

HERALD January, 2024 THY WILL BE DONE 1

Let Me Be Content One Day At A Time

On January 8, 2024, we commemorate the 50th day since the Bishop of Penang's elevation to cardinal. In celebration, *HERALD* reconnects with the cardinal, engaging in an insightful conversation revealing his appointment. Unaware of the grand designs that God had for him, Cardinal Sebastian Francis discovered that the Lord had been quietly orchestrating events, equipping him for his new role, and he embraced these developments with grace, accepting everything as part of God's plan.

When a young Fr Sebastian Francis embraced *Fiat Voluntas Tua* (Thy will be done) for his priestly ordination on July 28, 1977, little did he envision that this vow would echo through his life in the years that followed. This commitment led to significant shifts, including leaving his home diocese of Malacca Johore, establishing new roots within the Diocese of Penang, and ultimately charting a course towards Rome.

On August 20, 2012, the then Msgr Sebastian Francis assumed the mantle as the fifth Bishop of the Diocese of Penang, reiterating *Fiat Voluntas Tua* as his episcopal motto, enriched with the verse 'A Shepherd I Pray I'll Be'.

Eleven years into his episcopate, contemplating retirement at the customary age of 75, the Lord unveiled yet another calling for this faithful steward. Thus, on September 30, 2023, Right Reverend Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, was elevated to the esteemed rank of Cardinal, bestowed upon him by Pope Francis at the conclave in Rome.



Be sure to get the eight-page supplement on Cardinal Sebastian Francis in this issue.

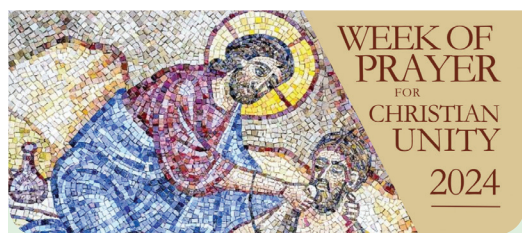
"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food" — and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

1 Cor. 6:13-14



Hospital Fatimah turns 50 this year

■ P4



You shall love the Lord your God ...and your neighbour as yourself...

■ P6



Serving Beyond Borders

■ P16

World is letting the Syrian people die

VATICAN: The Archbishop of Homs has launched an impassioned plea for the Syrian people who risk dying of hunger after the World Food Programme suspended its general food assistance programme in the war-torn country due to funding shortages.

Six months ago, the World Food Programme (WFP) reduced by half its food aid to Syria. As of January 1, 2024, the UN aid agency has stopped its general food assistance programme across the country due to funding shortages.

More than five million Syrians depended on the delivery of food and basic necessities, because of the war that has ravaged Syria for nearly 13 years and more recently, the devastating earthquake that hit the areas bordering Turkey in February 2023.

The WFP explained that the funding crisis is related to the COVID pandemic, the war in Ukraine and now, the conflict in Gaza. It is now estimated that over 12 million people live in severe food insecurity.

"The Syrian people are condemned to die without being able to say a word," said Archbishop Jacques Mourad, who was appointed a year ago to the helm of the Archdiocese of Homs, the third largest city in Syria.

"It is a terrible and unfair decision," he said, wondering how this could be possible. "For us, it is as if the world is telling the Syrian people 'You are condemned to die, without raising your voices, without saying anything.' And for what? What is the fault of the Syrian people?" he asked.

His words were strong and moved by the suffering endured by the Syrian people after years of war which continues to shatter all their hopes.

Archbishop Mourad remarked the WFP decision will "throw the Syrian people into complete despair, extinguishing any glimmer of light our faith and hope had left. This is the end for us."



Devastation in the town of Harem, Idlib governorate, Syria. (Vatican News)

Non-governmental organisations and the Catholic Church have worked miracles in Syria in recent years, supporting the population in every way. Today, the interruption of international humanitarian aid, which served almost two thirds of the Syrian population, leaves people to wonder if they can still hope they will not die of hunger.

"The Church, along with non-governmental organisations, cannot cover all the needs of the Syrian people because their financial capacity is limited," explained Archbishop Mourad.

Furthermore, getting the money to Syria is impossible due to the sanctions imposed by the United States and the UN. "So, what do we do? How can the Syrian people live?," the Archbishop of Homs asked, noting that many families in Syria already live on only one meal a day.

"We have forgotten what heating means, because we cannot buy diesel or wood, we have forgotten what hot water is, we have forgotten what a society is. And we live in total darkness because the cities in Syria are without light."

"Certainly," he added, "the rich neighbourhoods which only account for 5 per cent of the population are not representative of the situation of the Syrian people."

Archbishop Mourad concluded by saying his only hope now lies in the European Union and that it will take a clear stand based on "a sincere and human sensitivity" to the plight of the Syrian people who seem to have been abandoned by the entire world. "Why do you want to let these people die? What have we done wrong to be condemned to die?," he lamented. — By Jean-Charles Putzolu and Francesca Sabatinelli, *Vatican News*

HERALD

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Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre
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Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur,
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**EDITOR**

Patricia Pereira
editor1@herald.com.my

**ASSISTANT EDITOR
Social Media Coordinator**

Sandra Ann Inbaraj
sandra@herald.com.my

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Youth Section**

Amanda Mah
amanda@herald.com.my

**BAHASA MALAYSIA**

Melania Liza Magnus
liza@herald.com.my

**MANDARIN**

Adelina Wong
yin4482@gmail.com

**TAMIL**

RK Samy
rksamy3@hotmail.com

**ADMIN ASSISTANT**

Advertisements / Subscription
Priscillia Raymond
advertisement@herald.com.my

MEMORIAM

memoriam@herald.com.my

LETTERS

letterseditor@herald.com.my

COMMENTARY

Could this be the year of a spiritual revival?

Religion has often become more of an identity marker than a true spiritual resource, which is why we need deeper reflection on the role it plays in a world in turmoil

Feared by some and cherished by others, religion could be a force for unity or a new source of division in this new year of 2024. Modernity has not eliminated the need for belief or the search for the meaning of existence. Even artificial intelligence (AI) is trained on religious issues and can answer various questions. But AI lacks life and spirit. It can do nothing for what each individual must achieve in their own life without being able to delegate it to anyone else.

From an anthropological perspective, religion reflects that unknown part of existence that no human thought can explain. It serves as a constant reminder that “man infinitely transcends man,” as Blaise Pascal said. The concept of “God” affirms the permanence of the unknowable for the intelligent creatures that we are. This ignorance often appears as an unbearable and humiliating flaw.

If, in the 20th century, the attempt to eliminate God from the horizon of thought allowed for self-reference, the elimination of the thirst for meaning — the quest for transcendence — seems to be the attempt of the 21st century: to make the human being perfectly transparent to oneself and to renounce the pursuit of this truth that transcends them. Only wonder embraces this transcendence.

From a political perspective, the various religions play a role in the

governance of peoples. Autocratic regimes know this and find in religion a very powerful adjunct to their politics. Unfortunately, many conflicts have religious pretexts, justifying the desire for domination. Invoking heaven’s will to impose it often produces chaos on earth. Therefore, many of our contemporaries’ view religion as a plague and the cause of war. They turn away from it for good reason. Delivering religion from its counterfeits remains an unfinished task. Renouncing religion does not make one stronger, but rather more fragile, as faith engages reason, and reason stimulates faith.

For several years we have seen that economic and technological globalisation does not create a more united humanity. Technologies bring people closer but do not make them brothers and sisters. Who can help humanity think about its unity? This path toward unity is the only way to free humanity from the absurdity of its wars. Pope Francis tirelessly urges us to find in friendship and fraternity the answer to this “piecemeal third world war”. Humanity is clearly challenged by its unity and must urgently discover the key so that the tragedies of its history do not repeat themselves. This is our dearest wish for 2024!

— By Fr Laurent Stalla-Bourdillon, LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)



NCRonline.org/cartoons

No better invitation than ‘Come and See’

“What are you looking for?”

These are the first words of Jesus in John’s Gospel. This simple question is addressed to two disciples who follow Jesus down the road. He turns and asks them this question — “What are you looking for?” sometimes translated as “What do you want?”

It is no accident that John has included this question at the beginning of his Gospel. I am sure that this question that Jesus asks is intended not only as a question of the first disciples but also as a question for every reader of this Gospel.

And what a question. In fact, isn’t this the question.

Every philosophy, every religion, every person asks this question of their life — what is it that I want? What am I looking for? What is life really all about?

Perhaps the disciples aren’t really sure, because they don’t answer Jesus directly, instead they inquire about where He is staying. They want to spend time with Jesus and get to know Him, after all, John has been making big claims about this man.

And so, Jesus replies: “Come and see” or as the Message translation of the Bible puts it: “Come and see for yourself.”

What an invitation that is. That is the invitation of Jesus to the first disciples, and it is the invitation to every reader of John’s Gospel ever since — “Come and see for yourself.”

At the start of a new year, perhaps there is no better invitation?

At the beginning of every new year we are more prone to ask the question “what is it that I am looking for?” We are more inclined to examine our lives and ask the question “Am I happy with where I am at?” “Is this what it is all about?”

The invitation that we read in today’s Gospel is to hear this question on the lips of Jesus — “What are you looking for?”

And then the follow up invitation... “Come and See.”

It’s very important for us to hear this invitation for what it really is.

Jesus doesn’t offer a three-point sermon to the disciples. Jesus doesn’t give them a sales pitch or try and convince them then and there that he really is just as amazing as John the Baptist has made him out to be.

Jesus simply invites these new disciples to be with Him.

This is what being a disciple of Jesus is about. It is about being in the company of Jesus and learning from Him, getting to know Him, growing in relationship with Him.

The disciples perhaps don’t know quite what they are looking for, even if they did it doesn’t seem that Jesus is going to give it to them all at once.

What we discover quickly here in John’s Gospel is that the answer to the deepest longings of humanity isn’t an intellectual solution or philosophy, it is a person. It’s a relationship. The word became flesh.

The disciples are invited to come and stay with Jesus. The invitation is to stay and to remain with Jesus, to abide with Him.

This invitation is for us all. It isn’t conditional. It’s not as if the disciples had done anything to qualify as special. Jesus openly invites them to be with Him, and He invites us too.

Jesus is open for inquiry; intellectually, emotionally, we are invited to look at Him, to hear Him, to pray to Him, to ask of Him.

A question we ask each other a lot over January is “how was your Christmas?” or “How was your holidays?”

We post photos of our celebrations and holidays on Facebook. As humans we just love to share this stuff. We want to share what matters to us, we want to share stories of the fun we have had, the people we care about, what is going on in our lives.

We are creatures that love to show and tell and in today’s Gospel reading from John we see this element of show and tell at play.

One of the disciples who had been with Jesus all day was Andrew. He was so excited about his encounter with Jesus that he just had to share it and so he goes and finds his brother Simon.

When he finds him he does two things — he tells him about Jesus and he offers to show him Jesus.

First of all, Andrew tells Simon about Jesus. He says: “We have found the Messiah.” Messiah means “the anointed one.” In the Old Testament kings were anointed for their role, so were priests and prophets. The term was often used in anticipation of the one who would come to rescue the people of Israel. Here is Andrew saying to Simon — he is

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with the *HERALD* team

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Readings: 1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19;

1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20;

Gospel: John 1:35-42

here, we have found him!

Secondly, Andrew shows Simon. “He brought Simon to Jesus.”

Words are good, but as the first disciples discovered, it is meeting Jesus that really counts, it is meeting Jesus and encountering Him that will bring transformation.

For Simon it all begins here. In anticipation of who he will one day become, Jesus gives him a new name. He will be called Peter.

Simon experiences Jesus who gives him a new name, a new identity, based on who he will become as a follower of Jesus. In doing this Jesus also calls Peter into a role and makes a claim on Him. Peter will be no passive admirer of Jesus, but the one on whom Jesus will build the church.

And so now Peter is a disciple and the process continues, he will go on to make more disciples.

Being a disciple is accepting the invitation to come and be with Jesus, to follow Him and to stay with him. Secondly being a disciple is sharing Jesus with others, that they may become disciples.

It really is simple.

IMPORTANT DATES

January 18 - 25:

Christian Unity Week

Theme: *You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself... (Luke 10:27)*

January 21:

Sunday of the Word of God

Theme: *Word of God is central to the life, faith and mission of the Church.*



**KUALA LUMPUR
ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop
Julian Leow**

January

- 13 *Catholic Lawyers' Society Votive Mass – Church of the Divine Mercy*
- 14-18 *Clergy Annual Pastoral Assembly*
- 21 *Archbishop John Wong's 25th Sacerdotal Anniversary*



PENANG DIOCESE

**Diary of Cardinal
Sebastian Francis**

January

- 15 *Meeting – Penang Diocesan Finance Committee at 5.00pm Pusat Keuskupan Katolik*
- 15 *Appreciation Dinner – Penang Diocesan Finance Committee and Penang Diocese Catholic Heritage Conservation Committee at 7.00pm*
- 16 *Council of Priests at 10.00am*
- 16-17 *Clergy Monthly Recollection*
- 19 *Appointment – Penang Diocesan New Evangelisation Commission at 11.00am – Pusat Keuskupan Katolik*
- 20 *Meeting with CHARIS Peninsular Malaysia (Mass & Session) – Minor Basilica of St Anne, BM at 7.30am*
- 20 *Mass – Dedication of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit at 6.00pm at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang*
- 21 *Parish Pastoral Assembly – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam at 3.00pm*



**MALACCA JOHORE
DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop
Bernard Paul**

January

- 16-17 *Clergy Monthly Recollection for January*

Sunday of the Word of God

January 21, 2024

On September 30, 2019, Pope Francis instituted the annual observance of the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time as "Sunday of the Word of God," devoting a special day "to the celebration, study and dissemination of the Word of God".

The Sunday of the Word of God is a year

long series of activities and initiatives to promote reading, studying, meditating and sharing the Word of God.

The objective is to generate awareness on the importance of the Sunday of the Word of God.

This year's theme, chosen by the Re-

gional Biblical Commission of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, is *Word of God is central to the life, faith and mission of the Church.*

Please see the image below for suggested activities at individual, family, parish and community levels that you can adopt.

Some Suggested Activities

Personal level:

- Buy a personal Bible or Bible Journal
- Daily Bible Reading
- Meditation & Reflection
- Journaling
- Bible Verse Memorization

Parish level:

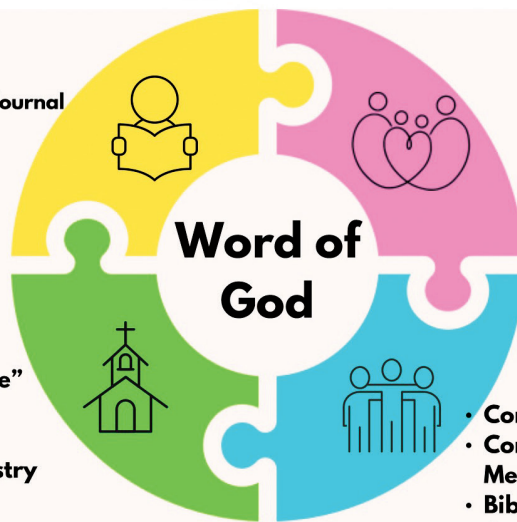
- Promote "Buy one, Gift one" campaign
- Set up bible apostolate, committee or Biblical Ministry
- Bible Seminars & Events
- Bible Festival / Bible Day Celebration
- Parish-Wide Bible Reading Plans

Family level:

- Family Bible Study & Prayer Time
- Memory Verse Challenges
- Bible Story Time
- Family Discussion and Sharing
- Family Biblical Games

Community level:

- Community Bible Studies
- Community-Wide Scripture Memorization Challenges
- Bible-themed Book Clubs
- Community Scripture Garden
- Set up community Bible support group



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #160

F12
NEWS
MJD UPDATES

Greetings, a grace-filled New Year to you all. What's ahead? What is 2024 going to be like for us? In a word: different. Over the next ten years, rising temperatures will threaten our predominantly urban, coastal way of life. A low birth rate combined with higher life expectancy will make the above 60s with the spending power. And some national economies will stagnate while others will unexpectedly thrive. New technologies are offering hope in the fight against climate change and poverty. There's a shift from 'owning' culture to 'sharing' culture. Friendlier eco-cities are appearing. Be prepared. More taxes, removal of subsidies and raising of tariffs reported. *The year will be different.*

Re-designing Times: With the New Year comes reviews, revisions, re-designing and resolute action. The Scriptures call this, pouring new wine into new wineskins. But many governments, leaderships and organisations opt for "quickies" i.e. patchwork approach to development.

Maybe it is time to restate your mission, vision and values. They should begin by asking these three questions.

First, to understand your mission, or purpose ask, *Why does your company or organisation exist?*

Second, to understand your vision, or dream, ask, *What sort of future do you and your team hope to create?*

Third, to understand your values, or beliefs, ask, *What values and beliefs are you and your team passionate about?*

What we need is real change, not cosmetic change. Answering these questions will provide more data to future decisions and keep us on the right path, even in the midst of chaos. *(The Wise Company)*

A Thought for the Week:
The Trouble Tree

A plumber was hired to restore an old farmhouse and, after a rough first day on the job, a flat tire made him lose an hour of work, his electric drill quit and his ancient one ton truck refused to start. As the client drove him home, he sat in *stony silence*. On arriving, he invited the client to meet his family. As they walked up the front walk, he paused briefly at a small tree, touching the tips of the branches with both hands. When opening the door, he underwent an amazing transformation. His face was *wreathed in smiles* and he hugged his two small children and gave his wife a kiss.

