraged in our time, especially in families, schools, workplaces, recreation centres, hospitals, social media, during coffee break, and simple gatherings of friends," he said.

Card Tagle, the prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, was asked to give the closing speech on February 19 for a three-day Vatican conference on the theology of the priesthood.

Pope Francis opened the conference on Feb 17 with a reflection on his more than 52 years of priesthood.

In a very animated speech, Card Tagle said that "mission forms community, which in turn becomes the flame that fires up other missionaries."

The cardinal shared that one of the youth delegates at the 2018 Synod of Bishops on young people had told him that her friends' experience of the Church was of priests who were "angry, impatient, unapproachable" and who "criticise persons during homilies and talk always about rules."



Cardinal Luis Tagle speaks at the Vatican conference on the theology of the priesthood on February 19, 2022. (Screenshot from Youtube)

Card Tagle added that hearing testimonies like this prompted him to reflect on joy in the lives of the baptised.

"There are many reasons why we feel tired, empty and joyless. But I asked myself: Is it possible that one reason for the loss of joy in a baptised person or a minister of the Church is the lack, or weakening, of the sense of mission?" he said.

"Without a commitment to mission, the priesthood of the baptised or consecrated life and the ministerial priesthood are deprived of joy. Why? Because the priesthood of Christ is intrinsically linked to His mission."

Card Tagle's speech marked the end of the live-streamed summit *For a Fundamen-*

tal Theology of the Priesthood, which took place Feb 17-19 in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall. The symposium was first announced in April 2021.

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Bishops, organised the meeting together with the France-based Research and Anthropology Centre for Vocations.

The third and final day of the conference was dedicated to "Celibacy, charisms, and spirituality."

"The priesthood of Jesus is completely missionary and continues to be so, for He intercedes eternally for His brothers and sisters before the Father in the heavenly sanctuary," Card Tagle said.

"Jesus' priesthood is a wholly missionary life. Remove mission, there will be no joy, no joy in those who share in the priesthood of Christ in baptism, in other states of life, and in the ministerial priesthood."

Card Tagle reflected on Jesus' words in the Gospel of John: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

"The ones Jesus loves are the ones He sends," Card Tagle noted. "Dangerous love. The more He loves you, the more He sends you."

The 64-year-old cardinal from the Philippines said that being called to "belong to Jesus and share in his mission" is not a matter of "creating or promoting one's own project, but of participating in God's salvific plan in the missions of Jesus and the Holy Spirit."

"It is the joy, not of inventing one's message, but of proclaiming what one has heard, seen, looked upon and touched of the Word of Life. It is the joy, not of boasting of one's knowledge of the Lord, but of humbly being led by the Holy Spirit's testimony to Jesus," he said.

"It is the joy, not of being obsessed with achievements, degrees – 'Oh, I have a doctorate, you only a master's degree. I deserve the cathedral. You deserve a village parish.' – That's not joy. It's obsession with achievements."

"It is the joy of gratitude to Him who makes weak and sinful disciples strong by His grace. We wish every baptised Christian would experience the joy of being a disciple missionary," he said. — **By Courtney Mares, CNA**

Celibacy not 'divine law' for priests, but promotes holiness

VATICAN: The requirement that most priests in the Latin rite of the Catholic Church be celibate has theological and spiritual foundations and not only practical motivations, said speakers at an international conference on priesthood.

Jesus' chastity, poverty and obedience were not "incidental or simply functional," but expressed his total union with God and dedication to the salvation of humanity, Jesuit Fr Gianfranco Ghirlanda, a well-known canon lawyer, said on February 19 at the Vatican conference.

The Church has never claimed that celibacy is "intrinsic" to the priesthood, he said, and, in fact, the Eastern Catholic Churches have maintained the discipline of having both celibate and married clergy, and the Latin Church has welcomed married priests coming from other denominations.

The status of married Eastern Catholic priests was raised in several of the questions posed to both Fr Ghirlanda and Fr Emilio Justo, a professor of theology at the Pontifical University of Salamanca, who also spoke Feb 19.

Making greater claims about the relationship of celibacy to priesthood will not help Catholics understand its "profound spiritual and theological meaning," Fr Ghirlanda responded; celibacy "is not a divine law, because otherwise the discipline of the Eastern Churches would not be possible, and it would not have been possible to have mar-

ried priests in the Early Church, even if they were called to continence," as Father Justo had said in his speech.

A married priesthood "is not a second-class priesthood," Fr Ghirlanda said, because married priests also proclaim the Gospel, lead the Christian people and celebrate the sacraments.

Celibacy or marriage "does not touch the priesthood in itself," he said.

In his speech, Fr Ghirlanda said that in the Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church, celibacy is seen as a gift from God that enables priests "to adhere more easily to Christ with an undivided heart and dedicate themselves more easily to the service of God and his people."

Catholic theology, spirituality and Church law on priesthood, he said, aim to promote a "self-giving love," one in which celibacy is not lived "in a repressive way as mortification and denial," but as an expression of the biblical call to a "purity of heart" requiring a progressive "liberation from passions and the stripping away of earthly possessions."

Fr Justo, in his presentation on the history of celibacy, told participants that in the first millennium of the Church, married priests were common, "but I believe there were predominant tendencies" favouring celibacy and requiring married priests to "live perfect continence," that is, forgoing sexual relations with their wives.

The requirement to live marriage in this



Jesuit Fr Gianfranco Ghirlanda speaks during an international conference on the priesthood at the Vatican February 19, 2022. (Screenshot from Youtube)

"abnormal way" was primarily theological, he said, and was based on a priest's role as mediator between God and the faithful, a role that required "purity."

That purity, he said, often is seen as merely ritual, "but it is related to holiness" and conformity to Christ, who offered his whole self to God for the salvation of the world.

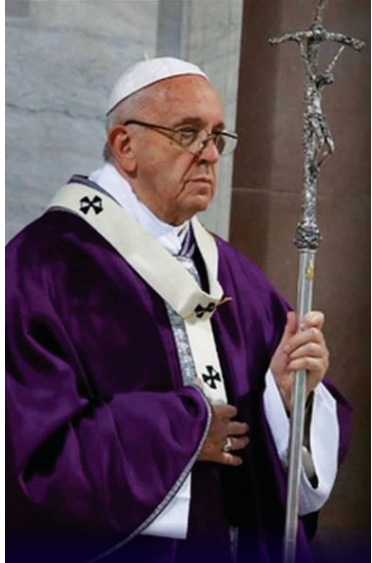
"Celibacy is not a call to loneliness but to

communion," Fr Justo said. "The Church is the space where the ordained minister loves and is loved."

Celibacy, he said, is a special way of being "configured to Christ" and responding to the call "to love like Him and with Him, to serve with Him and like Him in the way that Jesus historically loved, which was in a celibate way." — **By Cindy Wooden, CNS**

Pope Francis' Lenten Message

“LET US NOT GROW TIRED OF DOING GOOD, FOR IN DUE TIME WE SHALL REAP OUR HARVEST, IF WE DO NOT GIVE UP. SO THEN, WHILE WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY, LET US DO GOOD TO ALL” (GAL 6:9-10)



Dear Brothers and Sisters, Lent is a favourable time for personal and community renewal as it leads us to the Paschal Mystery - the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For our Lenten journey in 2022, we would do well to reflect on Saint Paul's exhortation to the Galatians: "Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up. So then, while we have the opportunity (kairós), let us do good to all" (Gal 6:9-10).

Sowing and reaping

In these words, the Apostle evokes the image of sowing and reaping, so dear to Jesus (cf. Mt 13). St Paul speaks to us of a *kairós*: an opportune time for sowing goodness in view of a future harvest. What is this "opportune time" for us? Lent is certainly such an opportune time, but so is our entire existence, of which Lent is, in some way, an image.¹ All too often in our lives, greed, pride and the desire to possess, accumulate and consume, have the upper hand, as we see from the story of the foolish man in the Gospel parable, who thought his life was safe and secure because of the abundant grain and goods he had stored in his barns (cf. Lk 12:16-21). Lent invites us to conversion, to a change in mindset, so that life's truth and beauty may be found, not so much in possessing as in giving, not so much in accumulating as in sowing and sharing goodness.

The first to sow is God himself who, with great generosity, "continues to sow abundant seeds of goodness in our human family" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 54). During Lent, we are called to respond to God's gift by accepting His Word, which is "liv-

ing and active" (Heb 4:12). Regular listening to the Word of God makes us open and docile to His working (cf. Jas 1:21) and bears fruit in our lives. This brings us great joy, yet even more, it summons us to become God's co-workers (cf. 1 Cor 3:9). By making good use of the present time (cf. Eph 5:16), we too can sow seeds of goodness. This call to sow goodness should not be seen as a burden but a grace, whereby the Creator wishes us to be actively united with His own bountiful goodness.

What about the harvest? Do we not sow seeds in order to reap a harvest? Of course! St Paul points to the close relationship between sowing and reaping when he says: "Anyone who sows sparsely will reap sparsely as well, and anyone who sows generously will reap generously as well" (2 Cor 9:6). But what kind of harvest are we talking about? A first fruit of the goodness we sow appears in ourselves and our daily lives, even in our little acts of kindness. In God, no act of love, no matter how small, and no "generous effort" will ever be lost (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 279). Just as

we recognise a tree by its fruits (cf. Mt 7:16, 20), so a life full of good deeds radiates light (cf. Mt 5:14-16) and carries the fragrance of Christ to the world (cf. 2 Cor 2:15).

Serving God in freedom from sin brings forth fruits of sanctification for the salvation of all (cf. Rom 6:22).

In truth, we see only a small portion of the fruits of what we sow, since, according to the Gospel proverb, "one sows, while another reaps" (Jn 4:37). When we sow for the benefit of others, we share in God's own benevolent love: "it is truly noble to place our hope in the hidden power of the seeds of goodness we sow, and thus to initiate processes whose fruits will be reaped by others" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 196). Sowing goodness for the benefit of others frees us from narrow self-interest, infuses our actions with gratuitousness, and makes us part of the magnificent horizon of God's benevolent plan.

