

MISSION STATEMENT

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

HERALD

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But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others.

2 Cor. 8:7, 9:13



Cardinal Sim remembered for his depth of faith, acts of service

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Pope Francis tells grandparents and all elderly people: 'You are needed'

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A Closer Walk with St Joseph Through Young People's Virtual Retreat

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Pope Francis warns against preachers who sow division online

VATICAN: At his general audience on Wednesday, Pope Francis warned against preachers who sow division and mistrust online.

“There is no shortage of preachers who, especially through the new means of communication, can disturb communities. They present themselves, not primarily to announce the Gospel of God who loves man in Jesus, Crucified and Risen, but to insist, as true ‘keepers of the truth,’ ... the best way to be Christians,” the Pope said June 23.

“And they strongly affirm that true Christianity is what they adhere to, often identified with certain forms of the past, and that the solution to the crises of today is to go back so as not to lose the genuineness of the faith. Today too, as then, there is a temptation to close oneself up in some of the certainties acquired in past traditions.”

Pope Francis said that these “new preachers” can be recognised by their “rigidity,” which contrasts with “preaching the Gospel that makes us free, makes us joyful.”

“The new preachers know neither meekness nor obedience,” he said.

The Pope began a new cycle of catechesis this week on St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians which, he suggested, “seems written for our times.”

“It is a very important letter, I would say decisive, not only to get to know the Apostle better but, above all, to consider some topics that he deals with in depth, showing the beauty of the Gospel,” the Pope said.

Paul “addresses some very important themes for the faith, such as those of freedom, grace and the Christian way of life, which are extremely current because they touch many aspects of the life of the Church of our day. This is a very current letter,” he added.

In particular, the Pope highlighted how St Paul responds to a pastoral concern in his Letter to the Galatians: Opponents of Paul had argued that he was not a true Apostle and therefore had no authority to preach the Gospel.

“Indeed, some Christians who had come from Judaism had infiltrated these churches



There is no shortage of preachers who, especially through the new means of communication, can disturb communities, said Pope Francis.

and began to sow theories contrary to the Apostle’s teaching, even going so far as to denigrate him. They began with doctrine — ‘No to this, yes to that,’ and then they denigrated the Apostle,” he said.

“It is the usual method: undermining the authority of the Apostle. As we can see, it is an ancient practice to present oneself at times as the sole possessor of the truth, the pure, and to aim at belittling the work of others, even with slander.”

Pope Francis said that this is exactly the way that “the evil one” seeks to divide Christian communities today.

“Let us think about how some Christian communities or dioceses first begin with stories, and then end by discrediting the priest or the bishop. It is precisely the way of the evil one, of these people who divide, who do not know how to build. And in this Letter to the Galatians, we see this process,” he said.

Paul’s Letter to the Galatians also provides a model of missionary evangelisation, the Pope said.

“In his indefatigable work of evangelisation, the Apostle succeeded in founding sev-

eral small communities scattered throughout the region of Galatia. Paul, when he arrived in a city, in a region, did not construct a great cathedral immediately, no. He created small communities that are the leaven of our Christian culture today,” he said.

Pope Francis added: “Today, too, this pastoral method is used in every missionary region. I received a letter last week from a missionary in Papua New Guinea, telling me that he is preaching the Gospel in the forest, to people who do not even know who Jesus Christ was. It is beautiful! One begins by forming small communities.”

“The path indicated by the Apostle is the liberating and ever-new path of Jesus, Crucified and Risen; it is the path of proclamation which is achieved through humility and fraternity,” the Pope said.

“It is the path of meek and obedient trust ... And this meek and obedient way leads forward in the certainty that the Holy Spirit works in the Church in every age. Ultimately, faith in the Holy Spirit present in the Church carries us forward and will save us,” he said. — **By Courtney Mares, CNA**

Synodality? What’s Synodality?

VATICAN: On May 21, the Bishops’ Synod published a note announcing the steps leading up to the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod in Rome in October 2023 on the theme *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*.

It’s a daring project, consisting of synods in every diocese in every country, from October 2021 to April 2022, as well as meetings at the continental level from September 2022 to April 2023, before the culminating meeting in a little more than two years from now.

Every bishop must appoint a diocesan contact person or a team for synodal consultation before this October; every diocese will then send its comments to the Bishops Conference, which will prepare a report with the help of a contact person for the synodal process at the national level.

Models of synodality may differ, and it is not yet clear just what concept of the “people of God” applies here. But what these models have in common is the aim of truly listening to all to ensure the participation of all in the synodal process.

This necessarily means a rebalancing of power in the Church — not only between the clergy and the laity or between men and women but also (for example) between the power of money and the contributions of the voiceless.

Therefore, even though the bishops are in charge, the synodal process requires mobilising the entire Church. Religious orders, lay movements, ‘associations of theologians’ — all have the opportunity to play an important role during the next two years.

If everything is left to the vertical institution of the Church, this two-year “synodal process” will simply perpetuate an ecclesiastical order that works only for an increasingly small number of people — that is, for clerics and the clericalised laity.

● **Turn to Editorial on page 10**

HERALD’s new editor

The Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan and Media Relations Officer, Ms Patricia Pereira, is the new Editor of *HERALD - The Catholic Weekly*.



She began her journalistic career with *HERALD* in 1996 and, ten years later, left as a trained hand for a broader experience in the corporate world. She now returns home to helm the historical and national Catholic Weekly of Malaysia.

In 2020, impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, this print media was transformed into an e-paper that currently serves Malaysia and beyond.

To this new environment, Ms Pereira brings with her the feminine charm that will highlight the tenderness that Pope Francis requests of the Church.

Welcome aboard, Pat!

Fr Lawrence Andrew SJ

Life in the 1970s — what has changed?