As they returned to the car, the client, upon seeing the tree, asked him about what he had seen him do earlier. *'Oh, that's my trouble tree,'* he replied *'I know I can't help having troubles on the job, but one thing's for sure, those troubles don't belong in the house with my wife and the children.* So, I just hang them up on the tree every night when I come home and ask God to take care of them. Then in the morning I pick them up again. Funny thing is,' he smiled, 'when I come out in the morning to pick 'em up, there aren't nearly as many as I remember hanging up the night before.'

Lessons from the plumber: *Don't bring your work or troubles home. Leave the day's burdens at the 'trouble tree' or with God. The Lord bears them with us.*

Announcements for this Week

1. Updates on our clergy:

a) Msgr Michel Mannayagam. has been warded at the Sultanah Aminah General Hospital for COVID and heart ailment. He remains in ICU and visitors are discouraged.

b) Fr Laurence Montoyou is on medical leave, after undergoing an operation for a ruptured appendix.

c) Fr Andrew Arokiasamy, now based in Segamat, will return to India to be with his ailing parent.

d) Fr John Pereira is serving the Diocese of Melbourne on contract for a term of three years.

e) Fr Adrian Francis has been re-assigned as assistant parish priest to St Philip, Segamat, with the parish priest, Fr Paul Wong.

QnQ: Q asks?

What elements are important for a successful organisation?

1. For organisations to be a success, practical wisdom can't be limited to CEOs and executives. Wise leaders need to share their *passions, their inspirations, and, most of all, their knowledge.* Wise organisations practise *mentorship and apprenticeship*, and encourage *leadership distribution*.

2. One of the central principles of practical wisdom is the sharing of that wisdom. In wise organisations, everyone should know what needs to be done. Practical wisdom must be cultivated at every level.

3. The key message here is: *Wise organisations practise distributed leadership.* And when they practise distributed leadership, they know that their successors will be wise leaders, too.

4. Toyota's CEO, Akio Toyoda, explained how having *multiple leaders* is essential to its ability to keep up in a changing world. With just one person making decisions, there's no way the company would be able to consider the myriad factors that go into making good decisions.

Just to tickle you: **A family altar can alter a family.** God bless you with a lovely year.

Bernard Paul

Bishop Bernard Paul

Hospital Fatimah turns 50 this year

IPOH: Hospital Fatimah is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, marking a significant milestone in its history. To honour this occasion, a diverse array of activities and programmes has been meticulously planned throughout the year. These initiatives are thoughtfully crafted to foster community involvement, extend gratitude towards the tireless dedication of the hospital's staff, and commemorate the enduring legacy of providing compassionate care.

Some of the key highlights of the 50th anniversary celebrations include:

Community Health Promotions: The Hospital will be offering various promotions on medical check-ups and consultations to the community, promoting health and wellness.

Free Educational Workshops: A series of educational workshops on various

health topics, empowering the community with knowledge to make informed decisions about their well-being.

Medical Camps: Specialised medical camps providing essential healthcare services to underserved areas, such as the Orang Asli, continuing the Hospital's tradition of outreach.

Charity Initiatives: Collaborate with and support local charitable organisations in feeding the poor and homeless, emphasising its commitment to community service.

Upgrading of the Physiotherapy Department: Providing state-of-the-art rehabilitation equipment and advanced technology to support a diverse range of treatment and therapies.

Opening of a Refurbished Ward: Providing top-quality healthcare services, ensuring patients receive the best possible care in a modern and comfortable setting.



Some of the staff of the hospital.

Staff Appreciation Events: Hospital Fatimah recognises the dedication of its staff and will organise special events to honour their commitment and hard work.

Hospital Fatimah extends a warm invitation to the entire community, past and present staff, and all well-wishers to partake in commemorating its 50th milestone. As the Hospital strides into its next chapter, it reaffirms its commitment to delivering compassionate care, continuing the legacy of love and service set forth by the Brothers of Mercy.

The Evolution of Hospital Fatimah

Hospital Fatimah boasts a storied legacy dating back to 1952, originating from an invitation extended by then Archbishop of Singapore (Most Rev Michel Olcomendy, MEP) to the Brothers of Mercy. The archbishop saw a great need for medical care in the northern region of the Malay Peninsula. The Brothers of Mercy responded to this call and arrived in Malaya in 1953. In the nascent years, these dedicated individuals operated under The Catholic Welfare

Services, delivering essential medical aid to villagers in the Kinta District and Province Wellesley.

They tirelessly traversed the area in mobile dispensary vans, conducting medical clinics in Gopeng and Kampong Simee, while extending free medical treatment to the Orang Asli community. Their unwavering compassion earned them the endearing moniker of "The German Doctors".

Embraced by the local communities and witnessing a burgeoning demand for their services, the Brothers of Mercy resolved to fortify their presence in Malaysia by erecting and managing a hospital. Their vision materialised into reality on December 7, 1974, marking the official inauguration of Hospital Fatimah.

Across the span of five decades, Hospital Fatimah has metamorphosed into a foremost healthcare institution. Its unwavering dedication to healthcare excellence, coupled with a resolute commitment to community welfare, has solidified its position as an integral pillar within the local health care framework.



Launch of the 50th anniversary celebrations.



Dr Paolo Ruffini (right) presenting the certificate of knighthood conferment to Lawrence. (Photo/SIGNIS)

Papal award for local communicator

KUALA LUMPUR: Lawrence John Sinniah, previously vice-president of SIGNIS World and president of SIGNIS Asia, was honoured with the Knight of the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St Sylvester, pope and martyr.

This distinction, one of the five Orders of Knighthood directly awarded by the Pope, recognises Lawrence's dedication to social communication. The conferral took place in Bangkok through the Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication, Dr Paolo Ruffini.

Lawrence, the former director of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur's

Cahayasuara Communications Centre (2001-2013), expressed his gratitude for the knighthood, saying, "I'm truly honoured by this recognition from Pope Francis. I extend this honour to my fellow social communicators, particularly the dedicated young leaders striving for unity and progress through communication and media."

He acknowledged the invaluable guidance received from his predecessors within the international Catholic communications community. "I am particularly grateful to my predecessors in SIGNIS, who mentored me in communications through their friendship and guidance. I especially pay tribute to Sir Augustine Loorthusamy, who introduced me to the 'hidden treasures' of Catholic social teaching and communication documents over 40 years ago."

Additionally, Lawrence acknowledged the empowering role of the late Cardinal Soter Fernandez, former archbishop of KL. "I express deep gratitude to the late Cardinal Fernandez for believing in me and entrusting me with the responsibility and leadership of social communications in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur in 2001."

Reflecting on his four-decade service to the Church, Lawrence also paid a special tribute to his late mother, Pauline Joseph, crediting her for instilling in him the values of service to others.

Papal knights do not have specific obligations, but it is customary for them to be invited to participate in the major events of their diocese.

Fr Alvin Ng installed as SFX parish priest



Fr Alberto Irenus SJ and Fr Alvin Ng SJ.

PETALING JAYA: Fr Alvin Ng Sze Syn, SJ was installed as the parish priest of the Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX) by Archbishop Julian Leow, January 1, 2024.

Fr Alvin will be assisted by Fr Alberto Irenus David, SJ.

Archbishop Julian asked the parishioners to pray for Fr Alvin as he takes on this new role. "May he be a pastor to each one of you and bring the presence of God into your lives."

Fr Norris Seenivasan SJ, who ended his term as parish priest of SFX on Dec 31, 2023, will be leaving for the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California, USA, for a six-month sabbatical programme.

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Sibu Diocese reaffirms commitment to creation justice

SIBU: In a pastoral message dated January 1, Bishop Joseph Hii of the Diocese of Sibu reflected on the ongoing decade-long commitment to creation justice within the diocese from 2017 to 2026.

The bishop, who is also the Episcopal President of the Creation Justice commission, outlined the yearly focus on various aspects of environmental stewardship, key encyclicals and teachings of the Catholic Church, marking a profound shift from an ego-centric approach to an eco-Christ centred philosophy.

Each year within this ten-year span was dedicated to specific themes derived from influential papal encyclicals:

- 2017: Embracing “Creation Justice - Evangelisation n Union with Creation: Ego-Centred to Eco-Christ Centred” (*Laudato Si mi Signore*)
- 2018: Exploring “The Joy of Love – Let’s Begin from Home” (*Amoris Laetitia*)
- 2019: Encouraging “Freedom - Rejoice and Be Glad: Call to Holiness through the 8 Beatitudes” (*Gaudete et Exsultate*)
- 2020: Reflecting on “Water and Baptism - Gift to all Creation” (*Christus Vivit*)
- 2021: Focusing on “Air and Confirmation - Breath of Life in all Creation” (*Querida Amazonia*)
- 2022: Contemplating “Food and Eucharist - On Sustenance and Fraternity of all Creation” (*Fratelli Tutti*)
- 2023: Addressing “Soil and Reconciliation - Interconnectedness with all Creation” (*Evangelii Gaudium*)



Parishioners gather at the start of the Walk for Peace.

Bishop Joseph also highlighted the “Protect Our Earth, Protect our Children” National Campaign from 2020 to 2024. This multi-year initiative is aimed at addressing critical environmental concerns including reducing electricity usage, cutting down on meat, dairy, and food waste, combating plastic pollution, and minimising fuel consumption.

Echoing Pope Francis’ call for global action, Bishop Joseph emphasised the urgent need for international AI regulation to promote human fraternity, peace, justice, and equality.

Highlighting the Holy Father’s Apostolic Exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, launched last year on the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, the bishop emphasised the continued urgency of addressing the climate crisis. The theme for

the current year, “Year of Oil and Anointing — The Healing Gift of God’s Creation,” aligns with this new document and emphasises the importance of caring for the planet and its resources.

Drawing connections between biblical references to oil and its symbolic significance in sacraments within the Catholic Church, the prelate underscored the healing properties of natural resources and the need for responsible stewardship. He lamented the exploitative practices leading to environmental degradation, highlighting the recent COP 28 Summit’s failure to prioritise transitioning away from fossil fuels.

Emphasising the interconnectedness of humanity and the environment, Bishop Joseph called for a collective effort to address the climate crisis, urging individual lifestyle changes, fostering care for the poor, and advocating for environmental conservation.

The prelate also stated that in September this year, at the start of the Season of Creation, they will continue with the fifth year of the nationwide campaign, “Protect Our Earth, Protect Our Children.” The campaign’s focal point for the year revolves around the theme of “Using Less Paper and Wood,” coinciding with the commencement of the Season of Creation.

This initiative aligns with the forthcoming Jubilee 2025, themed “Pilgrims of Hope,” and the embrace of the Synodal model for Church Reformation. The bishop emphasised the importance of delving into the wisdom encapsulated in the four Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council.

Simultaneously, this year is earmarked as a

Year of Prayer, emphasising personal and collective renewal within the community.

In anticipation of the Pastoral Convention in 2026, the Malaysian Catholic Church is actively preparing, focusing on Church, Family, Society, and Ecosystem/Ecology. The convention aims to foster collective celebration, attentive listening, and unified strides.

The journey involves revisiting pivotal Church documents such as *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Amoris Laetitia*, *Fratelli Tutti*, *Laudato Si*, and *Christus Vivit*, adopted by the diocese over the past decade in the pursuit of Creation Justice.

Highlighting recent achievements, the Diocese of Sibu successfully convened the “Celebrating Our Baptism” themed pastoral assembly on November 24-25, 2023, reflecting the inspirational essence of Psalm 133 through its theme song.

Looking ahead, the Sarawak Regional Assembly is scheduled for September 18-19, 2024, providing another opportunity for communal growth and enrichment within the Church.

Additionally, the message included prayers for the sick and elderly, acknowledging their role in witnessing Christ’s life and calling for support and encouragement for caregivers.

Bishop Joseph concluded his pastoral message by urging ecological conversion and stewardship, inviting the community to journey together in unity with God and creation, guided by the Holy Spirit, and following the example of Mother Mary in spreading Christ’s message of love and care for the world.

To read the full message, go to: <https://rb.gy/bws1vb>



Parishioners picking out rubbish from the drains and streets in the vicinity of the cathedral.

Year of Oil and Anointing

SIBU: During the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God on January 1, Bishop Joseph Hii delivered a compelling message to all Catholics, imploring the faithful not to merely receive God’s blessings but to actively embody them in their actions, enriching the world around them.

In his homily, Bishop Joseph likened the blessings bestowed upon humanity to the abundant rain and snow that shower the earth, emphasising the paramount importance of sharing these blessings for the greater good rather than hoarding them.

“As children of God, we are entrusted with these blessings. It is our solemn duty to extend and proliferate them, fostering peace and harmony in our world,” stressed the bishop, addressing the congregation at the Sacred Heart Cathedral.

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, the bishop announced the inaugu-

ration of the Year of Oil and Anointing, marking the 8th year within the decade-long commitment of Creation Justice for the Diocese of Sibu (2017-2026). He shed light on the significance of this year’s focus, referring to oil historically known as “liquid gold” due to its richness and preciousness.

Elaborating on the role of oil in the Church’s Sacraments, Bishop Joseph highlighted its integral presence in Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, and the Anointing of the Sick. “The Chrism oil used in Baptism is the same sacred oil utilised in the ordination of priests and the consecration of bishops,” he emphasised, urging the congregation to acknowledge their own anointment with this revered oil.

Drawing parallels from biblical references where oil symbolised the anointing of kings and leaders, Bishop Joseph em-



Rt Rev Joseph Hii of Sibu (centre) launching the Year of Oil and Anointing on World Day of Peace, January 1, 2024. (Photo/Sibu Soccom)

phasised the inherent dignity carried by every child of God.

The culminating events of the Mass included a ‘Walk for Peace’ and plogging

activities, spanning various streets such as Jalan Tong Sang, Jalan Wong King Huo, and Jalan Aman, and concluding back at the cathedral. — **By James Lau**

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity January 18--25, 2024

You shall love the Lord your God ...and your neighbour as yourself...

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) takes place each year from January 18 to 25. This special week provides an opportunity to focus our prayers on Christian unity, as well as speak about and experience Christian unity personally, in our village, town or city, as well as engage with what happens at a national level.

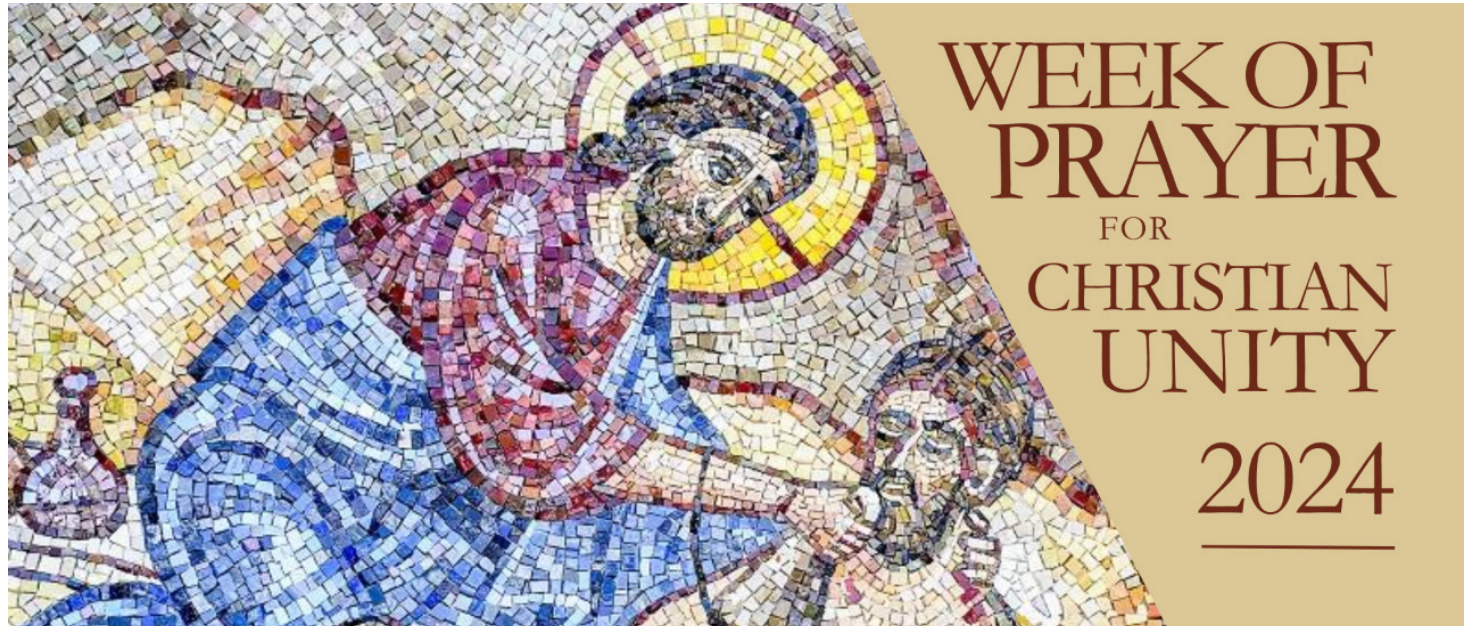
Each year, ecumenical partners in a different region are asked to prepare the materials.