The Word of God broadens and elevates our vision: it tells us that the real harvest is eschatological, the harvest of the last, undying day. The mature fruit of our lives and actions is "fruit for eternal life" (Jn 4:36),

our "treasure in heaven" (Lk 12:33; 18:22).

Jesus himself uses the image of the seed that dies in the ground in order to bear fruit as a symbol of the mystery of His death and resurrection (cf. Jn 12:24); while St Paul uses the same image to speak of the resurrection of our bodies: "What is sown is perishable, but what is raised is imperishable; what is sown is contemptible but what is raised is glorious; what is sown is weak, but what is raised is powerful; what is sown is a natural body, and what is raised is a spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:42-44). The hope of resurrection is the great light that the risen Christ brings to the world, for "if our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are, of all people, the most pitiable. In fact, however, Christ has been raised from the dead, as the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:19-20). Those who are intimately united to Him in love "by dying a death like His" (Rom 6:5) will also be united to His resurrection for eternal life (cf. Jn 5:29). "Then the upright will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Mt 13:43).

Let us not grow tired of doing good

Christ's resurrection enlivens earthly hopes with the "great hope" of eternal life, planting the seed of salvation in our present time (cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 3; 7). Bitter disappointment at shattered dreams, deep concern for the challenges ahead and discouragement at the poverty of our resources, can make us tempted to seek refuge in self-centredness and indifference to the suffering of others. Indeed, even our best resources have their limitations: "Youths grow tired and weary, the young stumble and fall" (Is 40:30). Yet God "gives strength to the weary, He strengthens the powerless..."

Those who hope in the Lord will regain their strength, they will soar on wings like eagles; though they run they will not grow weary, though they walk they will never tire" (Is 40:29, 31). The Lenten season calls us to place our faith and hope in the Lord (cf. 1 Pet 1:21), since only if we fix our gaze on the risen Christ (cf. Heb 12:2) will we be able to respond to the Apostle's appeal, "Let us never grow tired of doing good" (Gal 6:9).

Let us not grow tired of praying. Jesus taught us to "pray always without becoming weary" (Lk 18:1). We need to pray because we need God. Thinking that we need nothing other than ourselves is a

dangerous illusion. If the pandemic has heightened the awareness of our own personal and social fragility, may this Lent allow us to experience the consolation provided by faith in God, without whom we cannot stand firm (cf. Is 7:9). No one attains salvation alone, since we are all in the same boat, amid the storms of history;² and certainly no one reaches salvation without God, for only the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ triumphs over the dark waters of death. Faith does not spare us life's burdens and tribulations, but it does allow us to face them in union with God in Christ, with the great hope that does not disappoint, whose pledge is the love that God has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:1-5).

Let us not grow tired of uprooting evil from our lives. May the corporal fasting to which Lent calls us fortify our spirit for the battle against sin. Let us not grow tired of asking for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, knowing that God never tires of forgiving.³ Let us not grow tired of fighting against concupiscence, that weakness which induces to selfishness and all evil, and finds in the course of history a variety of ways to lure men and women into sin (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 166). One of these is addiction to the digital

media, which impoverishes human relationships. Lent is a propitious time to resist these temptations and to cultivate, instead, a more integral form of human communication (ibid., 43) made up of "authentic encounters" (ibid., 50), face-to-face and in person.

Let us not grow tired of doing good in active charity towards our neighbours. During this Lent, may we practise almsgiving by giving joyfully (cf. 2 Cor 9:7). God who "supplies seed to the sower and bread for food" (2 Cor 9:10) enables each of us not only to have food to eat, but also to be generous in doing good to others. While it is true that we have our entire life to sow goodness, let us take special advantage of this Lenten season to care for those close to us and to reach out to our brothers and sisters who lie wounded along the path of life (cf. Lk 10:25-37). Lent is a favourable time to seek out – and not to avoid – those in need; to reach out – and not to ignore – those who need a sympathetic ear and a good word; to visit – and not to abandon – those who are lonely. Let us put into practice our call to do good to all, and take time to love the poor and needy, those abandoned and rejected, those discriminated against and marginalised (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 193).

If we do not give up, we shall reap our harvest in due time



Each year during Lent, we are reminded that "goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realised each day" (ibid., 11). Let us ask God to give us the patient perseverance of the farmer (cf. Jas 5:7), and to persevere in doing good, one step at a time. If we fall, let us stretch out our hand to the Father, who always lifts us up. If we are lost, if we are misled by the enticements of the evil one, let us not hesitate to return to God, who "is generous in forgiving" (Is 55:7). In this season of conversion, sustained by God's grace and by the communion of the Church, let us not grow tired of doing good. The soil is prepared by fasting, watered by prayer and enriched by charity. Let us believe firmly that "if we do not give up, we shall reap our harvest in due time" and that, with

the gift of perseverance, we shall obtain what was promised (cf. Heb 10:36), for our salvation and the salvation of others (cf. 1 Tim 4:16). By cultivating fraternal love towards everyone, we are united to Christ, who gave His life for our sake (cf. 2 Cor 5:14-15), and we are granted a foretaste of the joy of the kingdom of heaven, when God will be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

May the Virgin Mary, who bore the Saviour in her womb and "pondered all these things in her heart" (Lk 2:19), obtain for us the gift of patience. May she accompany us with her maternal presence, so that this season of conversion may bring forth fruits of eternal salvation.

Franciscus
Rome, St John Lateran,
November 11, 2021
Memorial of St Martin, Bishop

[1] Cf. ST AUGUSTINE, Sermon 243, 9, 8; 270, 3; En. in Ps. 110, 1.

[2] Cf. Extraordinary Moment of Prayer presided over by Pope Francis (March 27, 2020).

[3] Cf. Angelus, March 17, 2013.



For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

Synodality and who gets to make the decisions

La Croix: *The Pope has launched preparations for a Synod of Bishops' assembly on synodality. What could be the impact on how the Church is organised, in particular concerning the exercise of authority, which the preparatory document invites us to reflect upon?*

Jean-François Chiron: One approach is to keep the bodies as they exist, while strengthening the spaces for debate. The other approach would be to make the councils truly deliberative spaces where decisions would be taken by majority vote. The first option is in keeping with Catholic tradition, but some of the faithful may find it insufficient.

You mention the tradition of the Church: how do you define decision-making today?

In the Church, the decision comes down to "only one". A structure that we find at three levels: the pope in the Church, the bishop in the diocese and the priest in the parish. If we abandon this organisation at one level, we would have to do so for the other levels as well, which would be a real revolution. It would not be honest to say that at the parish level, for example, we would institute a democratic functioning without modifying the organisation of the universal Church.

Can we go as far as a democratic type of functioning?

Ecclesial life is more in the order of an emerging consensus. There are objectives, and programs of pastoral action for a determined period of time that serve to implement decisions. I am surprised that the Pope rejects the term "consensus" because, in our ecclesial assemblies, the goal is to reach this consensus, whereas in political assemblies, it is the majority that prevails.

Isn't there a paradox in consulting the faithful when, if new models emerge from the Synod, they would be coming from the Pope?

In the synodal spirit, we remain within a framework of in-depth consultation, combined with the one who has the "last word". We return to the organisation of the Church according to a trilogy: one, some and all. Catholic tradition values the "one" — the pope, the bishop and the parish priest. Synodality consists in giving greater value to the other two levels, beginning with the "some". This consists of the bishops and cardinals at the universal Church

Jean-François Chiron (pic) is a French Catholic priest and theologian who has done much research and published many articles and books on ecclesiology — that is, the nature of the Church. Currently professor at the Catholic University of Lyon, he spoke with La Croix's Christophe Henning about the synodal process and the challenges it presents in changing structures, especially in the exercise of authority.



level; the priests, deacons and councils at the diocese level; and the councils and pastoral teams at the parish level. The Church is not a democracy, but the "some" can be representative of the "all". Whatever happens, for the moment, it is the "one" who has the last word.

Will synodality upset this pattern?

A Synod on synodality is synodality in the second degree. Of course, we shouldn't expect any major changes. Moreover, the great majority of Catholics do not necessarily aspire to major changes. In fact, more than structures, it is often a question of people. Catholics are satisfied when their parish priest or bishop knows how to listen to them, and in a certain way, they practise synodality without saying so. On the other hand, if the parish priest, young or not so young, makes it clear that he is the one who decides by virtue of the power of "one", the parishioners will consider that nothing is going right in the Church.

Does this mean that synodality is already in place?

Not all local Churches are at the same point, and the stories are not the same in all countries. For a long time, the Church of France

has been in a dynamic of co-responsibility between priests and laity. This does not prevent us from reflecting on it: it is an opportunity to evaluate our practices. Where it is going well, we have already implemented something of what the Pope is aspiring to.

Will it be possible to leave it to one person, the pope, the bishop or the parish priest?

When "one person" makes the decision, that person engages their responsibility, that is to say, the person must be accountable, possibly with evaluation processes. I teach in a faculty and every two years I am evaluated by the dean, who is also evaluated by the rector, and so on. As a teacher, I am evaluated by the students. But there is no culture of evaluation in the Church and the clergy today. The other point is transparency. Are decisions made in a clear and public way?

How can newly instituted ministers — catechists, lectors and acolytes — participate in this synodality?

There are two ways of approaching these new ministries: some will emphasise that they constitute an expression of baptismal responsibility, others will say that it is a way of cleri-

calising the laity. The catechist will be able to take part in the proclamation of the Gospel in the countries where Christianity has long been established. In Africa, the catechist is responsible for a community, which could also happen in the West, in regions lacking priests. Lay people who represent the Church are then appointed and have a pastoral responsibility, even if, once again, the *motu proprio* (on the new ministries) specifies that it is always under the authority of one person, the parish priest.