The other day I stumbled on a video of life on the streets of Kuala Lumpur, apparently in 1969-1970.

In the video, you could see... street barbers trimming the hair of customers at the side of public pavements under the shade of a tree. An old woman wearing a saree sitting on the pavement stringing flowers together.

Motorists and taxi drivers competing with pedestrians, trishaw-riders, cyclists, and motorcyclists for use of the streets. Fruit and vegetable vendors and their customers spilling on to the streets.

People attired casually and comfortably, with no airs, strolling and chatting with friends or family members. No one engrossed with mobile phones! Fewer plastic bags...

That period coincided with rule under a 'National Operations Council', from 1969 to 1971, in the wake of the unrest in Kuala Lumpur in May 1969. Then, like now, the entire country was under emergency rule.

But life on the streets seemed to have returned to normal in the video, even though the country had changed.

At ground level, the 1960s and 1970s generally seemed like a kinder, gentler time. Life seemed so carefree and simple back then. The streets bustled with activity, unlike now, when cars have taken over. Burglaries and robberies — apparently not as common.

The bonds of community solidarity seemed stronger in times past. People had more time for one another. Entire families would visit the homes of their relatives and friends — that was an event in itself.

Perhaps there were fewer distractions — no internet, fewer shopping malls. Movies in cinemas were more of an occasional treat.

Perhaps longer leisure hours allowed more community interaction (though this may not have applied to those in manual labour, who toiled long hours). Few people worked past

Sunday Observer

By

Anil Netto

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6.00pm. Growing up, we had a next-door neighbour who worked in a bank and returned home after 8.00pm, and we found that unusual. Today, nobody would bat an eyelid if you said you got home after 8.00pm.

When we were young, it was a real treat if we had a meal outside once a month — some satay and noodles, perhaps with a fizzy drink. Today, the reverse might be true — having a home-cooked meal would be a treat.

Another example: the highlight of school holidays — a trip to another town to see friends and relatives. Today, that doesn't qualify as a holiday, if it happens at all!

The air seemed fresher and cooler. There were more forests and green spaces. The rivers and seas were clearer and sparkled. Fruit and vegetables were fresher, more organic, with fewer pesticides, and thus healthier.

Perhaps this is just nostalgia for the past. In some ways, life was harder. Medical care was more basic. Ordinary people did not have access to top-level medical attention. People had to go to Singapore and beyond for more complicated operations. The life expectancy back then was about 65 compared to about 76 now.

It would take about a week to 10 days for an "aerogramme" (air letter) to arrive from abroad. Only a small minority had telephones. People were just getting used to TVs.

People's lives seemed less stressed, even though income levels were much lower (purchasing power was greater). Most people didn't feel like they were missing out on much. Life

must have been harder in the plantations and tin mines — though of course parents wanted a better life for their children, just as they do today.

So, what has changed? An international banker who spent most of his working life with financial institutions abroad told me, "It seems to me that, collectively, we have sold our souls for money. The pace of everything is faster — but toward what end?"

Has our quality of life improved? Or have we lost something in the process?

We have been swamped by the culture of consumerism. Our wants have soared — whether it is the trappings of wealth, the latest fads and fashions, the electronic and IT gadgets, the meals out, the holidays to more glamorous destinations.

The other thing that has happened is the neo-liberalisation of our world: 'markets', the quest for economic growth, profit maximisation and privatisation have swamped our lives.

Because of the need to maximise profits and shareholders' returns, rank-and-file employees are often squeezed. Job security takes a hit. When companies lay off staff, we often hear of those remaining — the 'fortunate' ones — grumbling they have to shoulder more than one person's work, often without a corresponding increase in pay. They are expected to grin and bear it, while working longer hours.

No longer do many people have a steady job until retirement: they may be laid off and have to take up short-term 'gigs' or 'flexible' jobs. The problem with these jobs is that they do not

have the usual social security benefits such as EPF, medical care and proper rest days.

As part of the neoliberal trend, the tax rates for the wealthy have gradually fallen over the years. To make up for the shortfall in tax revenue, expenditure on social services has been squeezed. And so, we have public schools with inadequate facilities, overstretched general hospitals and inadequate welfare support for the vulnerable.

Income and wealth inequality has widened, sparking social problems, crime, stress and mental illness — the latter two aggravated by the loss of green spaces.

The bonds of social solidarity have loosened. We hardly know our neighbours. Walls have replaced the fences and simpler demarcation that once separated our homes. My mother told me how she could run out of the back door of her family home, across the back lane and into their neighbours' house through their back door, which was kept open.

Today, it is everyone for themselves, the survival of the fittest, which follows the logic of the 'market'. Most public goods, the Commons, — even the forests and plains, the seas and rivers, healthcare and education — have been 'commodified'.

In many ways, our life today runs counter to the spirit of the Gospel, whether at the individual level or the social level. In the Gospels and the social teachings of the Church, we are exhorted to love our neighbour. That love is also extended to concern and care for our fellow human beings and the rest of Creation. We are urged to respond to the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth.

The world may have changed, but ancient Gospel truths remain. Though we face an uphill battle, let us never surrender these truths — the spirit of social solidarity and care for the community — to the onslaught of the 'market' and unbridled consumerism.

Thirteenth Sunday: Fear is useless. What is needed is faith

This Sunday I would like to consider a difficult topic, but one we all have to confront — fear.

The Miriam Webster's first definition of fear is 'an unpleasant and often strong emotion caused by the anticipation of danger'. There are many other ways that fear can be defined including the prudent use of reason, such as "If I don't study for that test I'm afraid I might fail the class" or "If I have another drink, I'm afraid that I might not be able to drive, might get into an accident or might get summoned." Fear is often used in the Bible as 'showing reverence' such as "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," Proverbs 9:10. But for this homily I will stick to the first definition of fear — a strong emotion in response to an anticipation of danger.