With roots going back over 100 years, the dedicated octave of prayers has been jointly commissioned and prepared since 1966, after the Second Vatican Council, by the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC.

The theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2024, 'You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbour as yourself' (Lk 10:27), was selected by the Pontifical Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, the World Council of Churches, and the Christian Churches in Burkina Faso, coordinated by the community of Chemin Neuf (CCN), a French Catholic and ecumenical community of vowed and lay people and its local community in Burkina Faso.

The ecumenical team from Burkina Faso, reflected on the familiar story of the Good Samaritan, and all are encouraged to Go and Do likewise.

The theme, taken from the first chapter of the *Gospel of Luke*, reflects the connection between love of God and love of neighbour with a particular concern for challenging the boundaries of who is considered "neighbour". In this pericope, Jesus is questioned



as to the path to eternal life. His answer is not to only observe the commandments, but to also imitate the love of God in the giving of self for another. It is a call for charity, mercy, justice, and unity.

The reflections explore how we find our common identity in the experience of God's love. The specific context of Burkina Faso reflects the need to place love at the centre of the quest for peace and reconciliation.

The introduction to the materials notes that this quest has often been undermined by the loss of values and of a shared sense of humanity and by a diminished concern for the common good, probity, integrity, and patriotism. "The search for reconcili-

ation has also been weakened by spiritual impoverishment and by the pursuit of easy gains," reads the introduction. "Faced with these realities, the imperative to witness to the love of God is all the more pressing."

The introduction also notes that Christian communities in Burkina Faso try to live the call to love through mutual hospitality.

"We have been invited to live the divine call to love God and our neighbour as ourselves," reads one prayer of intercession. "As we renew our commitment to this call, may this love strengthen our unity as Christians."

Each January, individuals pray and churches and ecumenical organisations

celebrate the WPCU in a variety of ways. These include events large and small, a simple prayer meeting, an ecumenical breakfast, a prayer walk, speaker events, online prayer relays, preaching swaps in villages and towns, using social media to share online reflections and prayers from church leaders as well as joint services bringing together Christians from across the traditions in prayer and worship.

The resources include an ecumenical opening prayer service, biblical reflections and prayers for eight days, and other elements of worship and is available in several languages.

Please go to <https://rb.gy/gnrg19>



DIocese OF PENANG

PKK/BDN/2024/01/174

Notifications and Updates

My Dear People of God in Perak, Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Penang, I wish you warm fraternal greetings on this Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. With HOPE, PEACE, JOY and LOVE, I assure you of my prayers and blessings for the New Year of the Lord 2024.

As the Church in Peninsular Malaysia journeys towards the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026, She constantly discerns her vocation and mission in the light of the existing realities in relation to the FAMILY, CHURCH, ECOLOGY and SOCIETY.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, let us walk towards becoming a more synodal Church as we journey together in Celebrating, Listening, and Walking Together in a Spirit of Communion, Participation and Mission, encouraged by the Unity of the Gift of Diversity in the Church. Mary, Mother of God, pray for us and teach us to be obedient to the Holy Spirit.

1. 2024 candidates to the Seminary and the Permanent Diaconate from the Diocese of Penang

I am pleased to share with you updates on the new and existing seminarians and candidates to the permanent diaconate. Let us continue to lift them up in prayer as we pray for more vocations in the vineyard of the Lord:

- Dennis Raj Rasu, Jan 2024-Jan 2025 (Church of the Holy Rosary, Kuala Lumpur)
- Leon James Gautier, 1st Year Theology (St Peter's College, Kuching)
- Mark Edward Calady Muniandy, 1st Year Theology (St Peter's College, Kuching)
- Melvin Dawson Michael Dass, 2nd Year Theology (St Peter's College, Kuching)
- Ron Fernandez Sandanasamy, 2nd Year Theology (St Peter's College, Kuching)
- Patrick Hillary Sandnasamy, 3rd Year Theology (St Peter's College, Kuching)
- Ashley Stephen Chau, 3rd Year Theology (St Peter's College, Kuching)
- Clement Lee Swee Meng, Initiation Year & Beda College (College General Major Seminary, Penang)
- Vincent Yip Kar Chun, Initiation Year (College General Major Seminary, Penang)
- Daniel Anthony Isak, Initiation Year (College General Major Seminary, Penang)
- Raphael Marian Maria Joseph Candidate for Permanent Diaconate
- Isaac Alfred Simbun Candidate for Permanent Diaconate
- Anthony Michael Candidate for Permanent Diaconate

2. Fr Joachim Robert attends Renewal Programme for Missionaries (RPM) 2024

Fr Joachim Robert will be attending the Renewal Programme for Missionaries (RPM) 2024 under the Faculty of Missiology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He will be away from the Diocese of Penang from early February 2024 until the end of July 2024. Deacon Andrew Loh will be the administrator of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang in the interim.

3. Kempen Kasih Lenten cheque presentation to parishes and updates by social mission organisations in the Diocese of Penang

In conjunction with the 2024 Lenten Campaign, Caritas Penang will be giving RM5,000 to all parishes in Penang Diocese for their Kempen Kasih Lenten initiatives on Saturday, January 20, at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang. I will be launching the 2024 Lenten theme and presenting a mock cheque, followed by updates by the various Social Mission organisations in the Penang Diocese on their plans for 2024 starting from 2.30pm to 4.30pm.

4. Priestly Ordination of Deacon George Vaithynathan

Deacon George Vaithynathan from the

Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Silibin, Ipoh will be called to the Order of the Presbyterate and ordained diocesan priest on February 2 at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Silibin, Ipoh together with the Celebration of the World Day of Consecrated Life

5. Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Theme & Focus for 2024

Once again the Liturgical Celebrations for 2024 along with the overall theme and monthly focus for the year has been compiled for your easy reference. Go to this link for more: <https://rb.gy/8pfygh>

6. The Year of Prayer 2024

In preparation for the 2025 Jubilee Year 'Pilgrims of Hope', 2024 has been designated a Year of Prayer by Pope Francis. It started in Advent. I pray that each one of us may reflect on our life of prayer, guided by the Holy Spirit. There is a particular focus on the Our Father, and this presents us with a great opportunity to go back to the basics of prayer. Let us make every effort possible to consciously live a life of prayer at every present moment.

Sebastian Francis

Cardinal Sebastian Francis
Bishop of Penang

Korean bishops highlight priorities for 2024

SEOUL: This year, the Korean Catholic Church is amplifying its focus on key priorities: ecology, poverty alleviation, and spiritual enrichment.

The pastoral messages from Korean dioceses emphasised the Church's role in reflecting Gospel values with an aim to restoring religious life that was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acknowledging a 70 per cent recovery from pandemic setbacks, Bishop Augustine Kim Jong-soo of Daejeon notes the need for further strides. He urges parishioners to engage in personal encounters fostering faith, recognising shifts in parish dynamics pre and post-pandemic.

Archbishop Simon Ok Hyun-jin of Gwangju addresses the exodus from churches during the pandemic, highlighting the necessity to revisit the Gospel's essence: solidarity and support for the impoverished.

The forthcoming *Korean Catholic Church COVID-19 Pandemic Pastoral White Paper*, to be published by the bishops' Catholic Pastoral Research Institute, will systematically analyse pandemic impacts and propose pastoral strategies.

Archbishop Thaddaeus Cho Hwan-kil of Daegu emphasises the essence of synodality, urging Korean Catholics to embody the spirit of 'walking together' as outlined in the Synod on Synodality.

Bishop John Baptist Jung Shin-chul of Incheon declares 2025 as the 'Pilgrimage of Hope,' striving for a deeper faith practice aligned with the Synod's directions.

Bishop John Kim Son-tae of Jeonju prioritises rejuvenating faith and re-evangelising families, focusing on fostering loving and devoted family units.

Fr Paul Shin Eun-keun, ap-

ostolic administrator of Masan diocese, echoes this sentiment, proposing 'Family Sundays' for joint participation in Mass and Gospel readings.

Bishop Basil Cho Kyu-man of Wonju designates 2024 as the 'Year of Mercy,' aligning with Pope Francis' call for reflection on God's mercy.

Ecological and environmental preservation takes centre stage for Bishop John Chrysostom Kwon Hyeok-ju of Andong, advocating for the Church's integrated ecological repentance.

Bishop Matthias Ri Iong-hoo of Suwon stresses the need for a shift to a life-centred approach, abandoning growth-centric values for sustainable living.

Ahead of World Youth Day in 2027, Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taick of Seoul focuses on empowering youth as future Church and societal leaders.

Bishop Peter Lee Ki-heon of



South Korean children participate in a Church-sponsored climate march in the capital Seoul on September 23, 2023. (UCA News Photo/Catholic Times)

Uijeongbu urges adherence to Jesus' teachings and Catholic social doctrine to foster love for neighbours and global peace.

Bishop Pius Moon Chang-woo of Jeju emphasises collective efforts in building a society where human rights are unconditionally

safeguarded.

Bishop Simon Kim Jong-gang of Cheongju encourages prayers for the canonisation of Catholic heroes, like Fr Choi Yang-eop, who served and sacrificed for persecuted Catholics. — ucanews.com

Calcutta Archdiocese gives new look to Jubilee Holy Door

CALCUTTA, India: In view of the worldwide Catholic Church's celebration of the Jubilee Year 2025, the Archdiocese of Calcutta recently unveiled its new-look Jubilee Holy Door.

Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal state, joined Archbishop Thomas D'Souza of Calcutta at the inauguration of the Holy Door at the Cathedral of the Most Holy Rosary during a ceremony on Christmas Eve, December 24.

After unveiling the Christmas crib and offering floral tribute to Baby Jesus, Archbishop D'Souza and Chief Minister Banerjee cut the ribbon to inaugurate the Holy Door.

The 3.7 metre by 2.5-metre main door of the cathedral now has a bronze-finish cladding on the theme of the Annunciation. The artwork depicting the announcement by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive a son, Jesus, by the power of the Holy



Inauguration of the Holy Door.

Spirit, has been conceptualized and executed by a young student, Parthabrata Ganguly, of Church Art, a local-based creative firm that specialises in creating sacred art in compliance with the Church laws and tradition.

"In times marked by conflicts

and violence, the significance of a Jubilee Year Holy Door takes on an even more profound meaning. It stands as a symbol of hope, reconciliation, mercy, and peace amidst turmoil," said Cathedral Vicar Fr Franklin Menezes. — **By Robin Gomes, Vatican News**



Holy Door of the Archdiocese of Kolkata.

Scholarship opportunity to promote Social Doctrine of Catholic Church

VATICAN: The Centesimus Annus - Pro Pontifice Foundation (FCAPP) has announced two distinct initiatives, aimed at promoting and recognising contributions to the understanding and application of the Catholic Church's Social Doctrine in contemporary economic and social realms.

a. Scholarship Programme - Fourth Edition, 2024

In its fourth edition for the year 2024, FCAPP unveils a scholarship programme designed to support young researchers. Two scholarships, valued at 10,000 and 20,000 euro (RM50,849.10 and RM101,698.20), will be awarded annually to promising individuals below the age of 35. The objective is to aid their pursuit of advanced specialisation or research courses at universities or higher educa-

tion institutions. These courses should delve into innovative socio-economic development models, aligning with the principles of the Church's Social Doctrine — models that are inclusive, supportive, and sustainable.

Eligible candidates must possess a master's degree obtained between August 1, 2017, and December 31, 2023. Academic excellence will significantly factor into the evaluation process.

Applications, must be submitted along with a brief three-page project presentation, endorsed by a supervising professor. Projects in specified languages and with a minimum duration of one academic year will be considered.

b. Publication Prize - Seventh Edition, 2025 Simultaneously, FCAPP announces its sev-

enth edition for the year 2025, introducing a 20,000-euro (RM101,698.20) biennial prize for outstanding publications in the economic and social spheres. This award aims to commend works published after 2019, showcasing an original contribution toward explaining, developing, or applying the Church's Social Doctrine in contemporary contexts. The winning publications should exhibit rigor, notable quality, and a profound Christian commitment to economic and social activities. Entries in French, English, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, German and Polish, will be assessed, with the prize potentially divided among multiple winners.

Applications for both editions, along with the specified documents, are to be submitted by May 22, 2024, to:

Centesimus Annus - Pro Pontifice Foundation
International Award Secretariat
Cortile San Damaso, 00120 Vatican City
or via email: centannus.award@foundation.va.

Both initiatives align with FCAPP's dedication to fostering a deeper understanding and practical application of the Catholic Church's Social Doctrine in modern society. These awards stand as a testament to the Foundation's commitment to nurturing scholarly pursuits and impactful contributions in the realms of economics and societal development.

For more information, interested candidates can visit the FCAPP website at: <https://rb.gy/dbol47>

Bringing lapsed Catholics back into the fold

WASHINGTON: A thirty-second video aims to make a powerful statement. It features footage of the Vatican, the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio (Brazil), and scenes of sacraments unfolding rapidly against the backdrop of epic music.

"For two thousand years, we have helped the poor, started hospitals, blessed marriages, and educated generations of children, guided by the Holy Spirit," says a man's voice. "If you have been away from the Catholic Church, we invite you to take another look... Ours is one family, united in Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. We are Catholics, welcome home."

This spot is an "evangomercial" — an advertisement with evangelistic intent — one of the many products produced by *Catholics Come Home* (CCH), an organisation dedicated to encouraging "inactive" Catholics (those who do not attend Mass regularly, or not at all) to "return home."

In its 15 years of existence, the service, targeting dioceses, has expanded. It now has a website in multiple languages, including French, Mandarin, and Tagalog-Filipino.

"Our platforms and advertisements have been rigorously tested by top Hollywood experts," boasts CCH founder, Tom Peterson, an American layman with a background in advertising.

Some 17 per cent of the 66 million Catholics in the United States attended church each



Sunday in 2022, and 36 per cent attended at least once a month, according to statistics from the Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), which is affiliated with Georgetown University.

Peterson estimates that 100,000 baptised members leave the Church each year, with "over 50 million Catholics not attending Mass regularly."

The reasons that people leave the Church are diverse and more or less firm, including the clergy sex abuse scandals, distancing due to COVID-19, marrying outside of Catholic circles, busy schedules, racism, and political polarisation within the clergy.

Sally Mews, a woman from Wisconsin, was one of those disillusioned by the Church.

Coming from a difficult background (she had a mother with mental disabilities and a father who was "violent"), she recalls that her classmates and teachers at a Catholic school used to mock her because she couldn't attend Mass every Sunday.

As an adult, she reconnected with the Church and decided to launch "Catholics Returning Home," a ministry to bring Catholics back to practice in participating dioceses. Her method involves a six-week programme of discussions in small groups on topics such as "changes since Vatican II," experiences of returning to the Church, and Mass. It is aimed at people who feel the desire to return.

"Most have experienced a life change, positive or negative, such as a birth, marriage, a

significant career choice, a tragedy," Mews notes.

She believes her "non-threatening" format contrasts with the "guilt-inducing" discourse she observed in some parishes. "These Catholics want to be able to come back without feeling guilty!" she says.

Frank DeSiano, a Paulist priest, runs "Awakening Faith," another group conversation programme for Catholics who have become "indifferent" to the Church. He would like to see more action from the dioceses.

"Priests do not have enough resources to do this work. Their priority is to prevent the departure of ageing members from their parishes," he says.

"Additionally, they often have to divide their time among different churches. They don't know how to reach out to these Catholics on the fringes of faith. I am often asked: how do we invite them? It's not hard. We all know them!" he insists.

Catholics Come Home claims 500,000 people have returned since 2008.

While some bishops have launched initiatives to facilitate these returns (billboards, extended confession hours, door-to-door operations), Peterson asserts that simple gestures, such as inviting an "inactive" individual to attend Mass, are the most effective.

His bottom line? "Most of those who return do so because they were invited." — *LCI* (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

Priest excommunicated for slandering Pope during Mass

ROME: An Italian Catholic priest has been excommunicated for having publicly committed "an act of a schismatic nature" while celebrating Mass at his parish near Livorno.

The priest, Fr Ramon Guidetti, dedicated his homily December 31, 2023 to marking the anniversary of the death of Pope Benedict XVI, whom he named as being "the true pope" who "never fled the barque of Peter."

In his 20-minute homily, the 48-year-old priest detailed the qualities of "real priests" and cardinals versus those who side with "Bergoglio [Pope Francis] and his mercenaries." He said the See of Peter is occupied by a "masonic Jesuit tied to a group of globalists, an antipope usurper."

Bishop Simone Giusti of Livorno issued the decree declaring the priest's excommunication January 1 and posted it on the diocese's website.

The bishop declared that Guidetti had incurred automatic excommunication, according to canon 1364.1 of the Code of Canon Law, dealing with offences against the faith and the unity of the church.

The diocesan priest, who had been at the parish of St Ranieri in the town of Guasticce since 2017, had "publicly committed an act of schismatic nature, refusing submission to the Supreme Pontiff and communion with the members of the church subject to him," the communicate said.

The priest, it said, was henceforth suspended "a divinis" and removed from his office at the parish. The censure means he cannot exercise any priestly functions.

The communicate warned all priests and lay faithful to not take part in any celebrations or forms of worship with Guidetti as they, too, would incur automatic excommunication. — **By Carol Glatz, NCR**

Archbishop warns against negative effects of AI

SUVA, Fiji: The Catholic Church in Fiji has called on Fijians to be mindful of the potentially negative effects of artificial intelligence.