How is synodality going to take shape at the parish level?

The material aspects are the first to be dealt with by the intervention of the finance councils, which are obligatory in a parish, whereas the pastoral council is not in canon law, which is paradoxical. The liturgy is a difficult and very sensitive area. In my opinion, these are, first of all, questions of common sense: I believe in the reform of institutions, but what counts is the conversion of people.

In recent years, there have been many Diocesan Synods: what remains of them?

Diocesan Synods are a manifestation of synodality. We need to look at the results that can be drawn from them, which are perhaps a little disillusioned today. Nevertheless, the Synod is a journey: the synodal experience in itself brings something to the participants. Perhaps some Synods were still a little directed, not so much during the reflection as in the final word. It is true that the synodal laws are the laws of the bishop and not of the assembly. In this process, there is a question around authority, decried in all sectors.

How can we define authority in the Church today?

Authority is what allows us to live together, to avoid tearing each other apart. Depending on the time and place, these procedures are bound to evolve. I don't think that Catholics have anarchist tendencies, but there is currently a frequent attitude of, "I agree with authority when it agrees with me". What is the legitimacy of authority today? The title of chaplain or pastor, as such, is no longer sufficient. The person in authority has to prove oneself. It is much more demanding. It is an "I" who decides. As such, that person must be ready to bear the consequences for the decision.

Synodal path on track in Philippines

MANILA: The synodal process in the Philippines is no longer only an assembly of bishops but a journey for all the faithful in which every local church has an integral part to play, says a Catholic leader.

Bishop Mylo Vergara of Pasig, who is also vice president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), is confident all dioceses in the Philippines have accomplished the appointments of diocesan point persons and coordinating teams at local levels.

The coronavirus pandemic posed a big challenge in the pre-synodal process as local lockdowns and travel restrictions slowed down the face-to-face consultations and the diocesan efforts "to reach out to other sectoral groups that need to be heard and listened to," said Bishop Vergara.

But this had been overcome along with the

other challenge posed by Typhoon Rai that devastated parts of Mindanao and the Visayas in December, the CBCP vice president added.

In his Pasig Diocese, Bishop Vergara said that the diocesan phase, which was foundational to the entire synodal process, was carried out by the diocesan team, which "conducted a series of orientations with training modules, updating of the consultation process for priests, religious, parish lay servants and sectoral representatives on how to facilitate the diocesan consultations in the parishes, schools and other sectors."

He sought to assure that this was also true with other dioceses. The pre-synodal consultation saw active participation by 84 archbishops and bishops, joined by some 10,000 priests and 1,000 nuns, who supervised the whole process on the ground.

They covered 69 dioceses in 16 ecclesi-

astical provinces, five prelatures and seven apostolic vicariates besides the military ordinariate.

Although a "majority of priests in the diocese actively participated in the process," Bishop Vergara revealed that there were a few ordained ministers at parish level who were simply non-compliant and did not participate due to "authority issues."

Worldwide, the synodal process at diocesan level began on Oct 10, 2021, and the consolidation and discussions of all the diocesan documentary reports are scheduled in March until August of this year.

The official Synod Secretariat in Rome reported early this month that nearly 98 per cent of all bishops' conferences worldwide have appointed a person or an entire team to implement the synodal process.

"Many of the faithful perceive the synodal



Bishop Mylo Vergara of Pasig

process as a crucial moment in the Church's life, as a learning process, as well as an opportunity for conversion and renewal of ecclesial life," reported the Synod Secretariat.

"There is growing awareness that the synodal conversion to which all the baptised are called is a lengthy process that will prolong itself well beyond 2023," said a Vatican statement. — ucanews.com

RUMINATIONS

Unexpected blessings at every level of life

Unexpected blessings are like the power-ups that rejuvenate a video game character as it perseveres through the challenges of each level. Much like the rejuvenation I experienced at various “levels” of my life. A little about my early faith life; my parents and siblings were the typical Catholic family; never missed Sunday Masses, family rosary gatherings, and observed meatless Fridays. Every Sunday, I observed my late dad faithfully carry out his responsibilities as a warden and an active member of the St Vincent de Paul society. That’s about it. I did say ‘a little bit’, didn’t I?

Level 1: My youth and the invitation

As I began my work life, things changed and it seemed that God had hidden Himself from me, perhaps waiting for the right time to lead me one step nearer to Him. After Mass one Sunday, a former schoolmate, who testified how God had changed her life, extended an invitation for me to participate in a “weekend” hosted by the CCF. No, they were not a band called the Chee Cheong Funs. They were “The Christian Community of Formation” (CCF), and at this weekend, we sang, danced, and listened to moving testimonies.

This was the start of my personal faith journey through the CCF. I was immersed in formation sessions which helped me understand myself better and allowed God to work in me, especially in the negative areas of my life. My faith slowly but surely deepened and to this day, I can testify that my eyes were opened to see God’s work in me from that point on. A turning point in my spiritual life, career and family life. How so?

Level 2: Married life

Having been married for five years, my husband and I were ready to start a family. After much prayer and patience, over seven years into our married life, our first-born son arrived. But I had to make a life-changing decision; leave a career I loved so much, moreover turn down a promotion for a post I had been eyeing. Again, turning to God for an answer, I felt that He pointed me towards the life of a full-time homemaker. The switch in ‘career’ was a struggle. My husband’s job required much travelling and I single-handedly brought up our three children. God worked his “magic” through my formation sessions with the radical dynamic youth group and there was no turning back. I had to put all my trust and fears into His care. Easier said than done. Today I can say it was the best decision I made. No regrets.

Level 3: In sickness and in health

At the age of 39, my husband had a heart attack and needed a bypass. How did I cope with two-young children, at the time, and a sick husband? God had been my rock during this turbulent time. Thankfully, we had the best care from the hospital and his health was restored within a few months.

Things seemed to be going well but my mum had an unexpected fall at the age of 82. I knew that I had to leave my family to give mum my full attention. It was never a burden, only a blessing. Since I had to leave her to live with my family after marriage, this opportunity brought me back “home” to be with her. After mum passed on, I was so thankful for the opportunity to be with her when she needed me. God knew how much we wanted to be together since I left “home”.

In 2015, my husband passed away after battling acute heart failure for many years. Through his sickness, I had to rely totally on God to sustain me. It was tiring, with all the hospital visits and making sure that he was comfortable. My children were a source of strength for me, taking turns to be with him when I needed to rest. I am thankful that even after giving up my salary, and after my husband retired and needed medical care which incurred expenses, God took care of all our finances. We did not have to worry about that.

Level 4: Showers of blessing

Last December 18, 2021, my neighbourhood experienced a massive flood. How is that an unexpected blessing? Exactly one week before disaster struck, my daughter finally had her long-awaited wedding that was postponed three times since 2020. Coincidence? No, it was God’s plan, I’m sure. While material things were lost, like so many, I am thankful to be alive. Especially since we sadly learned the floods had claimed lives around our neighbourhood. God blessed us with assistance from various persons, even strangers.

When I look back on my life, I can see God’s providence. Even when I was afraid that things were not working out in life. I learned to believe in His promises that He would never leave me nor forsake me. That He loves me truly, even in my doubts and fears.



Philomena Peterson is a Penangite, residing in Shah Alam. She credits her ever green enthusiasm for ministry life including the BEC, Prison Ministry and Grief Share Ministry to her early years being formed by the CCF. In her free time, she can be found plucking on a ukulele or buried in historical biographies.

Priest maimed in bomb attack named peace prize winner



Injured in a letter bomb, Fr Michael Lapsley lost both arms and an eye. He founded the Institute for the Healing of Memories. He has worked in places of conflict such as South Africa, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Bosnia, Serbia, East Timor and also works in the USA with war veterans.

The Niwano Peace Prize Committee has chosen Anglican missionary priest and social justice and anti-apartheid activist, Fr Michael Lapsley, to receive the 2022 Niwano Peace Prize.

The award honours and encourages individuals and organisations that have contributed significantly to interreligious cooperation, furthering the cause of world peace.

In a statement on February 21, the Committee writes that “Fr Lapsley’s non-violent, multi-faith peacebuilding efforts and activities of healing based on restorative justice, dialogue and reconciliation, are continuing to contribute to the healing of South Africans, as well as many others all over the world.”

Fr Lapsley will receive the Prize during the presentation ceremony in Tokyo, Japan, on Tuesday, June 14, 2022.

Fr Lapsley is a man whose personal story speaks of life-giving peace and forgiveness, and service to others. He was received in private audience by Pope Francis on June 15, 2019, and during that audience, he had the opportunity to talk to the Pope about his experiences and work for healing and reconciliation.



Fr Michael Lapsley visits Pope Francis in 2019.

In their comments, members of the Niwano Peace Prize Committee that presently consists of nine religious leaders from various parts of the world, describe Fr Lapsley as being a powerful witness of healing and reconciliation: “[He] lost both hands and one eye. He did not become bitter. Rather, he not only carried on his struggle, he set about working on healing and reconciliation. His work focuses on healing across all sorts of divides. He saw injustice and he fought it. He saw damage and he has strived to heal it.”

Flaminia Giovannelli, Under-Secretary of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, is part of the Committee. She writes that “Fr Lapsley has fought apartheid, which is one of the most striking forms of a hateful and painful phenomenon of racial or ethnic discrimination. By doing so, he has earned the esteem and respect of black South Africans of all religions. This commitment... was the cause of a very serious attempt on his life... gravely injured him, he lost both hands, the sight of one eye, and was severely burned. But a few years later, this attack also provoked

a real transformation in him, a conversion, from... freedom fighter to healer and reconciler. This shows that in addition to exercising the virtue of fortitude, thanks to which he has endured the very serious consequences of the attack suffered, Fr Lapsley also exercises the virtue of humility. In his commitment, he has met and collaborated with people of different religious beliefs to lead them to peace of heart.”