Jairus, the Synagogue official, was afraid. He came to Jesus with the plea of a desperate father: his daughter was dying. Could Jesus please come and heal her? Jesus left immediately. He was momentarily delayed when a lady touched his cloak and was healed, but that's a homily for another day. At Jairus' house, there was a horrible, pitiful scene. People were wailing because the girl had died. Jesus knew that her death was only so people could witness the Power of the Gospel. He knew He would heal her. What He said to Jairus was supremely significant: "Do not be afraid, just have faith." I love Luke's translation in his parallel to Mark's words: "Fear is useless, what is needed is trust."

Fear is useless. What has ever been accomplished through fear? How has fear ever helped a situation, no matter how grave it may be? Think about this. When has fear ever led to anything good happening? Again, I don't mean fear used as prudence or as reverence, but fear used as a response to anticipation of danger. A

man or woman is considering getting serious about a relationship. But he or she is afraid of getting hurt. So, the opportunity to grow in love is rejected. A man is afraid that he might not be a good husband or a good father, a woman is afraid that she might not be a good wife or a good mother, so a new relationship of love is rejected or wonderful reflections of the love of a husband and wife united to the love of God are not allowed to come into existence. An intelligent student could take a step into a difficult career, but is afraid that he or she might not succeed and so a great nurse or doctor or lawyer or engineer never comes into existence. So much is lost because of fear. "Fear is useless" the Lord says, "What is needed is faith."

Fear destroys our capacity for faith. When we have faith, we know that no matter what the outcome of a situation may be in this world, there is infinitely more to life than what our eyes see. There will be a better outcome than we could ever imagine. If we have faith, we know that if a situation does not work out, we will still be a better person for having been in that situation. The old saying that it is better to love and lose than never to love is true. People enter into marriage, or become priests, or become sisters, because they have faith that God is leading them in a direction which will turn out well in the long run, no matter what the immediate result is. I spent 14 years in a religious congregation. Priesthood was always right for me, but I was not a good fit for the religious congregation. Still, I am a better priest because of those 14 years and because of that congregation, the Salesians of St John Bosco. I was blessed by not being afraid to join the Salesians, and then blessed by not being afraid to take a step from the secure life they gave me. My story is no different than the story

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

13th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Readings: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24;

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9:13-15;

Gospel: Mark 5:21-43

of anyone who refuses to give in to fear. St John of the Cross wrote something that every husband and every wife and every one of us must have the courage to live in our lives. St John of the Cross wrote, "I went without discerning to that for which my heart was yearning." We must have faith in God to guide us and not be slaves to fear.

Nothing good ever flows from fear. Fear destroys faith. Fear is an instrument of the devil, tempting us to give up on God and His Goodness. Fear tells us to give in to a world that has rejected the Living God. We can easily become prey to the one who wants to use our fear against us. The devil wants us to deny the power of God. He wants us to give up on God. The devil can't attack God, but he can attack us, particularly our trust in God, and he does this through fear.

In 2 Tim 1:7 we read: God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power and love and self-control.

The opposite of fear is courage. The word courage comes from the Latin word for heart, cor, and the Latin word for action, acta. Courage is the action of a heart that has faith, that trusts in God.

Look at the martyrs. Two of my favourite saints are women, Perpetua and Felicity. They were threatened with every conceivable terror if they did not give up their faith in Jesus Christ. Yes, the thought of being thrown to the beasts scared them, but they did not fear that they would be left alone in that horrible arena in Carthage in 203. Felicity said, "I will suffer in Christ, and He will suffer in me." She was a

woman acting with what her heart told her was true. She was a woman of courage. She was a woman who rejected fear.

The great fear that we all must confront is the fear of dying. We know that none of us is going to get out of this life alive, but we fear death. The devil uses this particular fear to destroy our faith. He tells us the lie that all is lost if we die. The evil one is trying to get us to reject God's Goodness, to reject heaven. He whispers in our ears that if God is so good and has such good things waiting for us, then where is He now when the doctor says we have only a year or two to live, maybe less. But if we keep our eyes focused on heaven, if we reject fear and trust in the Lord, if we have faith, then our journey to God will reflect the destination He has prepared for us.

Melissa and Jonathan David Hesler wrote:

I am no longer a slave to fear. I am a child of God

You split the sea so I could walk right through it.

You drown my fear in perfect love.

You rescue me so I can stand and say, "I am a child of God." (©CCLI License #2368115).

From the decisions we must make in life to the very end of physical life itself, fear is useless. What is needed is faith. — **By Msgr Joseph A Pellegrino**



Diocesan Administrator for Brunei

May 31, 2021

To: Archbishop Wojciech Załuski
Apostolic Delegate in Brunei Darussalam
168 Jalan Imbi, 55100 Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysia

Peace be with you.

The clergy in the Apostolic Vicariate in Brunei Darussalam met today to discuss several matters following the death of His Eminence, Cardinal Cornelius Sim, on Saturday May 29, 2021.

At this meeting they appointed me to be the Diocesan Administrator. As per Canon 422, I would like to inform you of this appointment and my acceptance of it.

Please pray for me as I begin this new chapter in my life and pray also for this tiny but very vibrant Catholic community in the Apostolic Vicariate in Brunei Darussalam.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Fr Robert Leong
Parish Priest

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cc. Rt. Rev. Bishop Sebastian Francis
President
Catholic Bishops' Conference of
Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei

Church works with Tzu Chi to help hospital

KUALA LUMPUR: On June 23, the Tzu Chi Foundation of Malaysia delivered another 50 sets of medical beds and four extra units of emergency trolleys to Sungai Buloh Hospital.