Archbishop Peter Loy Chong's words came in his New Year's Message, where he said human dignity and peace are paramount for everyone.

Artificial intelligence (AI) went mainstream in 2023 — it was a long time coming yet has a long way to go for the technology to match people's science fiction fantasies of human-like machines.

Catalysing a year of AI fanfare was ChatGPT. The chatbot gave the world a glimpse of recent advances in computer science even if not everyone figured out quite how it works or what to do with it.

AI large language models behind technology such as ChatGPT work by repeatedly guessing the next word in a sentence after having "learned" the patterns of a huge trove of human-written works. They often get facts wrong. But the outputs appeared so natural that it sparked curiosity about the next AI advances and its potential use for trickery and deception.

Chong said he believes there is a need for families to establish guidelines in their homes to allow for human relations.

"If we are passive recipients of artificial intelligence, then we are losing the creativity that God has implanted in us, and that is not good for humanity," the Fijian archbishop said.



"So the Pope alerts us to be awake and to teach our children how to use artificial intelligence properly in the digital world and social media," he continued.

In the middle of December 2023, Pope Francis called for an international treaty to ensure artificial intelligence is developed and used ethically, arguing that the risks of technology lacking human values of compassion, mercy, morality and forgiveness are too great.

Francis acknowledged the promise AI offers and praised technological advances as a manifestation of the creativity of human intelligence, echoing the message the Vatican delivered at this year's UN General Assembly where a host of world leaders raised the promise and perils of the technology.

But his new peace message went further and emphasized the grave, existential concerns that have been raised by ethicists and human rights advocates about the technology that promises to transform everyday life in ways that can disrupt everything from democratic elections to art.

The Fijian archbishop said the use of AI is something that Fiji should seriously reflect upon in the new year.

"Like Mary pondering and reflecting on everything that is happening in the world, whatever gift that God gives to us, whether it is technology or artificial intelligence, we will make sure that we use them to promote human dignity and peace," said the prelate. — **Cruz**

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A new year, a renewed Indian Church?

Will Pope Francis' vision of a new kind of Church, a synodal pilgrim assembly, take deeper root in the country?

As a schoolboy many decades ago, I had often to answer the following true or false question in my examinations: "India is a rich country with poor people."

Today, wiser with hindsight, I would rephrase the question: "India is a rich government with poor people." And I would apply this dichotomy to the Indian Church as well — a rich and influential institution, with mostly poor Catholics.

Are there then two Churches in India? A rich Church and a Church of the poor? An important but difficult question.

Let me illustrate it through a conversation I had a few years ago with a foreign missionary.

When she came to India some 40 years ago to work as a missionary, my friend was sent to teach in a school in a small city in Gujarat, in western India.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (centre) seen with Christian leaders, including Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai (left) and Delhi Archbishop Anil Couto (right) during a Christmas gathering at his residence in New Delhi on Dec 25, 2023. (UCA News Photo/narendramodi.in)

The school was filled with children of the rich and the middle class, largely Gujarati business people, mainly Hindu and Muslim, who valued the English education they received. None of these students became Chris-

tian, though they kept close personal bonds with their Christian teachers and often gave them expensive personal gifts.

This was during the early 1970s, a critical time in the history of the Catholic Church.

There were many, especially in Latin America, who were speaking of "the option for the poor," blending this idea with another which came out of Vatican II, the Church as "a pilgrim people" and "faith as a process of self-discovery." The echo of these changes was heard across the world, even in India.

Inspired by these new values, my friend left the school for the well-to-do and volunteered to live and work with the poorest of India's poor, among the Bhil tribal women in north Gujarat.

She recalled words of the Gospel: "The good news is preached to the poor," as a sign of God's reign on earth. She left the comfortable and secure lifestyle of a convent school and inserted herself among tribal farmers, whose lives were a mixture of ignorance, prejudice, oppression and poverty.

Not many of these tribal women were Christian; most worshiped nature in its myriad forms, and her work with them was quite unstructured. To serve them she had to become like them herself — poor and vulnerable.

The Church in India is known for its educational and welfare institutions, and these are neither poor nor vulnerable. In fact, the Church in India has made a conscious option for service, the service of all, irrespective of caste or creed.

Considering that the tiny minority of Christians — who form less than 3 per cent of India's 1.2 billion people — run the largest network of schools, hospitals and social work centres that are second only to the government network, this is a contribution indeed. So, this is certainly a positive thing, though there are also other misgivings.

A sense of stewardship

One may ask: how does the Church in India run so many welfare institutions when its own community of Christians is not rich and philanthropic?

It has done this largely through the donations of Christians from Western countries, from Europe and America.

Foreign missionaries have raised funds from their own countries, and it is these funds that have built the churches, schools, colleges, hospitals and orphanages, and supported the numerous projects that have sustained the poor in times

of calamity and disaster.

In recent times, major funding agencies have helped to alleviate poverty, dispel illness and promote health and well-being.

But it must never be forgotten that the older Christian institutions were all put up through the collective contributions of ordinary middle-class Catholics in Western countries, whose sacrifices "for the missions" over the centuries have built the foundations of the Church in India.

Such money, available in large amounts,

has not always been a good thing for Church personnel.

It has tended to breed both arrogance and irresponsibility among those who handled it. The Gospel parable of the "talents" demands that we use our gifts with a sense of stewardship, or trusteeship. But this has not always been the case.

And when systems of accountability are poor and non-existent, it's even worse. Have you ever heard of a (Indian) priest or bishop on trial for misappropriation of funds? But there are many, sadly, involved in property scandals, which then have to be hushed up.

To speak out on behalf of the poor

Service is important, but prophecy is vital too. This is a forgotten aspect of the Church's mission, "to speak truth to power."

By prophecy, I do not mean foretelling the future, but judging the present with the eyes of God.

The Church — and by this, I mean the hierarchy, its government — has the moral duty to speak out on behalf of the poor and

the oppressed, and not just for Catholics, but wherever poverty and oppression are to be found.

That this is hardly done is surely an indication that the hierarchy has never suffered the oppression and inconveniences of ordinary men and women, and so cannot "put themselves into their slippers."

Take an example that happened about two

weeks ago.

Several important bishops and Church officials were invited to the prime minister's residence in New Delhi to celebrate Christmas with him. The event was a happy occasion marked by fulsome tributes to the leadership of the PM and his qualities and the contribution of Christian institutions to the nation.

Was this all? Not a word was said about the daily harassment of poor Christians in most regions of north India, or their persecution at the hands of government bodies and "non-state actors," of the terror inflicted on Christian Kukis in Manipur with government collusion, of the deprivation of benefits to Christian Dalits for 70 years of Independence... the list can go on and on.

Is this how Christians are appreciated for their service to the nation?

To those who protest that Christmas is not an appropriate time to make such protests, let such be informed that the minions of the party in power have lost no time in presenting 'doctored' versions of the Christmas event, displaying the complete subservience of the Christian hierarchy to the Indian state.



Kuki Christian children whose refugee families fled sectarian violence in India's northeastern state of Manipur. (CNA photo/Anto Akkara)

The public face of the Church

Individually and in groups, most Catholics are from poor and lower-middle-class backgrounds.

Occupation-wise, they are employed by others to work — as farmers if they belong to the rural poor; or as industrial workers, domestics, teachers, and nurses if with the urban poor. Not many Christians are in business, though this is slowly changing. Fewer still are in the bureaucracy or politics.

In fact, the public face of the Church is not

prominent laymen, but just the hierarchy — in sharp contrast to the image of other communities.

It bears adding that there exist many Indian Christian communities, for the Church is not a homogeneous group, and changes its face from place to place in India.

It is more powerful in the south, more fragmented in the north; but in recent years it has been under quiet threat from militant Hinduism almost everywhere.

But it is true that in India, like in the rest of the Catholic world, priests and bishops exert a power far beyond their numerical strength, or even their professional expertise.

In India, this has not given rise to anticlericalism as it has in Western countries, for Indians (Catholics as well as those of other faiths) are traditionally an obedient lot.

They respect their religious leaders, even when these are shown to be incompetent and less than adequate. Will this continue?

Synodal leadership



(UCA News photo)

What is true though, is that the Church is changing. Women are demanding a greater role in Church governance. Again, as numbers go, it's Asia, Africa and South America that largely outweigh the European Church of the last millennium.

All this has not been lost on the present pontiff, Pope Francis, the first representative of the Global South.

Quietly but with great determination, he has promoted a new way of governance in the Church — "synodality" — in which everyone, bishops, priests, sisters, men and women, young and old, take their rightful place in the Church under the guidance of the Spirit.

This has brought him into conflict with the older hierarchical leadership, largely Western. They falsely accuse him of schism.

Will Francis' vision of a new kind of Church, a synodal pilgrim assembly, take deeper root in India, hitherto so enmeshed in caste and tribal rivalries, so timid and fearful in its leadership?

Time alone will tell. But this is our fervent prayer for the new year. — **By Fr Myron J. Pereira, SJ, ucanews.com**

Pope Francis in 2024

The synod, health concerns, the China deal and more

Pope Francis is looking ahead to the Jubilee Year 2025 as “a pilgrim of hope”. In his Christmas Day “Urbi et Orbi” message (an annual address “to the city of Rome and the world”) he mentioned the jubilee and expressed the hope that 2024 would be “a time of preparation for the Holy Year” and “an opportunity for the conversion of hearts, for the rejection of war and the embrace of peace, and for joyfully responding to the Lord’s call.”

He again spoke about the jubilee at the end-of-year vespers in St Peter’s Basilica on December 31, which suggests that it could serve as his lodestar for this new year. Although Francis is now 87 years old and one of the oldest popes in history to lead the Catholic Church, a glance at his agenda for 2024 reveals that he has no intention of slowing down or reducing his engagements. On the contrary, he has confided to friends that “the closer one is to the finishing line, the faster one must go.” As for resignation, he said in a recent interview that he had not considered the idea.

The Pope’s health

Francis continues to have mobility problems due to medical issues with his right knee and hip, but unlike last year, he is now able to walk short distances. He is in good health for a man of his age, according to Dr Sergio Alfieri, the surgeon who operated on him at Rome’s Gemelli hospital in July 2021 and June 2023. Speaking of the Pope’s heart, lungs and abdomen, the doctor confidently told the press after the June operation, “He does not have infirmities.”

Dr. Alfieri added that the Pope’s mental faculties are those “of a man of 60.” Several persons who met Francis after his end-of-November bout of bronchitis and in recent weeks told *America* that the Pope is in good form again. Therefore, barring accidents or downturns, he seems set for a full year of activity.

Opening the new year

The first Latin American Pope opened the new year by presiding at Mass in St Peter’s Basilica for the World Day of Peace on Jan 1, the feast of Mary, Mother of God, in the presence of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See and a congregation of 7,000 people from around the world. He had already published his Message for the World Day of Peace, in which he focused on the important subject of “Artificial Intelligence and Peace.”

Argentina’s first female saint

On Feb 11, Francis will canonise Argentina’s first woman saint, María Antonia de Paz y Figueroa, popularly known as “Mama Antula” and considered “the mother of the nation.” Born in Santiago del Estero in northern Argentina in 1730, she met and began working with the Jesuits at an early age. After the order’s expulsion from Spain and its colonies in the Americas in 1767, she kept Ignatian spirituality alive throughout the country, walking 3,000 miles until she reached Buenos Aires, where she founded charity programmes for women and children and a house of

spiritual exercises before she died in 1799. She also promoted the idea of an independent Argentina, which came about in 1816.

“Mama Antula is considered the mother of the nation,” the Argentine bishop Santiago Olivera, who is responsible for her cause, told *OSV News*. “She was a strong, brave woman who believed in Argentina. She was committed to the country, and believed that knowing Christ would transform society.”

Some think Argentina’s new president, Javier Milei, could attend the canonisation ceremony in Rome and have his first meeting with Pope Francis. They spoke by phone soon after he took office, and the president then formally invited Francis to visit his homeland.

Foreign travel

Francis has already visited 61 countries on 44 journeys outside Italy since becoming pope. In interviews with *Telam*, an Argentine news agency, on Oct 16 and Mexico’s *N+* television on Dec 12, he said he intends to continue his foreign travels in 2024 and revealed his desire to visit Belgium, Argentina and Papua New Guinea.

He intends to go to Belgium, a country he visited as a Jesuit provincial, for the 600th anniversary of the Catholic University of Louvain. While the Vatican has not yet announced the date, an informed source told *America* it could be at the end of July.

America has also learned that plans are also underway for a 10-day visit at the end of August to four countries in Asia — Indonesia, Singapore, Timor Leste and the aforementioned Papua New Guinea. Francis had planned his trip to Asia in 2020 but had to postpone it due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Timor Leste is the most Catholic country in Asia — 97 per cent of its 1.4 million population is Catholic — while 26 per cent of Papua New Guinea’s population of 10 million is Catholic. Francis has long wanted to visit both of these countries on the world’s periphery. Indonesia, on the other hand, is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, and Singapore has been pressing hard for a visit.

It had been expected that Francis would finally visit Argentina, his homeland, this year, but the complicated economic and political situation in the country un-

der the new president has called that trip into question.

There is also the possibility that Francis could visit Vietnam this year, as relations between the Holy See and Vietnam have made significant progress. For the first time since the end of the Vietnam War, the Vietnamese government last year allowed the Holy See to open an office and have a resident representative in the country. Vietnam’s president visited the Pope last July and in December announced that he had sent a formal letter inviting Pope Francis to visit the country.

Sources say Francis would like to take the president up on the invitation, but the Vatican would prefer the papal visit to take place after the establishment of full diplomatic relations. A senior Vatican source said to *America* that diplomatic relations could happen quickly if the Vietnamese government so desires, as happened with Myanmar, where such relations were established months before Francis visited that country.

French President Emmanuel Macron has invited Francis to come to Paris for the reopening of the famous Notre-Dame Cathedral on Dec 8, 2024, but the Pope has not yet given any indication that he will take up this invitation.

Relations with China

An important question that Francis has to decide on by October 2024 relates to the Sino-Vatican provisional agreement that was signed in Beijing on Sept 22, 2018, regarding the nomination of bishops in mainland China. The Holy See and China renewed this agreement in 2020 and 2022. This year, the two sides will have to decide whether to renew the agreement for another two years, to make it permanent or to introduce changes to it.

The Synod on Synodality

In what will be a culminating moment of his 10-year effort to reform and lead the Catholic Church and its 1.3 billion members on to a new missionary path, Pope Francis will preside over the second and final session of the Synod on Synodality in October 2024. While the first session in October 2023 lasted almost four weeks, some in Rome expect this second session to be shorter, al-

though a decision has not yet been made on the length of the synod.

Vatican nominations and new bishops

Over the next 12 months, Francis is expected to make several important personnel changes in the Roman Curia and in dioceses worldwide, including in the United States. Changes at the senior levels of the Roman Curia include the appointments of the major penitentiary to succeed the Italian Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, who turns 80 on Sept 15, and of a new prefect for the Dicastery for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life to replace the Brazilian Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, who will turn 77 on April 24. The Brazilian will likely be succeeded by the Spanish Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime, SDB, the current superior general of the Salesian order. Changes are also expected at some mid-level positions in the curia, including in the Commission for the Protection of Minors.

Francis will also appoint bishops to many dioceses worldwide, including to some important archdioceses, including Boston, where Cardinal Seán O’Malley turns 80 on June 29, and Bombay (Mumbai), India, where Cardinal Oswald Gracias reaches the age of 80 on Dec 24. Both have been members of the Pope’s Council of Cardinal Advisors since he established that body soon after his election. He is expected to appoint two new cardinals to the nine-member council.

The Jesuit pope will also appoint nuncios — his ambassadors — to the Holy See’s diplomatic missions in at least 10 countries in the coming year.