Fr Lapsley is someone whose story speaks of just that: life-giving-peace and forgiveness and service to others.

In an interview with *Vatican Radio*’s Linda Bordoni in 2012, he told his story of survival, reconciliation and speaks of his mission as founder of the Institute for Healing Memories which is based in South Africa, but that reaches across the world advocating forgiveness, reconciliation and restorative justice.

In his own words, he then undertook another journey — from victim to survivor to victor, helped by the prayers, love and support of people who knew him all over the world.

This gave him the strength and the inspiration to create the Institute for Healing Memories that seeks to accompany other people on their journeys to healing and wholeness, both in South Africa and in many other countries where war, oppression and conflict have created suffering.

The Niwano Peace Foundation was chartered in 1978 to contribute to the realisation of world peace and the enhancement of a culture of peace, promoting research and other activities based on the spirit of religious principles and serves the cause of peace in such fields as education, science, religion and philosophy. — **By Linda Bordoni, Vatican News**

The blinding allure of greed

In today's world, we see greed all over and how it has widened disparities and degraded ecosystems while driving corruption.

IMDB showed the extent to which greed-driven corruption had pervaded society. The saga has revealed how a string of people were eyeing money that rightfully belonged to the people of Malaysia. Others were content to keep silent because they earned lucrative incomes from supporting activities — or it simply paid handsomely to acquiesce to the siphoning away of public funds.

Things were perhaps not much different in First Century Roman-occupied Palestine. The Temple in Jerusalem, which functioned like a central bank, was extracting enormous amounts from the people. The emphasis on animal sacrifices, supplemented by temple taxes and other extractive methods, reaped enormous wealth for temple coffers.

By right, this was public money and people's offerings to God — money which could have been used to ease the suffering of the poor and the destitute among the peasants, who probably made up 90 per cent of society back then.

The high priests and those from the aristocratic priestly families controlled these funds. But they grew corrupt and oppressive, living lives of luxury in palatial homes, while the people suffered deprivation.

By the late AD 20s, Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect, had landed in Judea, in the

easternmost frontier of the Roman Empire. Like most Romans in his position around the empire, he would probably have been trying to rise up the ranks, earn a fortune from his posting, and then use that to secure a Senate position in Rome later — so he too was eyeing the Temple funds.

Earlier, Herod the Great was richly rewarded with vast territories in return for financially supporting Augustus Caesar's military campaigns and ridding the territories of bandits and rebels. Earning revenue from other lucrative sources, including a copper mine, Herod spent huge amounts on a building spree.

If some of today's political leaders are any indication, Herod and his cronies would have profited handsomely from the mega-projects he indulged in — financed by assets that rightfully should have been used to ease the peasants' suffering.

By the time Herod died, he had begun massive renovations to the Temple complex and stashed away huge wealth — while long-suffering ordinary people clamoured for tax relief.

When Jesus was sitting in the Temple and watching the poor widow place her mite into one of the treasury collection chests, he and his followers would have noticed the contrast between the peasants' miserable lives and the opulence of the gold-plated Temple and its vast courtyard — a dazzling sight to behold.

How much was the Temple worth?

The historian Josephus Flavius describes in his work, *Antiquities*, how the Roman



Sunday Observer
Anil Netto

leader Crassus ransacked the Temple: Now Crassus, as he was going upon his expedition against the Parthians, came into Judea and carried off the sacred money that was in the temple (which Pompey had not touched, which amounted to the sum of 2000 talents). He spoils the Temple also of all the gold that was in it, to the sum of 8,000 talents...

So that would mean the Temple had at least 10,000 talents of assets early into Herod's reign — an enormous amount.

In Matthew 18: 23-28, Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a servant who owed 10,000 talents to the king. [Coincidentally or otherwise, this was the same wealth that Josephus said was in the Temple.]

The king forgave the servant his debt when the latter begged for mercy.

But the servant then promptly cornered someone else who owed him 100 denari (a tiny debt by comparison) and "seized him by the throat and began to throttle him, saying, 'Pay what you owe me,' and then threw the debtor into prison when he asked for mercy.

The king was not impressed and promptly revoked the cancellation of debt and punished the servant for not showing mer-

cy to his small debtor.

Could the greedy servant here be referring to the custodians of the Temple and rulers of the land who profited immensely while showing no mercy to ordinary people, many of whom were in debt?

Certainly, the custodians of the Temple had grown corrupt and their sacrifices were meaningless as they were not accompanied by justice or mercy, as Jeremiah had warned six centuries earlier. "Do not put your faith in delusive words, such as: This is Yahweh's sanctuary, Yahweh's sanctuary, Yahweh's sanctuary! But if you really amend your behaviour and your actions, if you really treat one another fairly, if you do not exploit the stranger, the orphan and the widow, if you do not shed innocent blood in this place and if you do not follow other gods, to your own ruin, then I shall let you stay in this place....For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, I said nothing to them, gave them no orders, about burnt offerings or sacrifices" (Jeremiah 7: 4-6, 22).

Jesus must have been inspired by Jeremiah's words when he heralded a new kingdom, which is already among us. It is a kingdom where no one would be left out and everyone would have a place. It is up to us to build on that to realise this kingdom.

● **Anil Netto** is a freelance writer and activist based in Penang. He believes we are all called to build the kingdom of God in this world.

Finding dessert in the desert

Whenever the season of Lent approaches, a certain sense of dread or discomfort may arise from the thought of having to make sacrifices or give up something for Lent. What may haunt us more are past experiences of 'failure' when we find ourselves either falling short of our Lenten commitments or not having done much for Lent. When these are what comes to mind at the thought of Lent, it is no wonder many of us cannot wait for Lent to be over, even before it has even begun.

How would our attitude and approach towards Lent change if we could be excited about finding dessert in the desert, learn how to feast from the fasting, and begin to play through the praying?

Recently, I participated in a "Play with Clay" prayer workshop that was conducted by the beach. We were first invited to get in touch with our emotions and choose a particular colour of clay to express how we were feeling. I eventually picked up a handful of red clay to reflect the anxiety I was feeling due to some outstanding work I was worried about.

When we were subsequently invited to unpack our emotions by playing with the clay, I sat down on a patch of sand, and felt God inviting me to enter the desert, and sit with my unpleasant emotions to better understand what they were telling me. Gradually, I realised that a lot of my anxiety stemmed from the fear of not doing a 'good enough' job, of not meeting people's expectations. Yet as I continued playing with the clay, I began to reconnect with the joy I felt in the work I was doing. It slowly dawned upon me that the red colour also revealed the passion and love I felt for the kind of work I felt called to do. Soon, God revealed that if I focused less on my expectations of the outcome, and more on the joy I received from the work I was doing, I would



Word Made Flesh
Nicholas Lye

more naturally bring greater joy and love to others, as symbolised by the heart which I eventually created with the clay.

From the above experience, I realise that even from what seems uncomfortable or unpleasant, something beautiful and life-giving can still be found. God does not draw us into the desert simply to make us suffer or feel miserable. Far from it, He invites us to make space in our lives and hearts in order to pay attention to the uncomfortable areas of our lives that do not bring us life, so that we may listen to His voice calling in the wilderness, and feast on the sweetness of His truth and presence that do bring us life.

"John was clothed in camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey." (Mk 1:6)

One thing I have noticed from the above verse is that despite what appears uncomfortable in terms of John the Baptist's choice of dress and food, there was also honey to be found and enjoyed.

What if the point of Lent is not to suffer or make life difficult for ourselves, but to really seek out the sweetness of God's presence and love in the midst of our daily lives? What if the focus of Lent is not on the sacrifices itself, but on the sweet fruits that such Lenten practices can offer? What if the aim of Lent is not about doing more for God, but about better recognising what more is God doing for us?

When we can begin to focus not on the



(Freepik/farknot)

desert but on the dessert to be found, not on the fasting but on the feasting of God's truth and presence to be experienced, not on the praying itself but on the joy of spending time playing with God and growing in deeper intimacy with Him, Lent may no longer feel so dreadful or burdensome. Instead, we can actually begin to enjoy our time in the desert, and seek out the sweet encounters of God that our desert experience can offer.

Therefore, here are three ways I am proposing that can help us search for and enjoy honey in the wilderness:

- 1. PRAYER** – explore new and enjoyable ways of connecting with God that allow you to actually enjoy spending time playing in the desert with Him.
- 2. FASTING** – consider giving up certain things in your life that actually help you to better recognise and

encounter God in your day to day, and feast on His love and truths.

3. ALMSGIVING – look out for opportunities where you may be invited to offer honey to others, especially in their desert moments.

"John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." (Jn 1:29)

As we will begin this Lenten journey shortly, may it be one where we not only enjoy the process of finding Christ in our DES(S)ERT experiences, but also pointing others to Him through our lives, so that others too may find dessert in their desert.

● **Nicholas Lye** loves exploring fresh and creative ways to connect with God in prayer. Check out his upcoming Lenten series of Prayer through Art workshops at www.tinyurl.com/restartlent.

The perfect ritual

Sometimes it takes an outsider to help you to see the beauty and depth of something you have never fully appreciated. I suspect this is true for many of us, myself no exception, regarding the celebration of the Eucharist in our churches.

David P. Gushee, an Evangelical, recently published a book entitled *After Evangelicalism*, within which he describes his decades-long struggle to make peace with some issues inside his own church. He has remained in his church, though now on Sundays, he also goes (with his wife who is a Roman Catholic) to a Catholic Mass. Here's his description of what he sees there.