This order was placed much earlier but could only be filled now as the supplier was swamped with orders.

The equipment was bought with funds from the Solidarity Fund set up by Tzu Chi and supported by various interfaith and religious groups including the Malaysian Catholic Church which pledged RM1 million to this fund.

Hence, Most Rev Julian Leow Beng Kim, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, also joined in the distribution.

Hospital Sungai Buloh Director, Dr Kuldip Kaur, who was on hand to receive the items, expressed her deepest gratitude to all.

She was touched and inspired when told that the Solidarity Fund had received support and endorsement from interfaith groups. She told us to express her sincere appreciation to all of you and that she and her team will do everything to fight on.

She said "We cannot lose to COVID". With the nation standing behind them, she said we have significantly boosted their strength to face the crisis together.

"Many of us are doing what we can to respond to this pandemic. There are pockets of communities, organisations and religious groups doing our bit to bring relief to the most vulnerable in our society. Malaysians



Archbishop Julian Leow with the Tzu Chi Foundation delivering the medical supplies to Sungai Buloh Hospital on June 23, 2021.

organise essential food items to the poor and offer also financial, emotional and spiritual assistance to our flock," said Archbishop Leow.

"When I heard of the tremendous work Tzu Chi is doing in helping our hospitals cope under these difficult circumstances, I decided to support this noble effort to ensure our healthcare system can continue to look after the soaring cases of COVID.

"Tzu Chi is well organised and is usually at the forefront of calamities and wherever humanitarian aid is needed. We invited the religious components of that Malaysian

Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBHS) to endorse and support this effort by Tzu Chi," said Archbishop Leow, who is also the president of MCCBHS.

"Our Catholic Bishops of Malaysia also pledged to contribute to this Solidarity Fund," added Archbishop Leow, who is also the President.

"I want to congratulate all Malaysians for rising to the occasion, and for contributing generously to this interfaith effort to support all our frontliners especially those in hospitals. #KitaJagaKita," he said.



**DIOCESE OF
MALACCA JOHORE**



MJD News Update #45

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

The Hari Kesyukuran or Gawai-Kaamatan online Masses and celebrations are on.

Fathers' Day wishes and prayers were dedicated to the fathers. Just like birthdays and anniversaries, they are times for remembering our fathers. They give life.

People connect, thoughts become one, memories are valued, prayers are evoked. There is no room for 'dissociated remembering'. Remembering bonds people.

The funny times are here. Douglas Lim, Harith Iskander, Allan Pereira and many others, with their puns, fill the Malaysian air with laughter. The cartoonists like Zunar, Fahmi and others see the funny side of the Malaysian scene. The clowns in full suit and garbs and their speeches which are so outrageous, tickle us, and we shake our heads and say: "memang tak masuk akal". It is funny that we have not enough vaccines to immunise more. Money goes out and people have yet to receive them. The fantastic SPM results in chaotic times is making people wonder. Funny things are happening.

1.0 A Thought for the Week:

A new green college campus was built, but one thing was still debated: Where in the grass should we put the paved walkways? Some felt the walkways should be around the edges, to leave the centre green and untouched.

Some felt the walkways should cut diagonal, connecting all buildings to all buildings.



One professor had the winning idea: Don't make any walkways this year.

At the end of the year, look at where the grass is worn away, showing us where the students are walking. Then pave just those paths.

For us to ponder: Resist the urge to figure everything out in advance. The beginning of everything is laced with a beautiful kind of ignorance. When people expect you to make decisions in advance, get in the habit of saying, "I don't know yet".

My comment: Not everything can be planned or laid out, sometimes new paths must be allowed to emerge naturally.

2.0 Announcements for this Week:

2.1 **Congratulations to Bishop Emeritus Paul Tan, who celebrated his 50th Anniversary as priest on June 21, 2021.**

2.2 The **Caritas-Diocese of Malacca Jo-**

hore reported that they received 1,261 applications for the "Bantuan Dapur". The parish and community frontliners have been mobilised to facilitate feeding the poor, the jobless and the hungry. Cash help, food items and Caritas-MJD funds have helped families and frontliners to reach out. You can also be part of this charity initiative.

2.3 **Wisdom and Money**, an organisation dedicated to helping people build awareness in their relationship with finances, is introducing their philosophy and mission. It is about transforming our lives by creating a spiritually grounded relationship to wealth and integrating contemplative practice into our financial decisions. Look up **Wisdom and Money** <https://wisdomandmoney.org/about/> or join **Wisdom and Money** which is holding its annual **Be Present with Money** event online from June 24-27.

Learn more about event details and registration at <https://wisdomandmoney.org/event/be-present-with-wisdom-money-2/>.

2.4 **Catholics@Home**, a Catholic podcast, hosted by Fr Clarence Dass of Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese, will be channelled via our online platform. The programmes are available in the four main languages.

Linkup and see. More info next time.

2.5 The **Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary** also known as the CSCM Sisters of Taiwan, are celebrating their **40th Anniversary of Mission in the MJD**. A series of talks in Mandarin are available on Facebook and YouTube. Congratulations to the

Sisters. May you continue to witness and give glory to the Lord of Missions.

3.0 This Week's Question & Query.

The Q asks: **Becoming A Synodal Church?** Is it going to be easy?

3.1 **Nicholas Lash** commented: It will be a shift in momentum, a reversal from a monarchical, centralised model of Church. It is towards a more participative Synodal model. The Pope has problems with an episcopate unable to carry "synodality", the apathy of many, the downright well organised and well financed opposition of some, and this turbulent time of COVID-19.