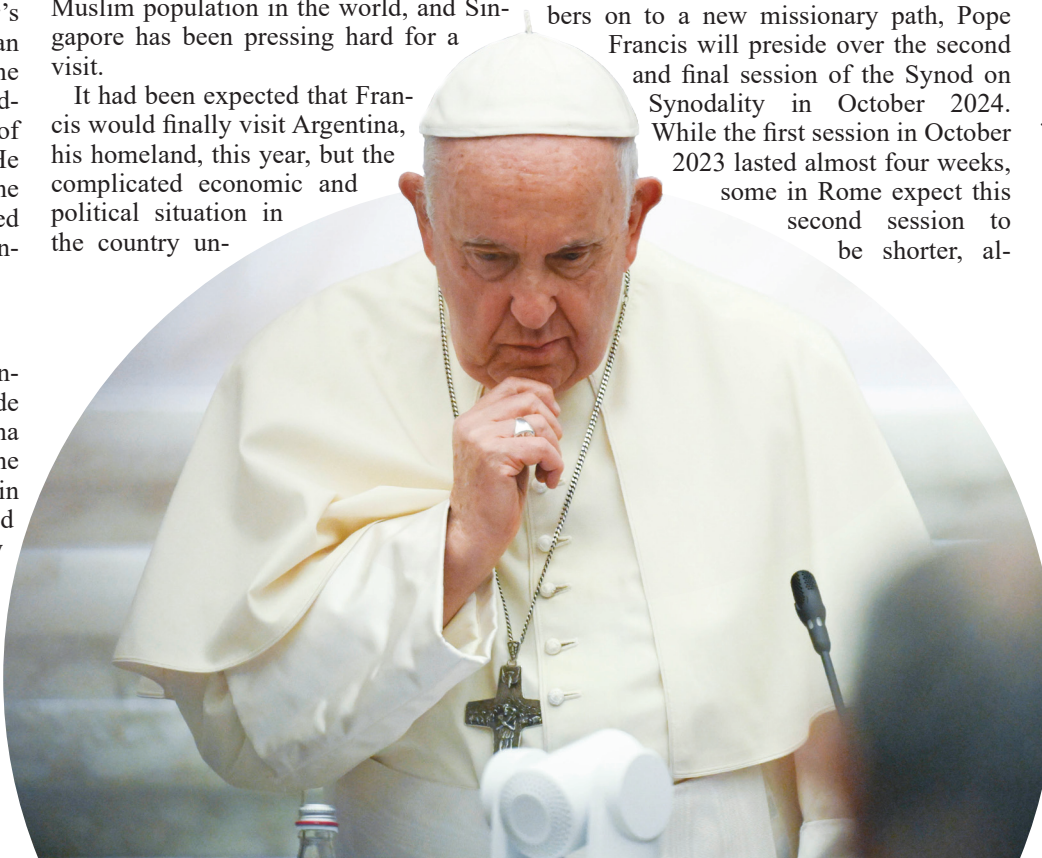
Another consistory

Francis has held consistories to make new cardinals almost every year since his election, and he could decide to hold his 10th consistory before the end of 2024, perhaps around the time of the October synod or for the opening of the Jubilee Year. The total number of cardinals under the age of 80 with a right to vote in a conclave to elect the next pope will have decreased to at least 119 by December 2024, which is just below the ceiling of 120 established by Pope Paul VI for a conclave. Since 13 electors will reach the age of 80 in 2025, the Pope could create that number of electors, or more, if he so wishes this year.

The Jubilee Year

Francis is expected to initiate the Jubilee Year 2025 just before Christmas by opening the Holy Door of St Peter’s Basilica in a rite that dates back to the year 1500. The exact date for the opening has yet to be announced. It will be his second jubilee; the first was the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, which he opened in Bangui, the capital of the war-torn Central African Republic, on Nov 29, 2015. Vatican organisers for Jubilee 2025 expect it to attract around 30 million pilgrims to the eternal city to participate in the event, and much work is being done in the city of Rome in preparation for their arrival.

— By Gerard O’Connell, *America*



Forming Catholics as 'Digital Missionaries'

The word "missionary" can conjure up in the Catholic mind a vision of saintly figures travelling to distant lands and enduring heroic hardships to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

Nowadays, however, the mission field is just as likely to be found in cyberspace — a fact recognised by the Synod on Synodality, which concluded its first session in Rome and is set to resume in October 2024.

"Digital culture," said the synod's synthesis report from October 28, 2023 "represents a fundamental change in the way we conceive reality and consequently relate to ourselves, one another, our surroundings, and even to God. ... Missionaries have always

gone with Christ to new frontiers, while the Holy Spirit pushed and preceded them. It is up to us to reach today's culture in all spaces where people seek meaning and love, including the spaces they enter through their cell phones and tablets."

"We need to provide opportunities for recognising, forming, and accompanying those already working as digital missionaries, while also facilitating networking amongst them," the synod's report added.

Statista reports, "As of October 2023, there were 5.3 billion internet users worldwide, which amounted to 65.7 per cent of the global population. Of this total, 4.95 billion, or 61.4 per cent of the world's population, were social media users."

OSV News spoke with three "digital missionaries" to hear their thoughts about forming disciples of Jesus into missionaries for online evangelisation.

"In several dioceses there are already institutes for lay formation," said Fr Iván Montelongo, judicial vicar and vocations director for the Diocese of El Paso, Texas. "I know that we have one here in my diocese. It would be a great thing in those institutions to start offering courses — curriculum guided toward that; toward learning about the internet, perhaps the nature of communications and about the Gospel."

Fr Montelongo, who regularly posts on X (formerly Twitter), attended the Synod on Synodality in Rome, and will return in 2024. One of six non-bishop voting delegates from the US chosen to represent North America, he's also the synod coordinator for his diocese.

While formation classes could equip

Catholics to evangelise digital spaces, Fr Montelongo advised a community bond is also essential.

"The connection to a church is important, too," he added. "We can learn a lot of things online; take a course; I'm sure there's great resources out there. But it should be a community that sends us, too — and we should come back to that community. I think that is necessary in order to form missionaries."

Community roots and reinforcement gain even greater importance considering the often strident tone of online polemics.

"It's hard sometimes when we see those debates — especially some platforms that don't make that connection with the physical world, and don't foster that encounter," Fr Montelongo said. "They can just become nasty places."

As Catholic journalist and author John L. Allen Jr observes in *Catholics and Contempt: How Catholic Media Fuel Today's Fights, and What to Do About It*, the experience of social media

shows that "people will say terrible things anonymously that they would never dare utter face-to-face. ... In a sense, social media is designed to bring out the worst angles of our nature."

That doesn't mean, however, that Catholics should avoid online engagement; indeed, Fr Montelongo was encouraged by the digital emphasis at the synod.

"Sometimes we are a little bit behind in these things," he said, referring to the Catholic Church. "Changing our perspective from the internet as a dangerous place to the internet as mission territory — that paradigm shift is already a huge improvement."

Preparation is important — but missionaries also need to just take the first step, Fr Montelongo emphasised.

"The disciples went out. Jesus gave them enough — and they also learned on their way, too," he said. "That should be our attitude — whether in person, whether online — being missionary disciples who are still learning," said Fr Montelongo. "We haven't figured everything out — but we're going out without fear, knowing that God is accompanying us."

Sr Orianne Dyck, a Daughter of St Paul who serves her order as US and Canada social media coordinator, said, while specific formation could be helpful to digital missionaries, the first thing for Catholics to re-

member is their baptism.

"You have people who enter into the online space on purpose as missionaries — that's their ministry. But then you also have just the average Joe, who — by virtue of his baptism — will always be a missionary, no matter where he or she is," Sr Orianne explained. "So I think in that sense, it's actually more important for us to form one another as every day, normal Christians, able to live in a missionary way all of our life — because then that will translate over to how we interact with people online."

Catholics' remembering their baptism also should shape their online exchanges, said Sr Orianne.

"Being able to understand we're called to communicate out of this covenant relationship we've entered into with Christ — that we have died with Christ; that we can live with Christ — should change everything about how we intake communication, and also how we output communication," she added. "Because it means that everything I'm filling myself with I want to be for the glory of God and the peace of mankind — and likewise, everything that I share I want to be for the glory of God and the peace of mankind. And online no less so."

It's something she always remembers in her own online messaging, said Sr Orianne.

"People will maybe leave kind of an angry comment under a video or whatever that I post, and I try to respond in charity," she said. "And when they notice that I'm responding to them in a different tone than every other Christian they've encountered online, they're surprised — and it shouldn't be that way. Every Christian should be able to communicate in charity and know the importance of it."

Echoing Fr Montelongo, Sr Orianne also emphasised true community as the foundation of communication.

"We are able to literally grow together — and to form one another and to encourage one another — in a way that is not possible if it's just seen as a dissemination of information," she noted. "It's much more communal — which is really beautiful, because it becomes an even deeper way of building up the body of Christ. So there's a huge gift in that — although it certainly comes with its own challenges."

One of those challenges, said Matthew Warner, founder and CEO of Flocknote, a member management and messaging tool created for churches and ministries, is authenticity.

"The better Catholics learn to integrate digital tools into their lives in healthy, authentic ways, the better digital missionaries they will be able to be," Warner said. "It's easy for the digital tools to become distractions or misrepresentations of our true

selves, which hinder our ability to build the strong relationships which lead to effective evangelisation."

But again, real community is vital.

"Personally, I think we put too much stock in a need for most people to evangelise online," Warner shared. "Don't get me wrong — there is a distinct need for a presence there from the Church. But I think the most powerful evangelising occurs in personal relationships and offline."

"In fact," he reflected, "the increase in massive digital activity — by both culture and the Church — has coincided with a great increase in broken families, more depression and anxiety, fewer closer relationships and an acceleration of people no longer practising or believing their faith."

In 2019, a poll conducted by the American Psychiatric Association revealed, "More than one in three adults (38 per cent) see

social media usage as harmful to mental health; nearly half (45 per cent) see social media usage as having both positive and negative impact on mental health; only five per cent see it as having a positive impact."

Warner also reminded Catholics that as digital missionaries, the mission field they'll encounter online will often be close to home — and so making time to go offline and cultivate those relationships in person is critical.

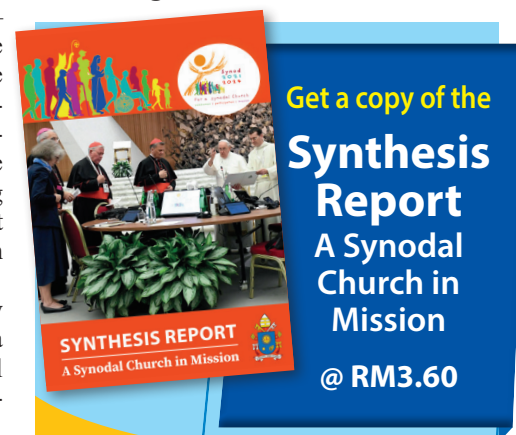
"If we are going to reverse the mass exodus of the next generation leaving the Church," he suggested, "I think it's going to happen more fundamentally by Catholics realising God has already placed their most urgent mission field right in front of them — in their homes, with their neighbour, with their co-worker they talk to every day ... If more of us focused more there — and spent less time online — I think big things would start to happen." — By Kimberley Heatherington, OSV

Changing our perspective from the internet as a dangerous place to the internet as mission territory is already a huge improvement.

The better Catholics learn to integrate digital tools into their lives in healthy, authentic ways, the better digital missionaries they will be able to be.



Members of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops begin work on the communion as the second theme of the synod in the Vatican's Paul VI Audience Hall Oct 9, 2023. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)



ARRUPE PUBLICATIONS SDN BHD (528765-P)
Xavier Hall, 135, Jalan Gasing
46000 Petaling Jaya, Selangor
Contact us:
Telephone: +6019-3716429
Email: shalompwpr@gmail.com

Mongolian folk metal band want to join Pope in saving the world

When Pope Francis visited Mongolia in 2023, it was spun as the ultimate in outreach to the peripheries — a trip literally to the other side of the world, the most sparsely populated country on earth, an almost forgotten place sandwiched between the two superpowers of China and Russia, and a country where the entire Catholic population of roughly 1,450 souls is roughly the size of a single small parish in, say, Italy or America.

As it happens, however, Mongolia these days isn't nearly as peripheral as it may seem, at least as far as the music world is concerned.

In the 13th and 14th centuries, vast Mongol armies under the legendary Genghis Khan forged the largest empire in history, creating a pre-modern form of globalisation known as the Pax Mongolica. Today, Mongolians once again are conquering the world — not by force of arms, but through a unique, utterly intoxicating blend of heavy metal and traditional folk music that's taken both song charts and social media by storm.

The great khan ("leader") of this new conquest is a Mongolian band called "The HU," whose pulsating music and soaring, movie-quality videos, all produced from a small studio called "Nature Sound" in the Mongolian capital city, have become the stuff of pop culture legend.

Just like the Mongolian khans of ages gone by, the band members are fascinated

by the Pope, despite the fact that they practise Tengherism, the traditional indigenous spirituality of the Mongolian steppes centred on veneration of the eternal blue sky.

Indeed, they said, they feel a shared mission with the Pope of Rome to do nothing less ambitious than to save the world.

The three members of the band, including lead singer TS. Galbadrakh, known as "Gala," and throat singer G. Nyamjantsan, who goes by "Jaya," said that although they were touring in the United States when Pope Francis made his Aug 31-Sept 4 visit to Mongolia, they followed the trip and were impressed with the pontiff's message.

Among other things, the bandmates praised the Pope's message on religious freedom, his efforts to bridge East and West,

and his commitment to the environment.

"We Mongolians are a nation with a higher sense and belief in traditional symbolism, and the Mongolians have received the visit of the Pope as of higher significance," Jaya said, saying the Pope's words in Ulaanbaatar "perfectly matched with the mission, songs and the messages of our band and everything we talk about."

"One of the main priorities and messages of the HU band that we aim to share with our fans and one of the concerns of the Pope are the same: to protect and love Mother Nature. We want to spread this message of the importance of loving and protecting our nature, and perhaps voicing against the climate change that's affecting us globally," Gala said.

A fairly recent addition to the international music industry, The HU — a Mongolian word meaning "human being" — is distinct for their use of Mongolian throat singing, a traditional musical technique tied to pastoral herders in Central Asia, fused with rock and heavy metal, along with traditional instruments such as the Morin Khuur (horsehead fiddle), Tovshuur (three-stringed lute), Tsuur (Mongolian flute) and Tumur Khuur (jaw harp).

Once described by Elton John as "just the greatest new thing I've heard in a long time," the HU refer to their unique musical genre as "Hunnu rock."

Two videos of the first

videos they released on YouTube in late 2018, "Yuve Yuve Yu" and "Wolf Totem", have together garnered over 211 million views. In April 2019, "Wolf Totem" reached No 1 on Billboard's Hard Rock Digital Song Sales, making the HU the first Mongolian band to top a Billboard chart.

In November 2022, Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoula named The HU as UNESCO Artist for Peace at a ceremony at the organisation's headquarters.

Band members include founding members Gala, Jaya, B. Enkhsaikhan, called "Enkush," and N. Temuulen, known as "Temka," as well as several backup musicians and vocalists. — **By Elise Ann Allen and John Allen, *CruX***



Film on martyred priests makes waves in the Philippines

Thousands in Catholic-majority Philippines have continued to flock to theatres to watch an award-winning film on three priests executed by the Spanish colonisers in the 19th century.

Released on Christmas Day, the historical biopic *GomBurza* retells the story of three native Filipino priests — Mariano Gomez, 72; Jose Apolonio Burgos, 35; and Jacinto Zamora, 36. The film's title refers to a portmanteau of the three priests' surnames.

They were executed on the orders of the Spanish colonial authorities on charges of subversion and treason on February 17, 1872, for alleged involvement in the Cavite mutiny in January of that year.

Produced by Jesuit Communications, MQuest Ventures and CMB Film Services, the movie has already received awards in several film festivals including in the 49th Metro Manila Film Festival on Dec 28.

Jon Ivan Torreros, 19, a communica-

tions student, said he was so excited about the film that he joined his friend to flock to a local theatre in Palo town in the central Philippines.

"I have known *GomBurza* since I was in elementary school, but it was only about their death. Now that I am in college, I learned that they are one of the biggest reasons why the Filipinos made sure of their independence," he said.

"So they were the driving force... especially since they were also the reason for the awakening of the nationalism of Dr Jose Rizal," Torreros added.

Rizal is hailed as a national hero in the Philippines. He was executed on Dec 30, 1896, at the same place where *GomBurza* were executed.

Rizal's execution sparked a massive revolution against the Spanish colonial government, which ruled the country from 1565 to 1898.

"I also saw the reviews from historians who approved this film," Torreros said.

Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan, the president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, urged Filipinos to watch the film.

"It is a well-researched historical film that will bring you back to the first spark of patriotism that forged the 'Filipino' identity that eventually united us Tagalogs, Kapampangans, Ilocanos, Cebuanos, natives,

mestizos, criollos and all other inhabitants of these 7,000 plus islands into one nation in the last quarter of the 19th century," the bishop said in a statement.

David said that watching the film "will make you appreciate what it truly means to be a Filipino."

Filipino journalist Howie Severino said the film "is an epic reminder of our cinematic history."

"Gomburza" is among the most hallowed words in Philippine history... There is some general awareness of their relationship to what came after them — an inspired Jose Rizal and the rise of a Filipino consciousness that led to the revolution of 1896," Severino wrote on Facebook on Jan 2.

According to Severino, "A critical incident in the film was the classroom rebellion against the Latin medium of instruction imposed inside the university. Signifying language as a tool for both controlling and liberating the mind, it evokes similar debates today about using mother tongues in schools."

During the Metro Manila Film Festival, the film received multiple awards including Best Actor, Best Director, Second Best Picture, Best Cinematography, Best Production Design, Best Sound Design, and the special Gatpuno Antonio Villegas Cultural Award. — **By Ronald O. Reyes, *ucanews.com***



A poster of the film *GomBurza*. (UCA News Photo/Journal News Online)



WORD IN PROGRESS

Karen-Michaela Tan

My mother liked having fresh flowers around the house. However, because she was a working professional, she had the tendency of leaving flowers in their vases until the poor things choked in slimy water, thus bringing them to a far quicker demise than if they had been tended properly, with regular water changes, and the trimming of their stalks.

I was, even as a child, highly desirous of routine and order. So, it wasn't unusual that I ended up being the one who had to gingerly remove dead, rotting flowers from the vases and wash out the putrid water. This probably had a lot to do with me turning 'anti-flowers' in my young adult days. I was vocal about what a waste flowers were, and the fact that the recipient had another thing added to their list of chores once the 'wow' or 'aww' factor had worn off.

In my thirties and early forties, flowers became more anathema because I wasn't receiving them. Gift-giving is not anywhere near any of my husband's love languages, and because I refused to badger him for something he should have known how to do if he knew I was an avid gift-giver and gift recipient, I took an almost militant path to flower-aversion, citing the environmental impact of the flower-growing industry, the large carbon footprints of the imports of hot-house flowers, and the waste of land on crops that did not feed the world.