"I view the design of the Catholic Mass as something like a polished gem, refined over time to a state of great beauty – if you know what you are looking at. ... The movement of the Mass manages to accomplish so much in something like an hour – a processional, with the cross held high; greetings in the name of the triune God; early confession of sin, brief but compelling; an Old Testament reading read by a lay person; a sung psalm; an Epistle reading by a layperson; the Gospel reading by the priest, and the ceremony around it; a brief homily; the centering movement provided by the creed and the prayers of the people. An offertory and music. Then right to the Table – the people offer gifts that are then offered to God and come back to the people as Christ's body and blood; the kneeling in humility; the Lord's Prayer as an important part of the Eucharistic rite; the precious chance to pass the peace with neighbours just before the supper; more kneeling; the chance to watch the people come up for Communion and pray for



Fr Ron Rolheiser

them, or instead be quiet with God; the final Trinitarian blessing and recessional."

What an insightful description of the ritual by which we celebrate the Eucharist! Sometimes when we're inside something, we don't see it as clearly as does someone from the outside.

Let me add two other descriptions that highlight the Eucharistic ritual in a way that we often don't think about or meet in our usual theology and catechesis on this.

The first, like Gushee's, also comes from a non-Catholic. A Methodist layman shares this: "I'm not a Roman Catholic, but sometimes I go to a Roman Catholic Mass just to take in the ritual. I'm not sure if they know exactly what they're doing, but they're doing something very powerful. Take their daily Mass, for example. Unlike their Sunday Mass, they do daily Mass more simply, with the ritual stripped down to its skeleton. What you see then, in essence, is something akin to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting." Why does he make that connection?

Here are his words. "People who go to daily Mass don't go there to experience anything novel or exciting. It's always the same, and that's the point. Like people going to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, they're going



(Unsplash/Josh Applegate)

there to receive the support they need to stay steady in their lives, and the steadiness comes through the ritual. Underneath the surface, each person is saying, "My name is ___ and my life is fragile. I know that if I don't come to this ritual regularly, my life will begin to unravel. I need this ritual to stay alive." The ritual of the Eucharist functions too as a "12-Step" meeting.

Another perspective comes from Ronald Knox, a British theologian. He submits that we have never truly been faithful to Jesus. When we're honest, we have to admit that we don't love our enemies, don't turn the other cheek, don't bless those who curse us, don't forgive those who kill our loved ones, don't

reach out enough to the poor, and don't extend our compassion out equally to the bad as well as to the good. Rather, we cherry-pick the teachings of Jesus. But, says Knox, we have been faithful in one great way, through the ritual of the Eucharist. Jesus asked us to keep celebrating that ritual until he returns and, 2000 years later, we are still celebrating it. The ritual of the Eucharist is our one great act of fidelity, and the good news is that this ritual will ultimately be enough.

Jesus left us two things: his Word and the Eucharist. Various churches have taken different approaches as to which of these to give priority. Some churches, like Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Anglicans have prioritised the Eucharist as the foundation on which they build and maintain community. Other churches, most Protestant and Evangelical communities, have reversed this and prioritised the Word as the foundation on which they build and maintain community. How do the Word and the Eucharist play out together?

On the Road to Emmaus, when the disciples of Jesus fail to recognise Him even as they are walking with Him, Jesus stirs their hearts with the Word, enough so that they beg Him to stay with them. Then He sits down with them for Eucharist, and the ritual does the rest.

● **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.

May cooler heads and peaceful hearts soon prevail!

This is a sad day.

As I write, news agencies around the world are reporting that Russia has initiated major airstrikes upon Ukrainian military installations.

As bad as this news is, we must deeply pray that it doesn't get worse. The task of nations, and our task, is to do whatever we can to work for a quick end to this unprovoked attack. Russian President Putin has stated that a full-scale invasion is not planned.

Instead of counter-military actions which will only further fuel these attacks, and give Putin an excuse to launch total war in Ukraine – causing unimaginable death and destruction – clear-headed, wise, peaceful actions are needed. To our more primitive instincts this sounds foolish, but our "better angels" know that nonviolence – especially in the face of violence – is the best way, the way of God.

The Catholic global peace organisation *Pax Christi International* issued this statement: "We call for peace, diplomacy, and international action. Generations are at risk, the time to act nonviolently is now" (see: <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/>).

A protracted war between Russia and Ukraine political hawks and the military-industrial complex will benefit from all this blood spilling and destruction. Weapons manufacturers like Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics and Raytheon are already raking in a fortune fueling this immoral, preventable war (see: <https://bit.ly/3h2ePAh>).



Making a Difference

Tony Magliano

If NATO, with its build-up of troops and armaments, directly gets involved – which is very possible considering Russia's overwhelming military superiority poised at Ukraine's border – the Russian-Ukraine conflict could quickly escalate out of control; quite possibly leading to humanity's worst catastrophe – thermonuclear war!

As reported by *Vatican News*, Colonel Konstantin Sivkov, deputy president of the Kremlin-backed Russian Academy of Missile and Artillery Sciences, is worried that military tensions between the US and Russia over Ukraine could escalate into nuclear war; citing that such a nuclear war would destroy the U.S. and Russia and change the world forever. Please watch the realistic nuclear war movie *The Day After* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyy9n8r16hs>.

It is long overdue for everyone to realise that the unthinkable is dangerously close!

Everyone throughout the world, needs to urge President Biden to act in the spirit and example of Jesus – to be a nonviolent peacemaker as his, and our, Catholic faith teaches. Please email him at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>.

Putin has dangerously and irresponsibly initiated this current crisis. There is no mor-



al excuse for it. Nonetheless, it is essential both morally and geopolitically for the US and NATO to walk awhile in the shoes of Putin and the Russian people.

Consider that during World War II, Hitler's Nazi Germany launched Operation Barbarossa – the largest, deadliest military invasion in the history of warfare – into Russia (known then as the Soviet Union). At its end, over 800,000 Soviets/Russians were killed, and an additional six million were wounded or captured (see: <https://bit.ly/3rODi25>).

Furthermore, the World War II Nazi Hunger Plan – the massive theft of Soviet crops – led to the starvation of more than 4 million Soviet/Russian citizens (see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hunger_Plan).

With all that in mind, and with many former Warsaw Pact nations now in NATO, Putin has an understandable and reasonable concern that neighboring Ukraine not become a member of NATO. Imagine the US's response if Canada or Mexico was seeking

to join in a military alliance with Russia.

It would be wise for NATO to negotiate a guarantee that Ukraine not become a member of its military alliance, and for Putin to stop his military attacks and instead guarantee that Ukraine's total sovereignty as an independent nation be permanently honoured with no military intimidations.

Violence is not the way of Jesus. This is indisputable!

The late preeminent theologian and biblical scholar, Fr. John McKenzie said, "If Jesus does not reject violence for any reason, we do not know anything about Jesus. Jesus taught us not how to kill but how to die."

Let us fervently ask Our Lady Queen Peace, to intercede to Our Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace, that cooler heads and peaceful hearts prevail.

● **Tony Magliano** is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist. He can be reached at tmag6@comcast.net

Little Catholics' Corner

Dear girls and boys

This Wednesday is the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday. If you go to Mass on Ash Wednesday, the priest will make a little cross on your forehead with ashes. The ashes come from burnt palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday Mass. Palms are a living plant, and a symbol of victory and triumph, but they are burnt to dust and become a symbol of sorrow and repentance.

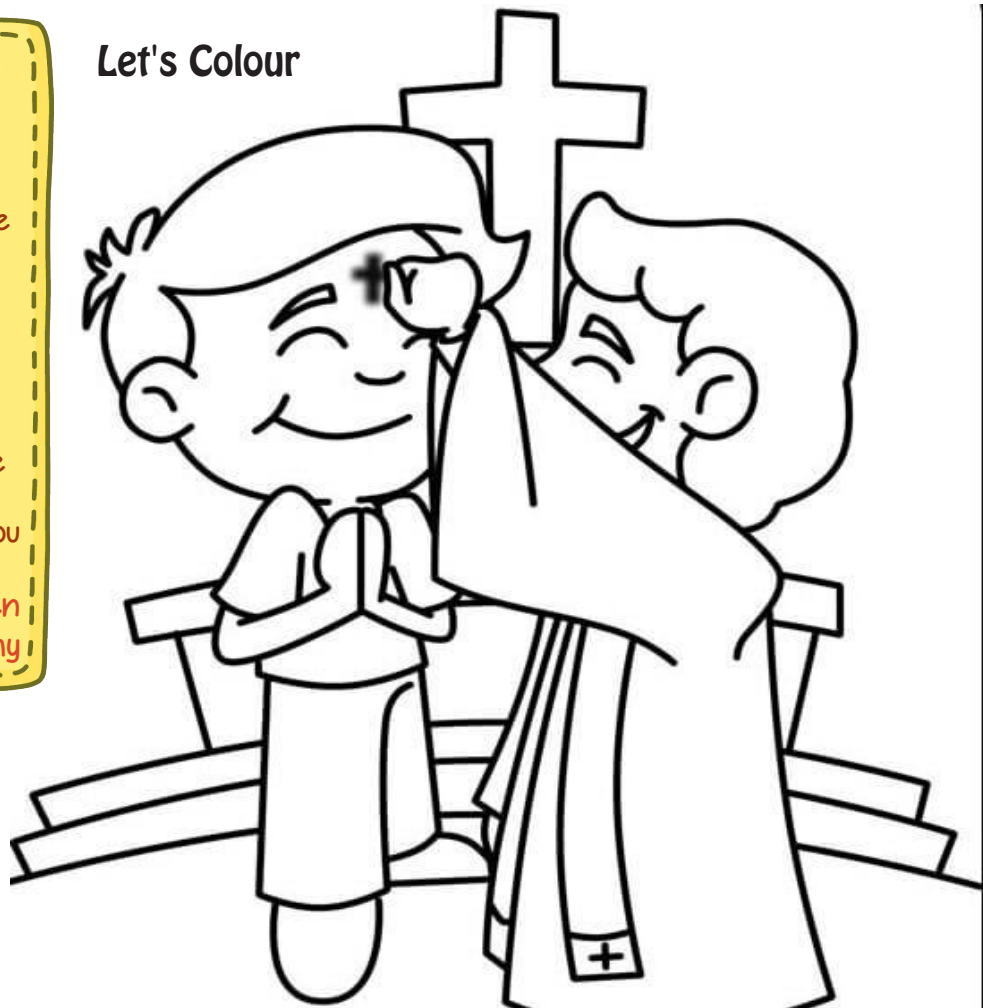
The Church gives us Lent as a time to change, to become a better version of ourselves, and to become more like Jesus. The disciplines of Lent - prayer, fasting, and almsgiving - help us prepare for Christ's victory on Easter.