3.2 **Becoming a Synodal Church** is the work of the whole Church, faithful, priests and bishops, and the Pope, inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is a Church which is poor and for the poor, called to go down into the underground, and pass from the hyper-virtual, fleshless world to the suffering flesh of the poor. (*Pope Francis & Church Reform, The Way* Oct.2020, p.110-111)

Thank you for reading. Let us continue to build God's Kingdom together. There is no need to be serious all the time. Smile! Laugh! They lighten our burdens. It helps us sleep well. Continue to be safe and keep one another safe.

Bishop Bernard Paul
June 25, 2021

[Click here to watch the video](#)

Getting vaccinated is an act of love for others

KUALA LUMPUR: In line with the Malaysian Government's efforts to inoculate 80 per cent of the population by the end of 2021, the Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, Most Rev Julian Leow, has also called on Catholics to register for the vaccine.

Despite this clarion call, many still have vaccine hesitancy. One such person was Fr Raymond Pereira, parish priest at the Church of St Thomas More in Subang Jaya.

Fr Raymond was initially doubtful about getting vaccinated as he had many questions. "I was unsure about which vaccine was best for me, what the vaccines are made of, and whether the vaccines were properly developed, given the short span of time," he confessed.



Archbishop Julian Leow (L) and Fr Raymond Pereira (R) after receiving their first dose.



However when the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in Malaysia started skyrocketing in late May, and with the emergence of

variants, Fr Raymond realised that he should get vaccinated in order to protect himself and the ones around him, especially since priests are con-

sidered frontliners too.

He said, "After seeking advice from a medical doctor, I prayed to the Holy Spirit and sought the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary for discernment. I felt inspired and encouraged to register for the vaccine.

"I then registered through the MySejahtera app and within a few days received an appointment to be vaccinated with Sinovac at Setia City Convention Centre on June 18," said Fr Raymond, who testified that he felt a sense of peace and calm after registering.

Following the vaccination, he did not suffer from any side effects. "I felt good and could sleep well," he said. His second jab is sched-

uled for July 9.

With the large amount of fake news that has caused vaccine hesitancy, Fr Raymond said, "Don't believe everything that you read in social media or messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram. Always check that the information is from a credible source. The best is to speak to your doctor for information and advice."

Even though it is one's free choice to be vaccinated or not, Fr Raymond encourages everyone to do so in order to protect oneself and loved ones. "Choosing to get vaccinated is an act of love for others done in the spirit of 'love thy neighbour'. If you still have doubts, pray and have faith," he said. — *By Julie Lim*

Youth volunteering at vaccination centres

KUALA LUMPUR: St Therese of Lisieux reminds us that "nothing is small in the eyes of God. Do all that you do with love." Volunteering is a way to demonstrate our love for our neighbours. Furthermore, service of others is enshrined in the social teaching of the Church. Christ set an example for us by tirelessly and lovingly serving all humanity (Mk 10: 35-45).

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage the world and solidarity in vaccination is crucial to combat this crisis. Thus, we have to

accelerate the vaccination process. In Malaysia, the government has set up multiple vaccination centres and volunteers, young and old, are needed. Let the Holy Spirit move us to volunteer, visit MyVAC (Malaysia Vaccine Support Volunteers) www.myvac.com.my to register.

Leading by example, Pope Francis has highlighted the importance of volunteering, and has met with different volunteer groups on numerous occasions. He said "Good" is accomplished and is effective, especially when it is done without seek-

ing recompense and visibility, in the concrete situations of daily life."

We thank the Lord for the many fine young women and men who are volunteering at vaccination centres. They have responded to Pope Francis' call to the youths, "I ask you to build the future. Make the world a better place. Please don't see life from afar. Live it. Jesus didn't stay out on a balcony. Instead, He got involved. Follow Jesus' example."

Lindungi Diri, Lindungi Semua — By Prof Chris Ng
See below for their sharings

Vatican's COVID-19 vaccine push 'extremely helpful'

MARYLAND, US: In recent months, the Vatican has used its global megaphone to remind Catholics that the COVID-19 vaccines are morally acceptable, and to call on wealthy countries to equitably distribute the vaccine. It has even turned a papal audience hall into a vaccination clinic for the poor of Rome.

The head of the US National Institutes of Health, Dr Francis Collins, is praising the Vatican's leadership in the push for vaccine acceptance as "extremely helpful."

"Having a leader in the Catholic Church who has been so outspoken and so willing to lay out the facts and not be dissuaded by a lot of the myths and even conspiracies has been really helpful," Collins said in an interview. "I'm really delighted the Vatican has taken on this role."

Pope Francis has not minced words on the topic, suggesting that a refusal to take the vaccine is "suicidal."

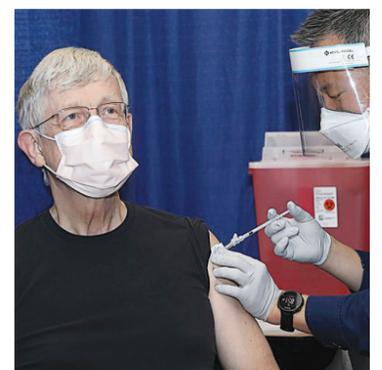
Collins, who is a practicing Christian and was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI to the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences in 2009, says he agrees with Francis' assessment and "not just because he and I have the same name."

"He is making a very good point. We have something here that is safe and effective.

"Why would you not want to protect yourself from what could be a fatal disease?" Collins asked. "If you say 'no,' well, yeah maybe you are kind of making a suicidal decision, whether you think about it that way or not."

Collins said he believes religious leaders have a special obligation to encourage their congregants to get vaccinated.

"As a person of faith myself, as well as a scientist, I've been spending a fair amount of my time talking with faith leaders, encouraging them to see themselves as really important voices," he said. "People are looking for credible spokespersons who they think have their best interests at heart



Dr Francis Collins, director of the US National Institutes of Health, receives his second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the NIH Clinical Centre. (Courtesy of National Institutes of Health)

to give them some guidance about this."