During the pandemic, when I considered divorce, I decided to give the proverbial finger to things I did not like doing; things

The lesson of flowers

I had to do because I felt it was in the line of wifely duty. I also decided that if I were the one doing most of the tidying in the household, I might as well tidy messes of my own. And admit that flowers were a nice mess to own.

As my life and marriage morphed, so did I. I learnt to say no to the things I did not want to do – like meals with tedious cousins in law whose faces I would willingly have held down in their self-acclaimed 'best curry in town'. I culled Facebook friends lists, weeding out all the 'had-to-accept-friend-requests-because-they-were-family', and bluntly told relatives I was not attending Chinese New Year reunions because one yearly luncheon, eaten off soggy paper plates, with screaming brats in festive wear, does nothing to build relationships.

I distilled everything I did to one question – "Does this make me happy?" Having flowers in the house did. I was not going to wait in hopeless anticipation for someone to bring them to me, so I began a bi-weekly ritual of buying cheerful, hardy flowers: one stalk at first, so water changes were simple, then graduating to small bunches, and slowly to the tall, heavy, bloom-filled vases my mother favoured. Flower care was built into my morning routine along with dog-feeding, laundry, and hamster housekeeping, and I never had to gag at brackish water because I ensured the vases were emptied, cleaned and refilled every other day.

There is a line in the Don Henley song *Through Your Hands* which goes, "So whatever your hands find to do, you must do with all your heart," and in those days of confusion where I battled between my right to be loved the way I needed and wanted, and my adherence to "what therefore God hath

joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6), my hands working on flowers helped my heart see.

The flowers I gifted myself brought pleasure back into a life overly dedicated to service. They also taught me that though I desired answers from God in a big, burning bush revelation, God rarely answers with grandiose gestures. The most wonderful thing about seeking God's will in one's life is seeing in retrospect how it unfolds little by little. I have come to realise as I grow older, no matter how intelligent, or well-versed I am in the art of people reading and pleasing, what I know is not an eyelash on what God knows. The Creator of all things, past, present and future, knows our foibles, and propensity for failing to distinguish between smarts and wisdom. And He deals with this weakness by spoon-feeding us what we need to know in little doses.

It was through the little works of my hands, with this new beauty in my life, that God reminded me of His providence, His infallibility, and His presence in my marriage. Scripture verses about flowers blossomed before me, as if to remind me that in the aridness of my search, there were always oases in the desert where wildflowers still sprang up.

I recalled how the facilitators at our Catholic Marriage Preparation Course told the couples to always ensure there were three people in the marriage: he, she and God. I always thought of God's presence in this equation like a security camera: always observing, but silent.

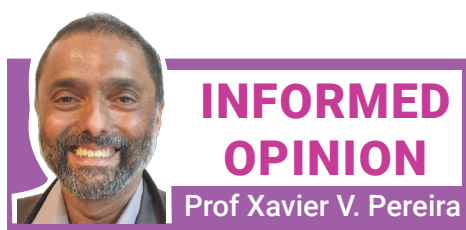
I have since come to realise that He manifests in a marriage like a dormant seed. While couples give lip service to a trinitarian marriage, it is only when they

find themselves in the stony, unproductive field of a union which has stunted, or is dying from the lack of care and proper management, that something from the seed bank of faith forces the growth of a supernatural bud. This surprise flower points to things which only come into fulfilment in God's time. It is the physical manifestation of answers begged for, with messages so personalised that I knew immediately what God's will for me pertaining to my marriage was.

I now look at flowers as reminders of God's eagerness to be present in my life. Because He gave us freewill, He does not force the knowledge of Himself on us. So, it is not until we change from just glancing at flowers, to actively seeking them out, and then striving to keep them at their best, that we learn to really listen to what He means to say to us.

When we act on His prompting, we will find new vigour in our conviction, and fresh sap in our relationships which make them bud and blossom, like Aaron's staff (Numbers 17:8). My marriage now echoes Hosea 14:7 which says "those who live in His shadow will again raise grain, and they will blossom like the vine."

● Karen-Michaela Tan is a poet, writer and editor who seeks out God's presence in the human condition and looks for ways to put the Word of God into real action.



INFORMED OPINION

Prof Xavier V. Pereira

Ageing and Disability

Disabilities affect normal functioning. These include the ability to carry out activities of daily living (personal functioning), the ability to interact with others (social functioning) and the ability to work (occupational functioning). Disabilities also impact negatively on one's quality of life.

Research conducted by the WHO has revealed that about 50 per cent of people above the age of 70 suffer from mental health disorders and disability. These disorders include neurocognitive disorders like dementia, and common mental disorders like depressive disorders and anxiety disorders. Thus, a large proportion of disabilities in the elderly are mental disorders.

Pope Francis dedicated the month of December, 2023 to people with disabilities as an acknowledgment of the fact that many people suffer from disabilities. The Pope, who recently celebrated his 87th birthday, also suffers from physical disabilities.

DALYS or Disability Adjusted Life Years, introduced by the World Health Organisation (WHO), is a measure to estimate disability due to a disease or health condition and its impact on human beings. It is defined as *the sum of the years of life lost due to premature mortality (death) and the years lived with a disability due to prevalent cases of the disease or health condition in a population*.

In low-income countries, for example, some countries in Africa, the problematic diseases, that have the greatest impact on health-related disability are infectious diseases, for example malaria, typhoid, and dysentery. Whereas in high and middle-income countries, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) like heart disease, diabetes mellitus and hypertension

predominate. Mental health disorders, for example schizophrenia and depressive disorders, are also listed in the top 10 causes of disability in high income countries. Further information about DALYs can be sourced from the internet.

An issue that is often overlooked in the discussion of disability is the burden of care that carers experience caring for people with disability. Close family members who take care of their elders with disability also experience challenges. Some experience burnout. Others who are sole providers of care feel trapped and stressed. Reactions like apathy and resentment may also emerge. Sometimes the burden of care can result in extreme behaviour, like in Japan where it was recently reported that some elderly people with disabilities had their lives ended by family members who were caring for them. This is indeed sad news, and could have been prevented if the carers had received assistance from the state.

The governments of some countries have addressed the burden of care in carers by providing respite care. Respite care allows carers to take well deserved rest from continuous care for their family members with disability. Some countries also provide residential assisted living or day care for those with disabilities. In Malaysia most of these services are provided by private entities and incur cost. The Malaysian Ministry of Health though, has provided rehabilitation services through their departments of Rehabilitation Medicine in many of the government general hospitals. Rehabilitation is crucial in reducing disability. Rehabilitation often includes physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Rehabilitation is a service that faith-based

organisations, including Christian churches can provide for people with disability.

My encounters with the elderly have revealed that they are often cognisant of their disabilities and the burden of care experienced by the people who take care of them. Some who suffer prolonged illness and disability wish that God will end their suffering. Their cry is like that of the psalmist in Psalm 6 – "Have mercy on me Lord, for I am faint. Heal me Lord for my bones are in agony. My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long? Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave?" This is a cry of despair. I have observed that pastoral care can play a vital role in addressing this anguish and despair. Pastoral care is crucial for people in all age groups, especially the elderly. This again is a service that faith-based organisations can provide.

As more people live longer, there will correspondingly be more people with disability. I often remark that *the cost of longevity is dementia*. I would like to expand this statement to read that *the cost of longevity is disability*. The more we realise and accept that ageing often entails disability, the better we can embrace this fact and take measures to prevent or reduce disability. We also must acknowledge the fact that age is certainly a number.

● Xavier V. Pereira is a medical doctor, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, and an adjunct professor at Taylor's University School of Medicine. He is also co-founder, director and pro bono psychiatrist of Health Equity Initiatives, an NGO that serves refugees with mental health challenges.





Fr Ron Rolheiser

My top ten books for 2023

There are thousands of new books published each year and they join the millions that are already in print. And so, a book has to find you as much as you have to find it. Also, it is said that the book you need to read finds you at just that time when you most need to read it. With this as a background, let me list the top ten books that found me in 2023 at an apropos time.

In the area of spirituality ...

✂ Tomas Halik's, *Touch the Wounds – On Suffering, Trust, & Transformation*, takes the biblical image of Jesus inviting the apostle Thomas to touch His wounds so as to overcome His weak faith and universalises it as an invitation for each of us. Are you having faith doubts? Reach out and touch those places where Christ is still wounded in our world.

✂ Karl Rahner, *Servants of the Lord*. This book is more than fifty years old but is worth reading and rereading. It's in one of the essays in this book that Rahner offers us his famous maxim: In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, we learn that, ultimately in this life, there is no finished symphony.

✂ Bill Cain, *The Book of Cain*. This is a very personal book written by a man, a Jesuit, who keeps a journal while he is keeping vigil with his mother as she is dying of a terminal disease. The book is full of poignant reflections on life, love, imperfection, and letting go.

✂ Ben McBride, *Troubling the Water – The Urgent Work of Radical Belonging*. This is the book on social justice that I most recommend this year. McBride works among the poor in Oakland, California, and beyond some of his practical recommendations as to how each of us might become more involved in justice work. The great strength of this book is what he invites us to in terms of heart and attitude while working for justice. He puts some practical skin on what this means in terms of working with a community as opposed to being a lone ranger, and on how to sustain yourself for the long haul and remain empathic in the face of opposition and hatred.

✂ Connie Zweig's, *The Inner Work of Age – Shifting from Role to Soul*, is an excellent book on aging. Her subtitle says it well; the task in aging is to shift from role to soul. The book makes some valuable suggestions on how this is done.

✂ Kim Colella, *Spirit Embraced, A Guiding Memoir for a Life Authentic*. This is a very personal book, a memoir, which traces out her own journey in life. How does someone mature? We each have our own path, but Colella shares the path she took and there is much we can learn from reading her story. I'm also proud to say that she is a former student of mine.

✂ Lisabeth During, *The Chastity Plot*. This is a brilliant (and basically very fair) history of the concept of chastity within Western culture. From its ascetic roots in Christianity, through its social roots in the centuries of arranged marriages in which women were often the victims of patriarchy, through its romantic roots in Victorian England, this book highlights the various nuances and modalities of chastity – and leaves us with the question, *Can anyone today say the word purity without a cringe?*

In the more academic realm ...

✂ Brian Swimme, *Cosmogenesis, An Unveiling of the Expanding Universe*. Leaning on great theological thinkers (such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry) Swimme (who is a scientist) proposes a vision that incorporates how our universe began, how it is bent in terms of its ongoing evolution, and how all of this is meant to all end up in a powerful vision of hope. Contemporary astrophysics and the Bible can befriend each other. Brian Swimme will give you that link.

✂ Philip Sheldrake, Julian of Norwich: *In God's Sight – Her Theology in Context*. The book is somewhat heavy academically, but it is a first-rate textbook on Julian of Norwich.

✂ Lisabeth During, *The Chastity Plot*. This is a brilliant (and basically very fair) history of the concept of chastity within Western culture. From its ascetic roots in Christianity, through its social roots in the centuries of arranged marriages in which women were often the victims of patriarchy, through its romantic roots in Victorian England, this book highlights the various nuances and modalities of chastity – and leaves us with the question, *Can anyone today say the word purity without a cringe?*

Novels ...

✂ 2023 was not a good year for me in terms

of reading novels. Although I read a number of novels, all of which had received good reviews, only one of them stood out for me, Barbara Kingsolver's, *Unsheltered*.

Special mention ...

The renowned Scripture scholar Raymond E. Brown wrote monumental works on both the birth and the death of Jesus. The editors at *Worship*, recognising that these great commentaries would be inaccessible to most everyone outside of an academic classroom, invited him to condense these into a series of short, popular booklets. Brown did this brilliantly and has left us five short popular books (all by Liturgical Press) that contain his deep insights.

- *Coming Christ in Advent*
 - *An Adult Christ at Christmas*
 - *A Crucified Christ in Holy Week, Essays on the Four Passion Narratives*
 - *A Risen Christ at Eastertide*
 - *A Once and Coming Spirit at Pentecost*
- They are a treasure, worth rereading every year during their proper season.

● **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**

Book Review

Walking with the Holy Spirit

The Synod on Synodality has enthused parishes worldwide for the past year. Many of us have been engaged with 'spiritual conversation' in this journey of synodality.

Pope Francis, at the Synod opening Mass in October 2023, extolled: "Let us walk with the Holy Spirit." To walk with the Spirit behoves us to actively listen to the Spirit.

That's where this handy book comes in. In 'Welcoming the Spirit,' author Dr Christina Kheng (pic) calls us to listen to the Spirit, and shows us practical ways on how we could effectively listen. She also provides a practical, step-by-step guide to pastoral planning in a synodal way, and includes many suggested activities and sample templates.

When we talk about planning, we immediately think of the traditional meetings, strategies and reports; however, this book emphasises planning as an essentially spiritual, holistic, transformative, and communal journey of discernment. We should expect change to take place in the very midst of the process – the prompting of the Spirit for us to collaborate with God.

In his foreword, Fr Arturo Sosa, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, highlights the goal of the book. He points out that

pastoral planning is an undertaking that helps us enter into a deep listening of the Spirit so as to emerge more fruitful, renewed, and committed in our life and mission. Fr Sosa adds that the communal discernment approach is an opportunity to exercise synodality, mutual listening, and building communion amidst diversity.

He states that the book has integrated both planning and communal discernment together in a meaningful and practical way.

In Part I of the book, Christina outlines the theological foundations for planning. This enables us to understand why planning is needed and what kind of process is more consistent with a faith-based perspective. It aims to foster an appropriate disposition towards planning and helps participants go through the process in a mindful and meaningful way.

Quotations from various sources encourage us to foster reflection and meditation.

Part II is on the pastoral planning process. It suggests a process for planning and serves as a general framework which each community can adapt according to its own situations and needs. Christina provides templates and worksheets that could be used in the process. Some of the exercises are adapted from methodologies that have been developed in the Ignatian tradition, such as spiritual conversation and

the grace-filled history line.

Christina provides two contextual examples of direction and priorities:

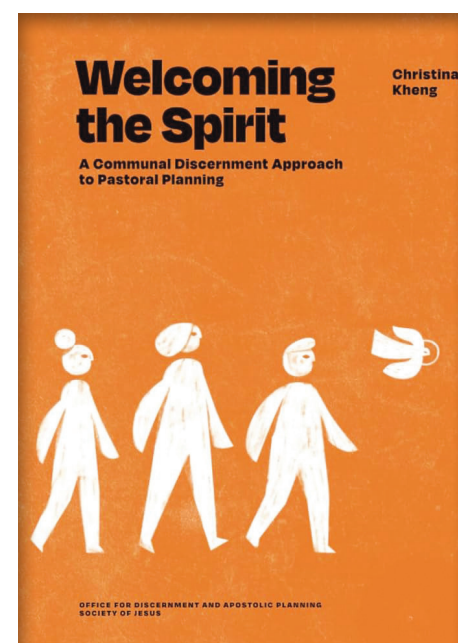
- (1) A city parish with an increasingly multi-cultural population where inter-group tensions are beginning to be felt; and
- (2) A religious congregation whose traditional ministry is in education, and is facing slower growth in membership.

The appendices contain ready-to-use sample schedules for pastoral planning, a sample handout on spiritual conversation, and a template to report on the fruits of the spiritual conversation.

Those of us in Church ministry can certainly learn a lot on the vital community dimension of pastoral planning from the book's framework and approaches, and how to purposefully listen to the Spirit.

Whether we are in the parish council, ministry, youth group or BEC, we will find this book very helpful in guiding us to listen to the Spirit and to walk with the Spirit in our planning and decision making.

Author Christina has a rich background in Church ministry. She is from Singapore, and has a Ph.D. in theology from the Australian Catholic University. She teaches theology and pastoral leadership at various institutions, including the East Asian Pastoral Institute in the Philippines. She provides pastoral planning, communal discernment and leadership accompaniment for dioceses, parishes, religious congregations, lay associations, and Catholic international organisations. Significantly, she serves in various task forces of the General Secretariat of the



Welcoming the Spirit
A Communal Discernment Approach
to Pastoral Planning
By Christina Kheng, PhD

Synod at the Vatican in respect of the Synod 2021-2024.