Remember God put us here and we need Him all the time. If we remember how much we need God, we will think of Him more and love Him more.

What can you do this Lent to remind yourself every day that you need God?

Aunty Gwen
gwen@herald.com.my

Let's Colour



Psalm 92

Unscramble the missing words to complete today's Psalm!

It is good to give _____ (KNSHTA)
to the Lord, to sing praises to thy _____ (MNAE),
O Most High; to declare thy steadfast _____ (OVLE)
in the morning, and thy faithfulness by _____ (HGNTI).
The righteous flourish like the _____ (LMAP) tree,
and _____ (ORGW) like a cedar in Lebanon.
They are planted in the _____ (UOESH) of the Lord,
they flourish in the courts of our _____ (DGO).
They still bring forth _____ (UFIRT) in old age, they are ever full of
sap and _____ (ERGNE), to show that the Lord is upright,
he is my _____ (KCRO), and there is no unrighteousness in him.

Word search

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

Eye Splinter Plank Remove	Brother Good Tree See	Rotten Goodness Heart Clearly	Evil Mouth Speaks Fullness
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Countdown to Easter

				Ash Wednesday	Holy Saturday				
				2	Good Friday				
				3	Holy Thursday				
				4	37				
8	7	6	5	First Sunday of Lent	36	35	Palm Sunday	34	33
9	10	Second Sunday of Lent	11	12	Fifth Sunday of Lent	29	30	31	32
				13	28				
				14	27				
				15	26				
				16	25				
				17	24				
				18	23				
				19	22				
				20	21				

Directions:
Colour one box on the cross everyday during Lent. When the cross is filled, the next day will be Easter.
You can also use this cross as a sacrifice tracker and colour one box each day you fulfill your Lenten promise.



Source: Catholic Mom

YOUTH

FEBRUARY 27, 2022

Nightbirde called home

Christian singer made famous on 'America's Got Talent' loses battle with cancer

Former *America's Got Talent* (AGT) contestant, Jane "Nightbirde" Marczewski, 31, died of cancer last week, four years after receiving her initial diagnosis in 2019.

"Her lasting legacy will be the gift of hope she gave to so many through her music and the strength she found in Jesus," her family said in an obituary.

A fan favourite on the show, having received a golden buzzer in 2021 from Simon Cowell for her song *It's OK*, she's remembered by her family and friends for her joyful personality and Christian faith. During her pre-performance interview with the judges onstage, she told them the cancer was in her back, lungs and liver, all the while maintaining a positive outlook.

"She dedicated her high school years volunteering with the youth ministry at Cornerstone Church in Licking County, Ohio. She also spent many nights and weekends leading worship at Christian events throughout

Ohio. It was during this time that she cultivated her love for music and ministry," her family said.

"[During college], when she was not writing or singing, she shared Jesus with underprivileged youngsters in her neighbourhood, while providing them snacks after school."

She led worship services at the Belonging Church in Nashville, Tennessee, and also volunteered as a camp counsellor and at the Davidson County Jail, according to the obituary.

"Many now know the Lord because of her evangelism and commitment to Christ," her family said. "Those who knew her enjoyed her larger-than-life personality and sense of humour. She had a witty joke for every occasion — even if the joke was on her."

A short time after her breakout perfor-

mance on *America's Got Talent*, she had to withdraw from the show due to health complications.

"That felt like the most authentic thing I have heard this season," Howie Mandel said of her first performance on the show.

Despite the continued reappearance of her illness — she lived with three bouts with cancer — she remained in warm and hopeful spirits in the messages she shared online.

"You can't wait until life isn't hard anymore before you decide to be happy," she said after her first performance.

Celebrities who met Marczewski during her singing career have reached out to share their affection and prayers for the deceased artist and her family.

Cowell, the creator of *America's Got Tal-*

*You can't wait
until life isn't hard
anymore before you
decide to be happy*

Nightbirde



Burkina Faso's first Olympic medalist wanted to be a priest

BURKINA FASO: The landlocked West African country, that gained independence from France in 1960, had never won any medals at the Olympics. That changed on August 5, 2021 when Hugues Fabrice Zango stepped on the podium in Tokyo to accept the bronze medal for his triple jump at the Summer Games. He was not only Burkina Faso's first-ever Olympic medallist, but also the first African to win a prize in the Summer Games.

The 28-year-old champion's record is already impressive, despite his late entry into professional sports at the age of 18. At the World Championships in Doha, Qatar, in 2019, he also won the bronze medal. And he broke the world indoor record in January 2021 with a jump of 18.07 m — that's 59 ft 3 1/4 inches!

Zango grew up as a Catholic, receiving all the sacraments of Christian initiation as

a child. He participated in Catholic groups and associations, first as an altar server, then in the Catholic Student Youth where he held positions of responsibility for three years.

"I was an aspirant on my way to the priesthood," he confesses. "All these experiences made me the person I am today. Faith in general has given me hope, and this hope has manifested itself in sports, where you have to be extremely patient to get results," the star athlete says.

Zango's hometown is the Burkina capital, Ouagadougou. That's where he developed his passion for the triple jump. But it was while pursuing university studies in electrical engineering in France that he made an impression with his performances.

"I had a double project: sport and studies," he explains. "Both projects were very important to me, and I didn't want to leave sport for studies and vice versa. It took a

lot of organisation and sacrifice, especially since I came into athletics a little late," the 1.8 meter (5'11") student-athlete says. "I had to put in a lot of effort, sweat and blood. I had to recover from many injuries, go to sleep late so I could study for my exams. There are a lot of sacrifices I had to make," he points out.

Despite all his achievements, including his world indoor record, Zango is looking to do better. "My body demands more performance and more results, so there is still a long way to go to reach the ideal I have set for myself in this discipline and the excellence I want to achieve in this field," he says.

The champion, who is also working on a PhD in electrical engineering, gives some keys in aiming for excellence. "As in any career, achieving excellence requires a certain discipline, rigor and sacrifice," he says. Zango says it's by remaining hopeful that



Hugues Fabrice Zango

things will turn out for the best, even if he knows that many challenges await him.

A believer and a hard worker, Zango believes that all the experiences he has already acquired will allow him to overcome all the obstacles that will arise in the future. "I think my future will be simply radiant," he predicts with a smile. — **By Kamboissoa Samboé, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

Empowered cell completes study on Acts of the Apostles

KUCHING: A total of 35 youth, comprising of Form 5 leavers, college/university students and young working adults, gathered to study the *Acts of the Apostles – The Spread of the Kingdom from The Great Adventure: A Journey Through the Bible Series* by Ascension Press.

Over six months, from June 2021, the youth gathered online on Thursday evenings for a time of praise and worship before breaking into their cell groups to discuss and share with one another based on the guiding question from the study material.

Prior to the Thursday meetings, the youth were required to prepare for the sessions on their own, by studying the chapters of the Acts and the relating verses from other books in the Bible. After each Thursday session, the youths viewed a video of that week's teaching session by Jeff Cavins to further reinforce their understanding and prompt them to reflecting as well as applying them in their own lives.

Through the commitment and discipline over the study of the Scripture and meeting



weekly to share with one another, the youth bore gained knowledge of the foundational story of Scripture, and a deepened faith and relationship with God. Before the study on the *Acts of the Apostles*, some of the youth had undergone the foundational study — the *Journey Through the Bible* which are *The Story of Salvation and Matthew: The King and His Kingdom*.

The study on the Acts of the Apostles shows the continuation of the work of Christ after His resurrection as He empowers believers with the Holy Spirit to carry out the mission of God's salvation on earth. Having



A screenshot of youth attending the Bible study sessions.

gone through the three-part foundational bible study series, the youths have a "bigger picture" perspective and it laid a significant foundation to support and augment a life-

time of Scripture reading, studying and understanding of God's plan for salvation. — **Empowered Ministry Kuching, Today's Catholic**

AN "APERITIF SYNOD" FOR YOUNG ADULT CATHOLICS IN PARIS

PARIS, France: Some were a little apprehensive, wondering if they should have come with "specific ideas" and "intelligent things to say". Others, like Théa, came out of curiosity, to take advantage of a moment of meeting and conviviality with other young Catholics. But they were also there to "reflect on the Church", because "when opportunities from above arise, we must seize them", says this art history student with a disheveled bun of hair and a single earring.

A small group of about 30 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 gathered together in central Paris on February 16 for an "aperitif synod". Some came because they belong to one of the various Church movements. Others came simply to see what would take place. But they all met for "1 hour and 30 minutes to respond to the Pope".

The event, organised by the Archdiocese of Paris' young adult ministry department (Jeunes à Paris), was part of ongoing local preparations for the upcoming Synod of Bishops' assembly in 2023 on Synodality.

The people who attended were from a variety of backgrounds. There was Pauline, a student and volunteer firefighter who is involved in a parish run by the Salesians of Don Bosco. And Maylis, a member of the Emmanuel Community, as well as Déborah, originally from Mauritius, who is a member of the Guides and Scouts of France. Fiorela is a consecrated religious who belongs to the Crusader Missionary Sisters of the Church. And then there was Gaspard, a history major who saw the event on his university's Facebook group. He described himself as just a "Sunday parishioner".