Collins said that he believes it is important and powerful "to have your pastor or your priest basically say, 'You know, I've looked into this and for my flock, I do think this is something that is going to help you and it will help all of us, because we will be able to get back together again safely.'"

After all, he believes people of faith should be in "the 'love your neighbour' space."

Given the efficacy and the safety of the vaccines, he added, "the opportunity to give that gift to everybody, and have them unwrap the gift and roll up their sleeve just makes so much sense, so I would hope schools wouldn't really have to impose that requirement and people would basically say, 'Well, of course I want that for my kids.'"

Collins says he hopes those who remain on the fence about getting vaccinated will realise how much more interior freedom they will experience by not having the fear of catching or spreading the virus.

And, for him, that includes being able to "pray together, and plan together and just have the experience of being a Christian community again." — *By Christopher White, NCR*

"When I first started volunteering at the vaccination centre, my main goal was to help the frontliners in combating this outbreak. However, meeting people of different ages made me realize how vital it is to be vaccinated as cases increase. I urge all to join in and help the frontliners in battling this pandemic! As mentioned in Hebrews 13:16, "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." — *Aaron Stone, CSS, University of Malaya Vaccination Centre*



"Volunteering has been a great experience. Besides handling the check-out counter, we also manage the logistics flow. I have learned a lot about the challenges facing frontliners and the

very real problem of burnout. I urge all who are hesitating to read credible articles in making a decision. *Kita bantu kita!* — *John Paul Sim, CSS, UMMC Vaccination Centre*

"Volunteering is one of the most amazing moments that I had experienced! I was helping at the registration counter to ensure the vaccination process runs smoothly. I also made new friends from different faculties in UM as well as meeting a lot of people and seeing different nationalities. All in all, I'm elated to be part of the volunteering team." — *Scholastica*



Philip, CSS, University of Malaya Vaccination Centre.

"An opportunity of the century (literally!) to aid the world in distress. I decided to join when the darkness of men manifested in forms of racism, discrimination and denial. I advise all to let fear motivate you, but never let it paralyse you. Join us, so that we may still call earth home." — *Adrian Goh CR, Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Selangor. Sunway Pyramid Convention Vaccination Centre*



"This volunteering opportunity has taught me patience and empathy when dealing with the older generation, as their languages and needs were catered differently; the key to it is assurance. It was a memorable experience and I highly encourage all to join us in service to humanity" — *Grace Goh XZ, Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Selangor. Sunway Pyramid Convention Vaccination Centre*



Cardinal Sim remembered for his depth of faith, acts of service

BRUNEI: During the Requiem Mass for His Eminence Cardinal Cornelius Sim held on June 15, Fr Arin Sugit paid homage to the late Bishop of Brunei in his homily. He highlighted the depth of faith of the late Cardinal and his motto of "Duc in Altum", which means "put out into the deep".

"Cardinal Sim measured the success of the Church not by the size [of its congregation] or its wealth, but by whether or not its people were deep seekers of faith," Fr Sugit said during the Requiem Mass, which was celebrated at the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption in Bandar Seri Begawan, where Cardinal Sim was the parish priest.

"His love for the truth and his [depth of thought] showed in his actions. [During his homilies], he would speak the truth, which would touch us all deep in our hearts. He



Fr Robert Leong blesses the coffin with holy water after the Requiem Mass at the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, June 15, 2021. (photo/Church of Our Lady of the Assumption)

was called to tell the truth," he added.

As Cardinal of Brunei, His Eminence Cardinal Sim established seven areas of priority for the nation's Apostolic Vicariate, namely

adult faith formation, Bible literacy, youth, family, vocations, evangelisation and social welfare, particularly for migrants.

Fr Sugit also highlighted the late

Cardinal's commitment to the youth, stating that he dutifully attended consecutive World Youth Day(s) in countries all over the world, to participate and connect with the youth.

"He was very much immersed with the youth, and he truly reflected the life of Christ [in his love of the youth]," he said.

Fr Sugit further explained the commitment the late Cardinal had to performing social work in the migrant community and in prisons.

"He has done much in Catholic social work. He set up many programmes for the migrant community, and he has visited prisons, performing Eucharistic celebrations there twice a year," he said.

Fr Sugit also shared that Cardinal Sim regularly visited the sick in hospital, and was heavily involved in youth and family pastoral care and

counselling.

Finally, Fr Sugit explained that Cardinal Sim chose to lead the clergy and his congregation by example and advised the priests to do the same.

"Cardinal Sim always told us that as leaders and as priests, we must know the way, show the way and lead the way. He always led by example, imitating Jesus Christ his Saviour, the Way the Truth and the Life," he said.

His Eminence Cardinal Cornelius Sim passed away on May 29 at a hospital in Taiwan where he was undergoing treatment for cancer. He was 69 years old. Cardinal Sim was appointed the first Apostolic Vicar of Brunei in 2004 and was made Cardinal of Brunei by Pope Francis in November 2020. He was also the country's first Catholic priest. — *By Anette Appaduray*

Counselling goes online due to the lockdown

PLENTONG, JOHOR: The pandemic has induced society to adapt to new norms like wearing face masks and practising social distancing when we venture out of our homes. Face-to-face meetings are discouraged as much as possible, especially in recent weeks, to stem the increased spread of the virus. As we go into prolonged lockdowns, families and friends are kept separated, activities are reduced to almost non-existence and the feeling of being in isolation and depression grows.