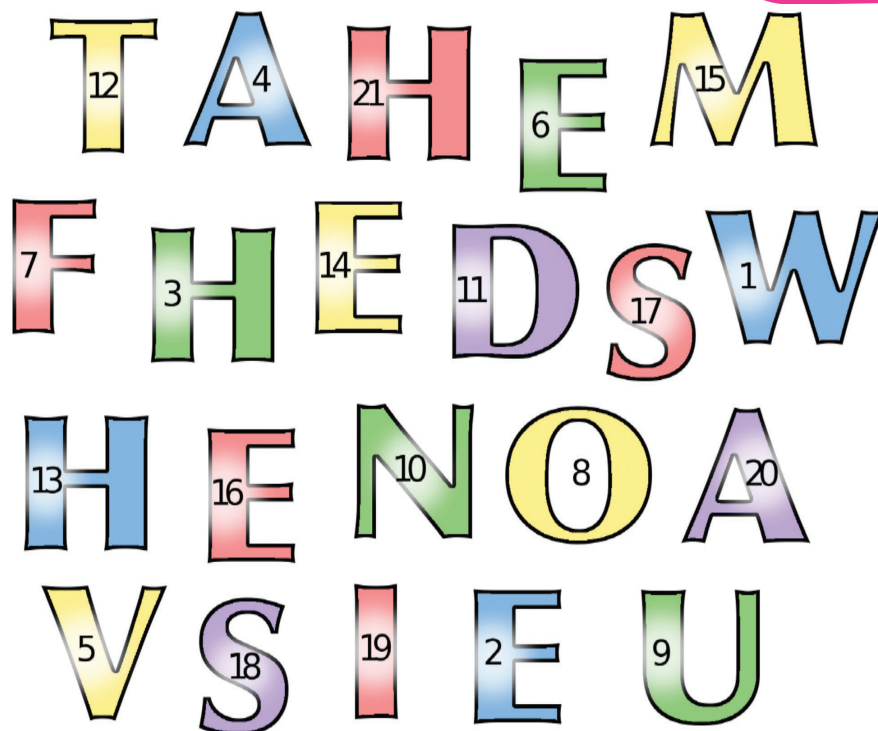
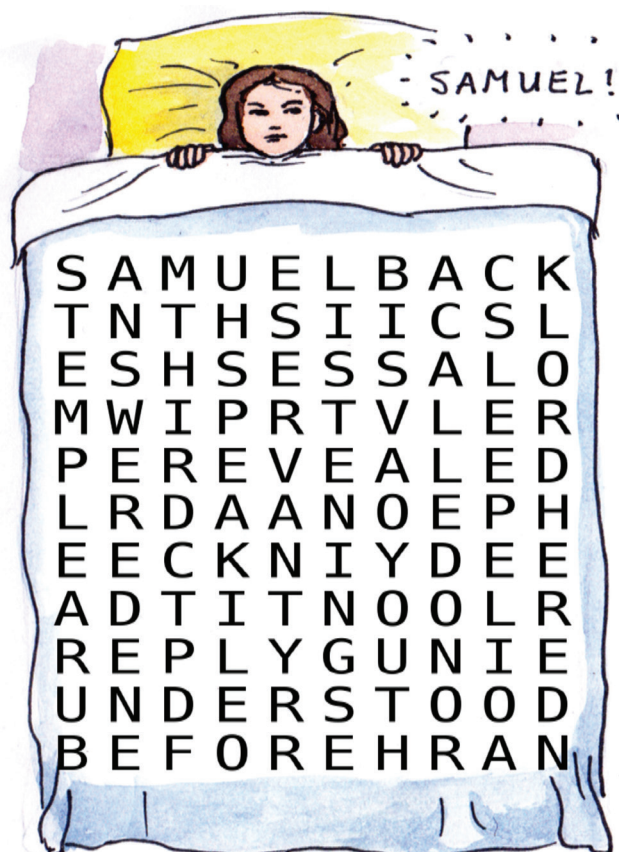
Welcoming the Spirit is a significant and worthy addition to the scarce resources available on the communal discernment approach in pastoral planning. In view of the current emphasis on synodality, I recommend this book to diocesan pastoral institutes, parish priests, heads of religious congregations, and key leaders of Church ministries. — **By Professor Christopher Ng**

The book can be downloaded here:
<https://discernmentandplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Welcoming-the-Spirit-A4-home-print.pdf>

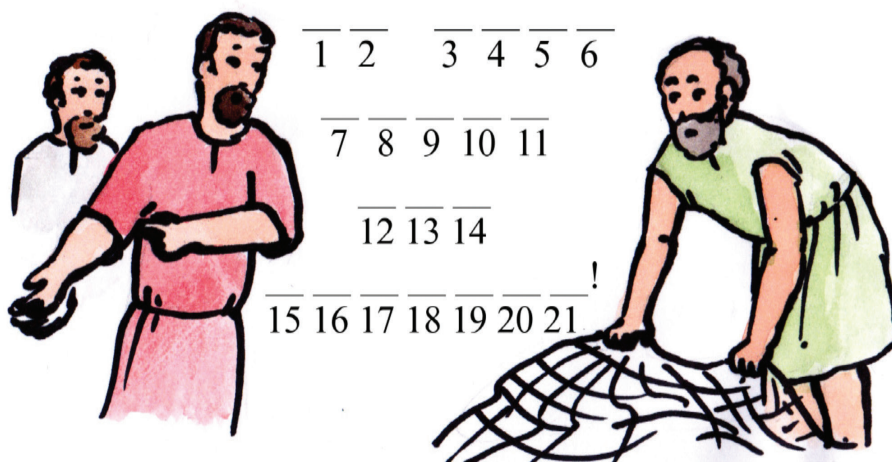
Little Catholics' Corner

Word Search

| | |
|------------|-----------|
| SAMUEL | YOUTH |
| TEMPLE | SLEEP |
| RAN | REPLY |
| ELI | SPEAK |
| BACK | SERVANT |
| CALLED | LORD |
| THIRD | REVEALED |
| HERE | BEFORE |
| UNDERSTOOD | ANSWERED |
| | LISTENING |



What did Andrew say to his brother Simon in today's Gospel reading?
Fill the spaces with the letters in the right order to find out!



Hello children,

God always calls us in a special way. For example, Samuel. Samuel's life had been dedicated to God, and because he was willing to follow God's plan, God made Samuel a holy prophet.

In the Gospel reading, St John the Baptist tells his followers that Jesus is the Messiah. Two of them then decided to follow Jesus and one of them, Andrew went and got his brother Simon.

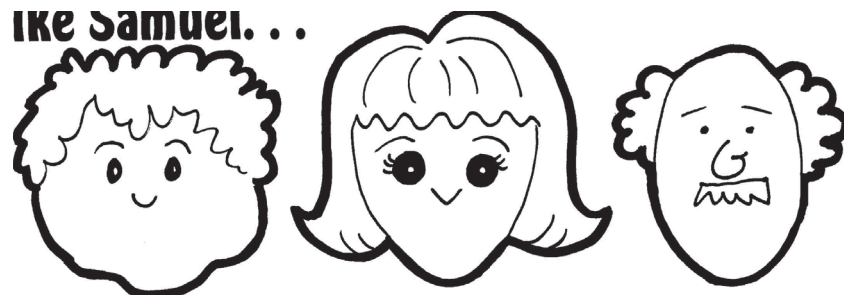
When Simon went to follow Him, Jesus told him that his name would now be "Cephas" or "Peter" which means 'rock'!

God does not call everyone to very important jobs. However, He had a special plan for Simon Peter. He was to become the leader of the Church — the first pope!

Each of us should follow Jesus and be ready to do His will. If we always try to do what God wants, then we will be ready if He has a special job for us!

Love
Aunty Eliz

Ike Samuel...



I will listen and



answer when God



ADD EARS AND A MOUTH TO THESE FACES. WE NEED TO LISTEN WITH OUR EARS AND THEN SPEAK WITH OUR MOUTHS ABOUT GOD AND HIS LOVE!

Hidden Pictures:
Joshua Explored
the promised Land

Find these objects hidden
in the picture below:
canoe, carrot, apple, book,
ice cream cone, olive, shovel, sock,
sailboat, spoon.



YOUTH

January 14, 2024



Serving beyond borders

JOHOR BAHRU: Caritas Beyond Borders, an initiative led by Caritas MJD Office of Human Development, with invaluable support from Caritas Cambodia, orchestrated a transformative experience for a group of young adults from the Diocese of Malacca Johore recently.

The programme saw these individuals engaged in a service mission in Siem Reap, Cambodia, immersing themselves in the lives of the local community, fostering empathy, and dedicating themselves to serving the underprivileged.

During their time there, volunteers actively supported a children's feeding programme (Rice-Soup) at the floating church of St Joseph parish in Prek Toal, extending their help to communi-

ties residing on the waters of Tonle Sap lake. They also initiated fundraising efforts to repair homes for families in need, organised art and volleyball sessions at Khnar Thnong primary school, and conducted English conversational lessons for village youths eager to learn and practise with our English-speaking volunteers.

The participants didn't just contribute; they gained invaluable life lessons.

They learned the essence of compassion, developed resilience in the face of challenges, and honed their collaborative skills by engaging with individuals from diverse cultures.

Caritas Beyond Borders was designed for those within the diocese ready to step beyond their comfort zones and embark on an adventurous journey to create a meaningful impact beyond our immediate borders.

Reflection from participants

Participating in a service mission beyond borders is an experience that I will hold close to my heart indefinitely. Reflecting on this transformative journey, the volunteering programme extended to me a wide range of social and personal benefits.

One thing that brought us all together was the willingness to serve. The combination of individuals from different parishes into a cohesive unit with a singular objective "to serve" unveiled a profound learning curve. This collaborative endeavour became a crucible for the development of teamwork and collaboration skills surpassing the boundaries of individual backgrounds.

The programme, extending beyond geographical borders, presented a unique opportunity to engage with people from diverse cultures, instilling within me a heightened cultural awareness and

sensitivity. There were moments that resonated deeply, none more so than attending Mass with the children at the floating church. The palpable peace within, coupled with the genuine joy emanating from the smiles of the children, revealed a divine presence, a sentiment beautifully articulated by Fr Yacob.

From the rice soup programme to arts and crafts sessions and carolling, each day held a distinct charm. Serving in the village of Thnal Taseth further enriched the experience, where construction work, educational sessions, and sports activities became a canvas for positive change.

The language barrier, though formidable, melted away in the warmth of the children's affection, underscoring the universal language of love.

I found unexpected growth and achievement. Leading activities and multitasking throughout the

day were challenges that proved instrumental in expanding my horizons. Beyond my personal objectives, the programme became a conduit for a closer connection to God, transforming me into an instrument of His divine purpose.

In conclusion, this was not merely a venture across borders; it was a pilgrimage of the soul, an odyssey that revealed the profound beauty of shared humanity and the transformative power of selfless service. — *Velma Suresh*



Ever since I was a little kid, I have always taken a keen interest towards helping the less fortunate. I have always had strong empathy towards them. From young, my parents exposed my brothers and I to the less fortunate through visits to the orphanages, special needs and old folks homes and homeless shelters to show us the real world. Those visits had a huge impact on me and I was adamant that I will make a difference. I have since volunteered at orphanages, soup kitchens and street feedings in KL.

I have been praying for a while now for God's purpose and will for my life. A week after my return from WYD Lisbon 2023, a good friend shared the pamphlet for Beyond Borders Cambodia 2023 with me. It was the easiest and quickest "Yes" in my life. Serving people across borders is an ultimate dream come true for me. Also, the calling to say "Yes" was very strong. However, the months and days leading up to this mission trip was not an easy one. I encountered numerous challenges, both personal and work. It was really tough on me, mentally and physically and I felt very alone. But, I prayed and kept my eyes on Jesus. I relied on Him for strength and comfort and kept my eyes on the mission.

From the very moment we arrived at Siem Reap, Cambodia, we were greeted by the warm smiles and hospitality of the Cambodians. We were very well supported, guided and well taken care of by the Caritas Cambodia Team. We enjoyed our stay at the Metta Karuna. Our first Mass at St John's Catholic Church was an amazing experience indeed. Our visit to the Caritas Cambodia head office was very purposeful as we were briefed on the objective and mission. The entire Caritas Cambodia Team was very warm and welcoming. They were very well organised and very helpful.



Our first mission was the Rice Soup Programme in a Catholic Church at the Prek Toal floating village. The entire village is so picturesque as everything is literally on the water, from the houses to convenient stores to schools to the church, everything. The only mode of transportation around this village is by boat. The Rice Soup Programme was conducted for the village children. We participated at Mass together in the Khmer language. We sang a few Christmas songs for the kids and danced together. That was the perfect ice-breaker. We taught the kids how to make origami roses. After that, we served the village children delicious and nutritious rice with chicken soup. We also distributed provisions to the families as well. All in all, serving the children at the floating village was an amazing, humbling and special experience. Being able to serve and spread the love and joy of Christ was very fulfilling and impactful.

Our main mission was at Thnal Taseth Village. We stayed in the village for five days. We were hosted by host families in their homes. They made

sure we were well fed and comfortable.

Our mission service consisted of a few segments. In the morning, we helped with house renovations and did home visitations, in the afternoon, we headed to Khnar Thnong Primary School where we taught the children volleyball and arts and crafts. In the evening, we taught the kids conversational English.

I have never done any hard labour in my entire life. We helped to layer the bricks for the walls of the house, involved in minor hammering, sawing of zinc and cement mixing. To be hands-on helping with the renovations to improve their standard of living was a very fulfilling, joyful and emotional experience for me.

After construction, we brought food provisions to several families in need. We heard the stories of their struggles and yet they seemed happy and contented.

Being with the primary school children in the afternoons produced cherished moments. We enjoyed teaching the children volleyball. They are already decently good players. To witness the love, joy and zeal for the game was so refreshing and inspiring. We definitely enjoyed playing volleyball games with them as well. We played football with the girls too and they were really good at it. The children themselves were incredibly warm and welcoming. They treated us as one of their own and included us in the games. They laughed at us when we made mistakes. They cheered and celebrated when we scored a winning point. In spite of the differences in cultures and language, we were all united and connected through the love

for the game.

The youth programme in the evenings was very fulfilling. Most of the children had little grasp of the English language. We taught them basic day to day conversational English and encouraged them to speak more with one another and with us. We incorporated some fun language songs and games too. They were incredibly quick and eager learners. At the end of the five days, the children improved their basic conversational English.

We hosted a dinner party at the primary school on the penultimate day for the students, parents and teachers. We cooked spaghetti Bolognese and rice with *rendang*. Everyone enjoyed the food very much.

On the final day of our service mission, we distributed backpacks, books and stationery to the primary school students as a final farewell gift. We also held a Volleyball Tournament for the kids. It was a good end to our programme.

We ended our mission trip with a visit to Angkor Wat, the eighth wonder of the world. Angkor Wat is just incredibly beautiful and majestic. We enjoyed spending the day exploring other temples too.

All in all, I am incredibly grateful and blessed to be part of this mission trip. It is a real eye opener and a very fulfilling, joyful and meaningful experience. We lived, loved, laughed and learned to be patient with each other as a team and as friends. We learned to help and support one another as well.

The people whom we had the privilege to meet and serve, taught me so much about love, joy, gratitude, contentment, simplicity and humility. I have also learned that true love destroys all language, cultural and social status barriers. I learned that true joy and love comes in the form of serving others. I am now more than ever inspired to serve. To live is to serve. — *Audrey Ng*

School marks 50 Years with Laudato Si' musical

SILIGURI, India: A premier Catholic school in North Bengal staged an ambitious musical performance to mark its golden jubilee with a two-day open air event by 1,200 children, teaching and learning from the animal kingdom.

Some 12,000 people, including school children and their guardians, as well as students and faculty members from Siliguri, participated in both shows staged by Don Bosco School, Siliguri.

'The Lion King' stage production, with music by Elton John, lyrics by Tim Rice, and a book by Roger Allers and Irene Mecchi, with additional music and lyrics by Lebo M and others, is based on the 1994 Walt Disney Animation Studios' film of the

same name.

In the golden jubilee performance of the popular musical adaptation, a total of 1,200 students came on stage, with 19 students from classes 6 to 12 playing lead roles, among them 8 soloists. They were supported by 600 plus dancers consisting of various animals, insects, grasses and plants; and a 500 strong choir backed by an ensemble of a 70-member student orchestra.

"The Lion King is about our interconnect-edness and the delicate balance between us and mother earth," said Rector and Principal of Don Bosco School Siliguri Fr V.C. Jose, himself an acclaimed musician.

Fr Jose said, "It was our experiment over the past six months to fight post-Covid leth-



The Lion King! Musical performance by Don Bosco School Siliguri.

argy among students by motivating them to team work with a challenging and ambitious project."

A senior educationist of North Bengal, Fr Jose, in his introductory speech asked parents to be the judges of the experiment by the school.

Emphasising the choice of the musical Fr Jose added, "The musical talks about values of family bonds; joint responsibility for future generations; facing adverse realities, and not shirking away from our duties toward society."

Inhouse music director and alumnus of the school, Mr. John Paul, added, "We found this theme most apt to teach children the value of living in harmony, respecting and protecting God's beautiful creation entrusted to humans."

The musical was performed on a stage 80 feet long and 60 feet wide, with 48 lead vocalists and support choir with six different voices namely: one part of sopranos; two parts of altos; two parts of tenors, and one part of bass. — **By Fr C.M. Paul, Matters India**



Altar servers workshop for Bung Mako youth

SERIAN, Sarawak: Sixty-six vibrant young individuals, hailing from five villages within the Bung Mako zone, recently participated in an enriching altar servers workshop held at St Joseph Catholic Church,

Kampung Seroban.

The workshop, spearheaded by Vincent Christopher, head of St Theresa's parish altar servers, featured insightful sessions led by speakers Alvenloon Aaron Maurice Justin and Kelvince Del Anak David. This collaborative effort between the facilitators and the Church Youth Ministry of St Joseph's parish made the event possible.

The primary goal of the programme was to equip altar servers from the villages under St Theresa's parish with essential skills for serving during Mass. Participants delved into the significance of each aspect of the Eucharist, presented by Kelvince Del and Vincent Christopher.

Additionally, the youth gained valuable insight into the items used by altar servers,

including the cincture, thurible, and boater, and learned about the symbolism of the liturgical colours. Alvenloon Aaron provided a comprehensive overview of the sacred vessels used by priests when celebrating Mass.