All these young people, who didn't know each other from Adam (or Eve!), were first invited to share a powerful moment from their faith life. One by one, under the attentive eyes of the others, they recounted the moment when they felt "God close". One spoke of a "call" during Adoration. Another, of an entire group that helped an obese person climb a mountain during a youth camp. Yet another described the tears that sprung up after a death. Someone

else talked about the funeral of her grandfather, during which she felt that "in the trial, there is something to lean upon".

In the intimacy of these testimonies, an atmosphere of respect was established, conducive to listening.

Next question: "In what way has your desire to participate in the life of the Church been disappointed?" "Me? I am disappointed by some priests who feel superior to the people, while we are all sinners," Pauline began. Déborah nodded, also regretting that "sometimes new ideas, which go beyond the established, are not welcomed by priests". Gaspard, struck by the publication of the report done by the Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Church (CIASE), said he expects concrete actions from the Church. As for Maylis, she said she is concerned about the way the institution transmits its message to the world. "On certain subjects, such as homosexuality, the word of the Church comes first to hurt before speaking of the love of Christ," she said.

Then came the time for proposals, which quickly turned into a dialogue about good practices. Maylis, who regrets that Catholics are not better welcomed at Mass, told us that in her parish, new members are systematically invited to have something to drink at the end of the service. "Oh, that's nice," said Pauline, who wondered if she could set that up at her

place. "Maybe the Synod experience could be repeated, not just to talk about the problems of the Church," said Gaspard. "I think it would be good to have times of exchange among believers: at Mass, we receive the Word, but it is also important to discuss it," he said.

The discussion continued at the buffet, and on each other's smartphones, the participants exchanged contacts, practices, and Instagram pages for movements. "Create a movement that can spread" "Our idea is that after this event, young adults can repeat this collaborative synodal workshop where they are: in their parish, in their movement or their family," explained Chrysoline Brabant, one of the organisers who is also a member of the diocesan synod team in Paris. This is the "domino strategy". "Jeune à Paris is a possible entry point to create a movement that can spread," she said. In fact, the discussions made some people want to go further.

The exchange with other committed Catholics helped raise more questions. "Where does that come from, the fact that women cannot be ordained?" wondered Paul, for example, after a lively discussion in his group. This 22-year-old student has "hope and faith" that all these contributions will come back. He said he was leaving the evening gathering with "a desire to change my way of being in the Church". — **By Marguerite de Lasa, LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)**



Thirty young people between the ages of 18 and 25, from different movements, meet for the event "one hour and 30 minutes to respond to the Pope". (LCI Photo/Marie-Christine Bertin)

Hey everyone,

Last week, I shared on the use of **NATURAL LIGHT** while taking photos using your smartphones. This week, I will share on the **RULE OF THIRDS**.

The rule of thirds is all about balancing your shots.

No worries if you can't keep it balanced, go to camera setting and turn on the **GRIDLINES**.

If you place points of interest in these intersections or along the lines, your photo will be more balanced, level, which will allow viewers to interact with it more naturally.

So, until then, go ahead, snap photos and praise His name!

Amanda
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MEMORIAM

So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.
John 16:22

6th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



ESTELLA CAROLINE ESAREWEL

Called to the Lord: 28.02.2016

Weep Not For Estella My Family Dear, She Is Not Dead But Asleep In Heaven. Weep Not For Estella And Be Content, She Was Not Ours But Only On Loan.

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by Amma Loorthy, Appa Esarewel, Brother Harry Thomas, Kid sister Rebbeka Ann, and loved ones.

“WE LOVE YOU CAROL”

5th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



F. A. Moses

15th June 1928 – 3rd March 2017

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

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by wife, children, in-laws, grandchildren, and loved ones.

In Loving Memory of



MARY CLARA PEREIRA

Called to the Lord: 1 March 2016

We hold you close within our hearts and there you will remain until we meet again in the Lord.

Miss and love you dearly Sampson, Clifton & Ewan, Sharon & Ben.

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Prayer to St Jude

O Most Holy apostle, Saint Jude, faithful servant and friend of Jesus, the Church honoureth and invoceth thee universally, as the patron of hopeless cases, of things almost despaired of.

Pray for me, who am so miserable. Make use, I implore thee, of that particular privilege accorded to thee, to bring visible and speedy help where help was almost despaired of.

Come to mine assistance in this great need, that I may receive the consolation and succor of Heaven in my necessities, tribulations, and sufferings, particularly (here make your request here) and that I may praise God with thee and all the elect throughout eternity.

I promise, O Blessed St Jude, to be ever mindful of this great favour, to always honour thee as my special and powerful patron, and to gratefully encourage devotion to thee. Amen.

— Angelina Patricks

A Tribute to TWO Precious Souls

7th Anniversary  16th Anniversary



SAVARIMUTHU s/o SOOSAIMUTHU

(ex-KTM, Sentul)

Began Eternal Life: March 2, 2015

“The Legacies You Both Lived & Left Continue In The Lives You Touched & Transformed...”

Gratefully cherished by: Wife Roseammal, Daughter Jessie & Family, and Sons, Benedict & Robert & their Families.



THOMAS SAVARIMUTHU

(GSM, GREAT EASTERN LIFE)

Began Eternal Life: March 1, 2006

In Ever Loving Memory of
Two Wonderful Ladies

14th Anniversary

11th Anniversary



Nora Hendroff

Departed: 21 Feb 2008



Winifreda Seneviratne

Departed: 28 Feb 2011

Dearly missed by their respective children, grandchildren and a host of relatives and dear friends.



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A Catechesis on the Letter to the Galatians:

Let us not grow weary

We have reached the end of the catecheses on the *Letter to the Galatians*. We could have reflected on so much other content found in this writing of Saint Paul! The Word of God is an inexhaustible font. And in this Letter, the Apostle spoke to us as an evangeliser, as a theologian and as a pastor.

The holy Bishop Ignatius of Antioch used a beautiful expression when he wrote: “There is then one Teacher, who spoke and it was done; while even those things which He did in silence are worthy of the Father. He who possesses the word of Jesus is truly able to hear even His very silence” (Epistle to the Ephesians, 15, 1-2). We can say that the Apostle Paul was capable of giving voice to this silence of God. His most original intuitions help us discover the astounding newness contained in the revelation of Jesus Christ. He was a true theologian who contemplated the mystery of Christ and transmitted it with his creative intelligence. And he was also capable of exercising his pastoral mission towards a lost and confused community. He did this with different methods: from time to time, he used irony, firmness, gentleness ... he revealed his own authority as an apostle, but at the same time he did not hide the weaknesses of his character. The strength of the Spirit had truly entered his heart: his meeting with the Risen Christ conquered and transformed his whole life, and he spent it entirely at the service of the Gospel.

Liberated from slavery

Paul never thought of Christianity in irenic terms, lacking edge and energy — on the

contrary, he defended the freedom Christ brought with such passion that it still moves us today, especially if we think of the suffering and loneliness he must have endured. He was convinced he had received a call to which he alone could respond; and he wanted to explain to the Galatians that they too were called to that freedom which liberated them from every form of slavery because it made them heirs of the ancient promise and, in Christ, children of God. And aware of the risks that this concept of freedom brought, he never minimised the consequences. He was aware of the risks that Christian freedom brought. But he did

“Saint Augustine evokes the image of Christ asleep in the boat amid the storm to remind us that whenever we feel weary and the tempests of life threaten to overwhelm us, we need but awaken Christ in our hearts, trusting in his faithful presence and the life-giving power of his Spirit.”

not minimise the consequences. With *parrhesia*, that is, courageously, he repeated to the believers that freedom is in no way equal to libertinism, nor does it lead to forms of presumptuous self-sufficiency. Rather, Paul placed freedom in love’s shadow and based its consistent exercise on the service of charity. This entire vision was set within the horizon of a life according to the Holy Spirit, that brings to fulfilment the Law given

by God to Israel and prevents it from falling back into the slavery of sin. The temptation is always to go backward. One definition of Christians found in the Scripture says that *we Christians are not the type of people who go backward, who turn back*. This is a beautiful definition. And the temptation is to turn back to be more secure; to turn back to the Law, disregarding the new life of the Spirit. This is what Paul teaches us: the fulfilment of the true Law is found in this life of the Spirit that Jesus gave us. And this life of the Spirit can only be lived in freedom; Christian freedom. And this is one of the most beautiful things.

Wake Christ up

At the end of this catechetical journey, it seems to me that a twofold attitude could arise within us. On the one hand, the Apostle’s teaching generates *enthusiasm* in us; we feel drawn to follow immediately the way of freedom, to “walk by the Spirit”, to always walk by the Spirit: it makes us free. On the other hand, we are aware of our limitations because we experience first-hand every day how difficult it is to be docile to the Spirit, to facilitate his beneficial action. Then *the tiredness that dampens enthusiasm* can set in. We feel discouraged, weak, sometimes marginalised with respect to a worldly life-style. St Augustine, referring to the Gospel episode of the storm on the lake, suggests how to react in this situation. This is what he says: “The faith of Christ in your heart is like Christ in the boat. You hear insults, you wear yourself out, you are upset, and Christ sleeps. Wake Christ up, rouse your faith! Even in tribulation you can do something. Rouse your faith. Christ awakes and speaks to you ... Therefore, wake Christ up ... Believe what has been said to you, and there will be tremendous calm in your heart” (cf. Sermon 63). In difficult moments, as St Augustine says here, it is as if we are in the boat at the moment of the storm. And what did the Apostles do? They woke Christ up who was sleeping during the storm; but he was present. The only thing we can do in terrible moments is to wake up Christ who is within us, but “sleeps” like [he did] in the boat. It is exactly like this. We must wake up Christ in our hearts and only then will we be able to contemplate things with his eyes for he sees beyond the storm. Through that serene gaze, we can see a panorama that we cannot even glimpse on our own.