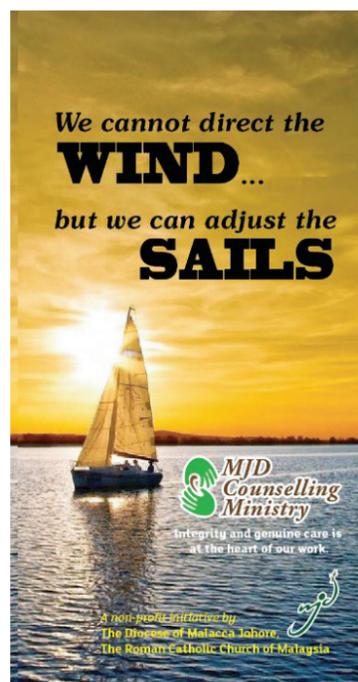
The MJD Counselling Ministry is one of the ministries that is affected since providing professional counselling services in the Diocese of Malacca-Johore require face-to-face encounters. As such, it is forced to also adapt to new norms and with the increasing mental conditions of isolation and depression, the ministry is a necessary vital human link.

The ministry, established in 2006, is run by counsellors/para-counsellors who have undergone challenging training, which includes personal therapy. Their counselling work is constantly supervised by accredited

practitioners. The aim of counselling is to assist and support individuals who are going through difficult emotional situations. Through counselling, individuals can be helped to discover a new outlook on life, making the necessary changes to cope. It can also result in finding different ways of responding to situations and people in their daily lives.

Grace M. Beck, a member of the ministry team based in Malacca, shared the challenges the ministry faced during the sudden change more than a year ago. Beck shared that during the first MCO, effective mid-March 2020, the ministry's helpline was receiving urgent calls and on-going WhatsApp messages that required immediate help over the phone. The levels of anxiety amongst people were heightened. While doing the best she could over the phone in lockdown, she then spelt out a proposal to the ministry to launch virtual/online counselling.

Thereafter, MJD Counselling Ministry started its first virtual counselling in mid-April 2020. It adopts a safe, private and HIPAA Compliant online platform to con-



duct one-on-one video session with clients. Moving to online counselling is a necessity in these changing times so that we can reach out to more people. It requires a mindset that is open to change, to adapt, to accept and to keep moving forward



KL Archdiocese The Mental Health Team of the Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry- Life Journey Wellness Centre, is available for psychosocial support. Please make an appointment at Tel: 03-82118214 or WhatsApp: 0179157188

in order to serve. Beck added that the pandemic came with a blessing – we can serve online beyond the diocese. Accustomed to the traditional settings, it takes quite a bit of time for some to venture into it. Hence, in the initial stages, only a few of them were available. Now, we have more members serving over the online platform.

"We cannot direct the wind but we can adjust the sails" – this quote which is found on their ministry's brochure to encourage people seeking counselling, also seems to apply to how the ministry has had to adapt

to the changing environment in providing their much-needed services.

Just recently, the ministry has again announced its presence online in the hope of bringing about greater visibility as many are still not aware that such services have been available in the diocese since April 2020.

To arrange for an initial appointment or request further information, please call the counselling helpline: 016-7099465 from Monday to Friday between 9.00am to 5.00pm. If calls are unanswered, please SMS or WhatsApp to the above number. — *By Angila Yong, ofs*

Seniors have rosary relay for their parish priest

KUALA LUMPUR: When the members of PAMSPEC (Parish Ministry of Senior Persons Circle) heard that their parish priest, Fr Joachim Tan, had been admitted to hospital, they organised a Rosary Relay for his speedy recovery. They were at that time already praying for Fr Augustine Lee who was then in a hospital in Kuantan and Fr Larry Tan SJ who was undergoing treatment for cancer in Kuching. They decided to include these two priests in their Rosary intentions.

They also added five other intentions: For Pope Francis' intention for the month of June; for all the unwell in their community, families, relatives and friends; for an end to the current pandemic; for all the

souls in purgatory especially those who have no one to pray for them; for their own special intentions that Our Lord bless them, their families and friends and, in particular, for Msgr Daniel Lim and all the residents in Sri Seronok with good health, happiness and peace.

With all these intentions in mind, they posted a notice in their WhatsApp PAMSPEC NEWS chat informing members that they were organising a nine-day Rosary Relay for the speedy recovery of their parish priest and five other intentions as stated. The Rosary would be prayed every half hour with the first one starting at 6.00am and the last one at 6.30pm for nine consecutive days. Members were to pray in their

own homes. Upon the completion of the Rosary, the member had to pass the spiritual Rosary to the next person in the rota with a blessing for the person and a short prayer via WhatsApp.

The response was overwhelming as thirty-four members signed up within a short time. The others who did not sign up promised to pray the Rosary at home in their own time. With the rota completed the first Rosary started at 6.00am on Friday June 11, the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. At the completion of the Rosary Relay on Saturday June 19, there was a virtual wrap-up prayer session via Zoom presided by Msgr Daniel Lim and attended by all the members.

In his opening address, Msgr Lim commended the members for their devotion to the Rosary and for so faithfully praying it every half hour for nine days consecutively. He said that when each of us recites the Rosary individually, we offer up a rose to Mother Mary. And when we pray the Rosary in a group, we offer up a huge crown of roses to Her. He asked, "Why do you pray the Rosary?" He said he prayed because it is Mother Mary's favourite prayer. In all her apparitions she would always appeal to all to pray the Rosary.

The Rosary is also a Bible-based meditation on the lives of Jesus and Mary. He affirmed that Mother Mary would ask Jesus to answer all

the intentions of the Rosary Relay. In conclusion, he bestowed his apostolic blessing on all present.