Following the engaging discussions, the programme culminated in a Mass celebrated by Fr Robert Jissem.

Expressing his sentiments, Kelvince Del remarked, "It's an honour to contribute to this programme, guiding and supporting altar servers to deepen their comprehension of the Holy Mass and their role in service. My hope is that they will embrace their duties with even greater enthusiasm and dedication to serve both God and the Church community."

• Continued from page 16

Whenever we have group sharing and reflection, Fr Martinian would like the team to share on our high, low and Godly moments throughout the day, and that was when I made myself walk through the day and reflect on what has happened.

Recalling every single moment of a day isn't easy. However, one particular moment stood out for me during the Mass at St John Catholic Church in Siem Reap. Fr Totet was the main celebrant. His homily was about his pet dog Milo showed us how we should follow Jesus, just as Milo follows him everywhere unconditionally. Milo was present throughout the entire mass, lying in different spots. It was very well behaved.

After receiving communion, I was praying with my eyes closed, as I usually do. But this time, I felt an unusual sense of peacefulness and a strong presence of Jesus. Slowly, I opened my eyes, and that was when Milo started to walk toward me and lay down in front of me, resting his head on my legs. At that moment, I didn't rationalise why Milo had come to me. I believe that Milo

could sense Jesus in me. He did not come to me, but rather for the Jesus inside of me! And this got me thinking, how can I preserve the presence of Jesus within me and carry Him wherever I go, so that people will know we are Christians by our love.

Another profound moment occurred during the school session when the arts and crafts team engaged the students in making bracelets.

As I handed out the loom bands for bracelet-making, the students suddenly all came rushing to me with their palms open ready to receive the bands.

Observing these children, half of my size, eagerly waiting with outstretched palms, I couldn't help but to think of how we receive Holy Communion every week with the same palm gesture. But why couldn't we receive Jesus with the same eagerness shown by these children when they received the loom bands?

While distributing the bands, a few fell to the floor. Before I could bend down and pick them up, some of them had already picked them up. Not a single tiny loom band was found on the floor, prompting me to reflect on another question. Why can't we appreciate the body of Christ like how these children appreciate every single tiny loom band? When we receive the body of Christ, why can't we check on our palms every time to make sure every bit is consumed and not one tiny bit is dropped on the floor? Why can't we hold the body of Christ in our palms as if it is something more precious than gold?

As the session concluded, I found myself contemplating on this: if the children can rush to me and eagerly wait for just loom bands, how wonderful it would be and how eagerly they would run to mass to receive Jesus if only they had the chance to know Him. — **Mandy Shum**

Joining this service mission to Cambodia, I initially contemplated setting expectations, hoping to maximise my time during this trip. However, I decided to go with no fixed ideas, trusting God to lead every step of my journey. And the experience turned out to be genuinely meaningful.

Some may wonder why we travelled to another country for a service mission when there are pressing needs in our own communities. Yet, I personally believe that poverty is multifaceted, and witnessing the faces of Christ in various communities with diverse backgrounds is a crucial step toward serving in a larger capacity in the future.

International mission trips help break the indifference we may feel towards people far away from us, those whose suffering we see on our phone screens but we cannot relate to them. However, Pope Francis has called on the faithful not to ignore the suffering of others, and this trip was organised with the hope of instilling this compassionate perspective in the heart of every participant.

Before heading to Cambodia, our group had prepared and raised funds for the programme including house renovations, a pri-



mary school programme with art and craft sessions, sports activities, school supply donations, a Rice-Soup programme for children, and provisions for families in need.

However, engaging in a mission trip isn't

just about what we give; crucially, it's about what we learn. Participants on this trip seamlessly adapted to the challenging conditions throughout the 7-day trip. And it all came to fruition on the last day when we witnessed the priceless smile on the faces of the families whose houses we renovated — a fulfilment unparalleled on any other occasion, to which I express gratitude for the team's fundraising efforts and the donors who made this experience possible.

Last but not least, the true essence of the trip lies in the innocent questions posed by the Cambodian children we bonded with: "Will you come again next week/next year?," they asked. These questions reflected a desire for long-term commitment, instilling me with hope that this endeavour wasn't just a one-time effort; it was a seed planted for future destinies. — **Rayvinshie**



Twenty Catholic missionaries killed in 2023

The Vatican's *Fides* News Agency released its annual list of Catholic missionaries who were killed bearing witness to their faith in 2023, with Africa again recording the highest number of victims.

The information service of the Pontifical Mission Societies reported that one bishop, eight priests, two men religious, one seminarian, one novice and seven laypeople were killed.

Africa leading the list

As in previous years, the deadliest continents for Church workers were Africa, where nine people were killed, and the Americas, where six gave their lives.

Until 2017, the latter had led the way for eight consecutive years, but since 2018, with the exception of 2020, Africa has topped the list.

Two priests, a seminarian and a Benedictine novice, were killed in terrorist- and bandit-prone Nigeria. Among the victims was Fr Isaac Achi, 61-year-old priest who was burned alive during an attack by an armed group in his parish in the diocese of Minna, central Nigeria.

Also in Africa, two missionaries were murdered in Burkina Faso; one priest was killed in an attack in his parish in Tanzania; a religious brother and a parish priest were stabbed in Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), respectively.

Six missionaries killed in Mexico and the United States

Mexico again endured the bulk of missionary murders in the Americas this year, with two priests and two young catechists killed in the context of growing drug-related insecurity in the country.

Two brutal missionary murders were also reported in the United States, where Bishop David O'Connell, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, was killed by the husband of his housekeeper, who confessed the crime, and in mid-December, Fr Stephen Gutsell, a priest at St John the Baptist Catholic Church in Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, died after being stabbed in the rectory of the Church.

Killings in the Philippines and Gaza

In Asia, four Catholic lay people

were murdered in 2023. Two Filipino Catholic students were among the victims of the recent bombing attack during a Mass at Mindanao State University in Marawi City, which killed four people and wounded several others. Junrey Barbante and Janine Arenas were volunteers from the university chaplaincy community, where they were involved in liturgical animation.

In war-hit Gaza, Nahida Khalil Anton, and her daughter Samar Kamal Anton, two active parishioners of the Holy Family Catholic Parish Church, were killed by snipers on December 16 as they were walking to the adjacent Convent of the Sisters of Mother Theresa. They both belonged to a group of Catholic and Orthodox women working for the poor and disabled in the Strip.

Another lay person was also killed in Spain earlier this year. Diego Valencia, sacristan of the parish of Nuestra Senora de La Palma, in Algeciras, in the province of Cadiz, was stabbed in January by a young Moroccan armed with a machete, who also injured other people.

Ordinary people witnessing the Gospel

In the introduction to the report, *Fides* explained that it used the term "missionary" in a broad sense, referring to "all the baptised engaged in the life of the Church," in which, by virtue of their Baptism, "all the members of the People of God become missionary disciples", and that it considered all those who died in a violent way, not only 'in hatred of the faith'."

The Vatican news agency noted that one of the distinctive traits that most of the victims have in common is the "ordinariness" of their lives and of the circumstances in which they were murdered: either on their way to celebrate Mass or to carry out pastoral activities in some distant community, offering their "simple evangelical witness" in difficult contexts marked by poverty, violence, social degradation, and oppression.

"They could have gone elsewhere, moved to safer places, or desisted from their Christian commitments, perhaps reducing them, but they did not do so, even though they were aware of the situation and the dangers they faced every day", it said. — *Vatican News*

MEMORIAM

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In Loving Memory



MDM. S. SUSY NATHAN

Born: 10-08-1930
Departed: 14-01-14

Fondly missed by
children, grandchildren
and loved ones.

Your presence we miss, Your
memories we treasure,
Loving you always,
Forgetting you never.

"The Lord is my shepherd,
there is nothing
I shall want."

1st Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Mr Joseph T. M. Samy
Departed: 17.01.2023

We love you and miss you pappa.
Thank you for your love and guidance,
you showered on everyone
who knows you near and far.
A man with few words
with a big kind heart will always
be remembered by everyone.
Our thoughts of you will be there
till we meet again.

Forever loved and missed by
Loving daughters, sons-in-law,
grandchildren and loved ones near and far.

Memorial Mass will be celebrated at the
Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang on
17th January 2024 at 6.00pm
and followed by fellowship.

Take this as a personal invitation.



1st Anniversary In Loving Memory of

JOSEPHINE ANTONY
Called home to be with
the Lord on
11th January 2023

Our mother is always with us. She is the whisper of the leaves
as we walk down the street, She's the smell of certain foods we
remember, flowers we pick, the fragrance of life itself. She's the
cool hand on our brow when we are not feeling well, she's our
breath in the air on a cold day. She's the sound of the rain that
lulls us to sleep, the colours of a rainbow.

Our mother lives inside our laughter.

She's the place we came from, our first home, and she is the map
we follow with every step we take. She was our first love and
friend, but nothing on earth can separate us.

Not time, not space... not even death.

Most Merciful Lord, grant her eternal rest.

Forever in our hearts and deeply missed by
Daughters, Son-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren,
relatives and loved ones.

1st Year Memorial



Joel Joseph

From God: 3rd July 1995

Return to God : 16th January 2023

Mass will be offered on Tuesday, 16th January
2024 at 7pm at the Church St Anne, Port Klang.

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

A year passed but your soul still walks within
us and we are grateful for the company.

This isn't goodbye handsome and cheerful
young man for you are the greatest gift that
God has granted us with. You deserve more
than this world hence He's taken you up into
His arms. The world changes from year to
year, our lives from day to day, but the love
and memory of you shall never pass away.

Take care beautiful soul ☐

Deeply missed by parents, brother,
relatives and friends

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Fear not,
for I am with you;
be not dismayed,
for I am your God;
I will strengthen
you, I will
help you,
I will uphold
you with
my righteous
right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

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REST IN PEACE

Pilgrimage for religious freedom in Mexico

MEXICO CITY: With the theme *We ask for citizen participation, we demand religious freedom*, thousands of young Catholics are preparing to make a pilgrimage January 17 to the monument of Christ the King on 8,900-foot Cubilete Hill in the Mexican state of Guanajuato.

According to Andrea Perea, president of the organising movement Witness and Hope, the 42nd National Youth March is presented as a manifestation of devotion and civic commitment.

"This year, in addition to being a pilgrimage where we present the fruits of our work to the Lord, we also want it to be a march where we make our presence there a sign that the Catholic also counts," said Perea.

The leader of the Catholic movement emphasised that this is intended to be "a call to Catholics for their responsibility in the face of the reality in the country."

"The demand [for religious freedom] is because of the love we have for our nation; we seek to engender confidence in young Mexicans, reminding them that Catholics must also be responsible for their environment," she added.

Likewise, Perea explained that the march

seeks to bring together adolescents and young people "to work together to build the kingdom of God," being an annual reminder that "Mexico continues to be an ideal place for young Catholics."

The pilgrimage will go to the monument of Christ the King, an imposing 75-foot statue that crowns Cubilete Hill, erected in 1950 in tribute to the martyrs of the Cristero War.

In 1926, the Cristero War, which lasted until 1929, broke out in Mexico due to the religious persecution that Catholics suffered in the country under the government of President Plutarco Elías Calles. The regime killed not only those who took up arms to defend their faith but also leaders who peacefully expressed in public their opposition to the anticlerical laws enacted by Calles.

Despite the government's repression, the Cristero resistance was noted for its battle cry of "Long live Christ the King!" and "Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe!"

As in previous years, a large participation of young people from all over the country is expected. According to Perea, this year's goal is to break the 2020 record of 45,000 young people. — **By Diego López Colín, CNA**

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Narita | Akita | Tokyo

9 Jun FR FREDERICK J.

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Do To Others What You Would Have Them Do To You - Celebrating Human Fraternity As Church - Matthew 7:12

பிறர் உங்களுக்குச் செய்ய வேண்டும் என விருப்புகிறவற்றை எல்லாம் நீங்களும் அவர்களுக்குச் செய்யுங்கள் - மனித சகோதரத்துவத்தை திருஅவையாக கொண்டிருக்க - மத்தேயு 7:12
Apa Yang Kamu Ingin Orang Lain Lakukan Untuk Kamu, Lakukanlah Hal Itu Untuk Mereka - Menyambut Persaudaraan Manusia Sebagai Gereja - Matthew 7:12 己所不欲，勿施于人-以教會之身慶祝人類之情——馬太福音 7:12

3rd Feb (Sat)

Time 5:00pm Flag-raising, Rosary, & Novena
6:00pm Community Mass

Sub-Theme Do To Others What You Would Have Them Do To You - Celebrating Human Fraternity As Church
பிறர் உங்களுக்குச் செய்ய வேண்டும் என விருப்புகிறவற்றை எல்லாம் நீங்களும் அவர்களுக்குச் செய்யுங்கள் - மனித சகோதரத்துவத்தை திருஅவையாக கொண்டிருக்க - மத்தேயு 7:12
Apa Yang Kamu Ingin Orang Lain Lakukan Untuk Kamu, Lakukanlah Hal Itu Untuk Mereka - Menyambut Persaudaraan Manusia Sebagai Gereja
己所不欲，勿施于人-以教會之身慶祝人類之情

4th Feb (Sun)

Time 6:00am Rosary & Novena 6:30am Mass (E)
7:30am Rosary & Novena 8:00am Mass (E)
9:30am Rosary & Novena 10:00am Mass (T)
12:00pm Rosary & Novena 12:30pm Mass (BM)
5:30pm Rosary & Novena 6:00pm Mass (E)

Sub-Theme Communion, Participation & Mission in Youth
இளைஞர்களில் ஒன்றிப்பு, பங்கெடுப்பு மற்றும் தூதரான **Persekutuan, Penyertaan dan Misi dalam Belia**
青年中的共融、參與和使命

5th Feb (Mon)

Time 7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (E)
7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (T)
• Tamil - Auditorium
7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (BM)
• BM - Chapel

Sub-Theme Communion, Participation & Mission in Family
குடும்பத்தில் ஒன்றிப்பு, பங்கெடுப்பு மற்றும் தூதரான **Persekutuan, Penyertaan dan Misi dalam Keluarga**
家庭中的共融、參與、與使命

6th Feb (Tue)

Time 7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (E)
7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (T)
• Tamil - Auditorium
7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (BM)
• BM - Chapel

Sub-Theme Communion, Participation & Mission in Church
திருஅவையில் ஒன்றிப்பு, பங்கெடுப்பு மற்றும் தூதரான **Persekutuan, Penyertaan dan Misi dalam Gereja**
教會中的共融、參與和使命

7th Feb (Wed)

Time 7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (E)
7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (T)
• Tamil - Auditorium
7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (BM)
• BM - Chapel

Sub-Theme Communion, Participation & Mission in Ecology
கூலியலில் ஒன்றிப்பு, பங்கெடுப்பு மற்றும் தூதரான **Persekutuan, Penyertaan dan Misi dalam Ekologi**
生態中的共融、參與和使命

8th Feb (Thu)

Time 7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (E)
7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (T)
• Tamil - Auditorium
7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (BM)
• BM - Chapel

Sub-Theme Communion, Participation & Mission in Society / Community
சமூகத்தில் ஒன்றிப்பு, பங்கெடுப்பு மற்றும் தூதரான **Persekutuan, Penyertaan dan Misi dalam Masyarakat**
社會/社區中的共融、參與和使命

9th Feb (Fri)

Time 7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (E)
7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (T)
• Tamil - Auditorium
7:30pm Rosary & Novena 8:00pm Mass (BM)
• BM - Chapel

Sub-Theme Communion, Participation & Mission in Leadership
தலைமைத்துவத்தில் ஒன்றிப்பு, பங்கெடுப்பு மற்றும் தூதரான **Persekutuan, Penyertaan dan Misi dalam Kepimpinan**
領導中的共融、參與和使命

10th Feb (Sat)

Time 7:30am Chinese New Year Mass (Eng & Mandarin)
• Followed by Lion Dance
5:00pm Rosary & Novena 6:00pm Mass (E)
5:00pm Rosary & Novena 6:00pm Mass (T)
• Tamil - Auditorium
5:00pm Rosary & Novena 6:00pm Mass (BM)
• BM - Chapel

Sub-Theme Communion, Participation and Mission in Mental Health
மன நலத்தில் ஒன்றிப்பு, பங்கெடுப்பு மற்றும் தூதரான **Persekutuan, Penyertaan dan Misi dalam Kesihatan Mental**
精神健康中的共融、參與和使命

11th Feb (Sun) WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

Time 6:00am Rosary & Novena 6:30am Mass (E)
7:30am Rosary & Novena 8:00am Mass (E)
9:30am Rosary & Novena 10:00am Mass (T)
12:00pm Rosary & Novena 12:30pm Mass (BM)
5:30pm Rosary & Novena 6:00pm Community Mass followed by Procession & Benediction

Sub-Theme Do To Others What You Would Have Them Do To You - Celebrating Human Fraternity As Church
பிறர் உங்களுக்குச் செய்ய வேண்டும் என விருப்புகிறவற்றை எல்லாம் நீங்களும் அவர்களுக்குச் செய்யுங்கள் - மனித சகோதரத்துவத்தை திருஅவையாக கொண்டிருக்க - மத்தேயு 7:12
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己所不欲，勿施于人-以教會之身慶祝人類之情

NOTE: Confession / Rosary will be held half an hour before Mass