Come, Holy Spirit

In this challenging but captivating journey, the Apostle reminds us that we cannot allow ourselves any tiredness when it comes to doing good. Do not grow tired of doing good. We have to trust that the Spirit always comes

to assist us in our weakness and grants us the support we need. Let us, therefore, learn to invoke the Holy Spirit more often! Some might say: “how is the Holy Spirit invoked? I know how to pray to the Father with the Our Father; I know how to pray to Our Lady with the Hail Mary, I know how to pray to Jesus with the Prayer to His Holy Wounds. But to the Spirit? What is the prayer to the Holy Spirit?” The prayer to the Holy Spirit is spontaneous: it has to come from your heart. In moments of difficulty, you have to say: “Come, Holy Spirit”. This is the key word: “Come”. But you have to say it yourself in your own style, in your own words. Come, because I find myself in difficulty. Come, because I am in obscurity, in the dark. Come, because I do not know what to do. Come, because I am about to fall. Come. Come. This is the Holy Spirit’s word, to call upon the Spirit. Let us learn to invoke the Holy Spirit often. We can do this with simple words at various moments during the day. And we can carry with us, perhaps inside the Gospel in our pocket, the beautiful prayer the Church recites on Pentecost: “Come, come Holy Spirit / And from your celestial home / Shed a ray of light divine! / Come, come, Father of the poor! / Come, Source of all our store! / Come, within our bosoms shine! / You, of comforters the best; / You the soul’s most welcome Guest; / Sweet refreshment...”. Come. And so it continues, it is a very beautiful prayer. The core of the prayer is “come”, as Our Lady and the Apostles prayed after Jesus had ascended into Heaven. They were alone in the Upper Room and invoked the Spirit. It will be good for us to often pray: *Come, Holy Spirit*. And with the presence of the Spirit, we will protect our freedom. We will be free, free Christians, not attached to the past in the bad sense of the word, not chained to practices, but free with the Christian freedom, the kind that makes us grow. This prayer will help us walk in the Spirit, in freedom and in joy because when the Holy Spirit comes, joy, true joy comes. May the Lord bless you. Thank you.

Saints of the Week

St Gregory of Narek

Approximately 12 years before the Roman Emperor Constantine legalised Christianity in 313, an Armenian king converted to Christianity.

Today’s saint, Gregory of Narek, was a medieval Armenian monk who wrote mystical poetry, hymns and biblical commentaries. He is one of Armenia’s greatest literary figures and poets. His principal work, the “Book of Lamentations,” consists of 95 prayers he composed as an encyclopedia of prayer for all people. The 12th century Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that while Western Medieval piety developed the Rosary as a lay substitute for praying the Psalms, the Armenian tradition developed hymns and songs to Mary as the primary expression of popular piety, as seen in the works of St Gregory of Narek (CCC #2678). Like St Ephrem, a centuries-earlier Syrian archetype of Eastern monasticism, St Gregory uses metaphor, songs, litanies, and poetry to communicate Christian truth.

Little is known of the life of St Gregory of Narek, other than that he was a dedicated monk who lived his entire adult life in a monastery. St. Gregory was never formally canonised, a not uncommon fact for holy men and women of his era. During a Mass



Feast day: February 27

in 2015 commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide by the Ottoman Turks, Pope Francis declared St Gregory of Narek a Doctor of the Church, the 36th person so honoured and only the second from the churches of the East. — *Agencies*

St David of Wales

David is the patron saint of Wales, and perhaps, the most famous of British saints. Ironically, we have little reliable information about him.

It is known that he became a priest, en-



Feast day: March 1

gaged in missionary work, and founded many monasteries, including his principal abbey in southwestern Wales. Many stories and legends sprang up about David and his Welsh monks. Their austerity was extreme. They worked in silence without the help of animals to till the soil. Their food was limited to bread, vegetables and water.

In about the year 550, David attended a synod where his eloquence impressed his fellow monks to such a degree that he was elected primate of the region. The episcopal see was moved to Mynyw, where he had his monastery, now called St. David’s. He ruled his diocese until he reached a very old age. His last words to his monks and subjects were: “Be joyful, brothers and sisters. Keep your faith, and do the little things that you have seen and heard with me.”

Saint David is pictured standing on a mound with a dove on his shoulder. The legend is that, once while he was preaching, a dove descended to his shoulder and the earth rose to lift him high above the people so he could be heard. Over 50 churches in South Wales were dedicated to him in pre-Reformation days. — *Franciscan Media*

Ukrainian archbishop assures people God is with them

KYIV, Ukraine: As Russia fired missiles on several Ukrainian cities and Russian troops reportedly landed in Odessa, the head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church affirmed the right of Ukrainians to defend their homeland and assured his people that God would watch over them.

“At this historic moment, the voice of our conscience calls us all, as one, to stand up for a free, united and independent Ukrainian state,” said Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, in a statement to his people on February 24.

The archbishop was supposed to be in Florence, Italy, for a meeting with other bishops from Europe and around the Mediterranean, which Pope Francis was scheduled to address Feb 27. Instead, Archbishop Shevchuk stayed in Kyiv with his people.

In a letter to the bishops in Florence, the archbishop said Ukraine was defending European values “at the cost of the blood of its children” and the whole country risked becoming “a death camp” because of Russian aggression. He pleaded with the bishops to pressure their governments to “help us defend peace in Ukraine and in Europe.”



Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych

Early Feb 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a wide-ranging attack on cities across Ukraine, after months of troop build-ups near the Ukraine border. Russia said it only targeted military installations. A Kremlin spokesman said the attacks were “a special operation” and called it the “demilitarisation and denazification” of Ukraine.

Ukrainians began fleeing cities, with lines forming at border crossings from Ukraine to Poland. Earlier, the president of the Polish bishops’ conference asked Polish Catholics to be prepared to welcome

Ukrainian refugees.

But in his message to Ukrainians, Archbishop Shevchuk told them, “Today, we solemnly proclaim: ‘Our soul and body we offer for our freedom!’”

He described Russia as “the treacherous enemy” and “an unjust aggressor” who attacked Ukraine, bringing “death and destruction.”

The history of the last century teaches us that all those who started world wars lost them, and the idolaters of war brought only destruction and decline to their own states and peoples.

“We believe that in this historic moment, the Lord is with us,” the archbishop said. “He, who holds in His hands the fate of the whole world, and of each person in particular, is always on the side of the victims of unjust aggression, the suffering and the enslaved.”

God “captures and overthrows the mighty of this world with their pride, the conquerors with the illusion of their omnipotence, the proud and insolent with their self-confidence,” he continued. “It is He who grants victory over evil and death.”

“The victory of Ukraine will be the victory of God’s power over the meanness and arrogance of man! So it was, is and will be!” the archbishop insisted. — *CNS*

‘Our life is in God’s hands,’ says priest in Ukraine

WASHINGTON: With Russia’s invasion of Ukraine underway, one local priest says that he and Ukrainian Catholics are placing their trust in God.

“As Catholics, we pray to God and hope that our life is in [His] hands,” said Fr Oleksandr Zelinskyi, the director general of *EWTN Ukraine*.

He called the situation very difficult.

“There is panic and fear among people,” he said. “Many are trying to leave Kyiv, where we work as an *EWTN* team.”

Early Thursday morning (February 24), Russia began a full-scale invasion of Ukraine by launching missiles into the country. Nearly three million people live in the capital city of Kyiv, where videos capture blaring air raid sirens and long lines of traffic as citizens attempt to flee. Others took more immediate shelter in underground train stations.

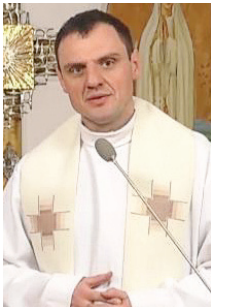
Zelinskyi thought of his flock when asked if he would stay or leave.

“I plan to stay,” he said. “We broadcast Masses and prayers from our chapel and we know that people need it now. So, as long as it will be possible, I will stay here with some of our co-workers.”

EWTN Ukraine, a part of the larger *EWTN* network, began broadcasting in 2011, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The day is a fitting one, since *EWTN Ukraine* is staffed by priests from the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception. A large group of friends and volunteers also support them in their efforts with their prayers, donations, and talents.

Today, they ask for prayers in a special way.

“We ask for prayer and support from all of you, we need it during this dramatic situation,” Fr Zelinskyi said. — *By Katie Yoder, CNA*



A Ukrainian woman lights a candle at St Alexander Church in Kiev at a prayer vigil (ANSA)

Theme for 108th World Day of Migrants and Refugees announced

VATICAN: Pope Francis has chosen *Building the Future with Migrants and Refugees*, as the theme for the 108th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, to be celebrated on September 25, 2022.

The day is observed every year, on the last Sunday of September, as an occasion to express support and concern for people who are forced to flee their homes, to encourage Catholics worldwide to remember and pray for those displaced by conflict and persecution and increase awareness about the opportunities that migration offers. It was first celebrated in 1914.

According to the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican’s Dicastery (the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development), this year’s theme highlights the commitment that we are all called to share, in building a future that embraces God’s plan, leaving no one behind.

“Building with” means recognising and promoting the role that migrants and refugees have to play in this work of construction, because only in this way will it be possible to build a world that ensures the conditions for the integral human development of all, a communiqué explains.

Pope Francis’ message, featuring six sub-themes, will explore how migrants and refugees are able to contribute – now and in the future – to the social, economic, cultural, and spiritual development of societies and ecclesial communities.

As with every year, the Migrants and Refugees Section will carry out a communications campaign starting at the end of March, aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of the theme and sub-themes through multimedia aids, informational material, and theological reflections. — *Vatican News*



A monument to migrants and refugees stands in St Peter’s Square. (Vatican News photo)