All the members were refreshed and energised and were grateful to be able to pray together in this new way during the MCO. It was the first time that they had prayed a Rosary Relay. They could feel the support, love and camaraderie among themselves and requested for more of this type of prayers as they were all encouraged to stay home. The Chairman announced that she would organise another virtual prayer session in July in conjunction with the Feast of St Anne, since they would not be able to make their annual pilgrimage to the Church of St Anne. — *By Elena Chan*

Parishes on the frontline in COVID-19 emergency

HO CHI MINH: Vietnam continues to cope with a complicated pandemic situation, with 13,483 coronavirus cases reported as of June 21.

Some 1,714 cases have been reported in Hồ Chí Minh City alone. Catholic groups in the local archdiocese have been mobilised to offer assistance.

Fr Joseph Đinh Văn Thè, vicar of Tân Trang parish, invited the faithful to pray and carry out works of charity.

The parish has organised special distributions of food for those who are worse off such as garbage collectors, seniors, the sick and those who live in the poorest areas.

"Many families are facing great challenges, but we always have faith in God," Fr Joseph explained. "We pray for everyone's peace and for the end of the pandemic."

At the same time, "we thank all those who, through their generos-



Parishes stand with people who lost their jobs as a result of the emergency. (AsiaNews photo)

ity, help us bring this aid in a spirit of charity and love".

In St Martin parish, Fr Peter Vũ Minh Hùng opened Quán Com 2000 in 2016, a rice store where

people can buy a meal for only 2,000 dongs (a few US cents).

As a result of the pandemic, the store was forced to close, but it was reorganised to distribute

rice to the poor, including lottery ticket sellers and motorcycle taxi drivers.

Between 500 and 600 people come every day, with Fr Peter tak-

ing part in handing out the food.

Fr Joseph Nguyễn Trường Thạch SDB, vicar of Xuân Hiệp, handed out food parcels, also thanks to contributions from the Charity and Social Activities Office of the Vietnamese Jesuit province.

The parish has also provided small sums to support those who cannot pay their water and electricity bills or for the purchase of medicines.

One of the areas most affected by COVID-29, Hoàng Mai parish, was placed under quarantine recently. Despite this situation, families still share food and masks in a spirit of charity.

"At such a time, we have not let ourselves be overcome by pessimism and sadness," some parishioners told *AsiaNews*. "We have learnt to take care of each other, bringing joy and strengthening our friendship." — **By Peter Tran, AsiaNews**

Catholic activist Angela Gomes in the crosshairs of Hindu radicals



Many Hindus stand by the Catholic activist, a laureate of the Ramon Magsaysay Award, the Asian Nobel Prize, for her work on behalf of the poor and the marginalised. (AsiaNews photo)

DHAKA: The Banchte Shekha (Learn to Survive), a Christian NGO led by Catholic Angela Gomes, has come in the crosshairs of a Hindu group, Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mahajote, which on Saturday denounced its actions during a meeting at the Dhaka Press Circle.

According to Gobinda Chandra Pramanik, Secretary General of the Hindu organisation, the Christian movement and the Manjsher Janno Foundation "promote activities against Hindus". Unless the Christian NGO changes its course, it would face "terrible consequences", Pramanik warned.

The attack was sparked by the fight for equality promoted by the Christian group in favour of women. In Hindu tradition, women have no title or claim to inheritance and do not get property from their parents.

Banchte Shekha and other groups

have long fought for equal opportunity with the aim of changing inheritance rules. In recent years, the two targeted NGOs have distinguished themselves for their work on behalf of the poor and the marginalised.

The Manjsher Janno Foundation is at the forefront of human rights and basic assistance, as well as campaigning against abuse and violence against minorities.

Banchte Shekha has been working since 1976 to improve the socio-economic status of women and girls. Its executive director, Angela Gomes, won the 1999 Ramon Magsaysay Award, also known as the Asian Nobel prize.

Speaking to *AsiaNews*, the activist targeted by Hindu extremists said that "we are not working against Hindus", but "we work for people of all faiths. The allegations against us are false."

Banchte Shekha's work is so appreciated that many Hindus and

other movements have come out against the Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mahajote and slammed the anti-Christian accusations.

These "NGOs are working for women's empowerment," said Sunjon Roy, a young Hindu man. "In India, Hindus have changed the inheritance law and today women enjoy equal rights; however, some radical leaders in Bangladesh do not want change."

The radical Hindu movement has also distinguished itself in other cases. It has demanded the construction of more Hindu temples and places of worship, the allocation of more funds for minorities in the government budget, the introduction of a different electoral system for the Hindu community with 60 reserved seats, the creation of a ministry for minorities, and a national holiday for the Hindu feast of Rathajatra. — **By Sumon Corraya, AsiaNews**

Kim Jong-un's sister temporarily freezes dialogue with the US

SEOUL: Kim Yo-jong has dampened hopes for dialogue with the United States. In a statement released June 22 by the KCNA state news agency, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said Washington has wrong expectations of any talks between the two sides.

Kim Yo-jong's words are a response to the claims made by Jake Sullivan, US President Joe Biden's National Security Advisor. On June 20, Sullivan spoke of an "interesting signal" from Kim Jong-un. Last week, during a meeting of the Workers' Party (in power in North Korea since the end of the Second World War), the strongman from Pyongyang declared that his country must be ready for both dialogue and confrontation with the United States.

North Korea is isolated from the international community (except China, and to some degree Rus-

sia), and has been subjected to international sanctions for years because of its nuclear and missile program. Since the end of 2017, in the framework of negotiations with former US President Donald Trump, Pyongyang has unilaterally decreed a moratorium on nuclear tests and long-range ballistic tests.

The dialogue between Washington and the Kim regime is in a phase of stagnation with an end to military exercises between the Washington and Seoul forces as a precondition for their return to talks.

The US and South Korea have launched a first signal of openness to the North. The two allies today declared their intention to cancel their labour forum on Pyongyang policies; the Kim Jong-un regime considers the body an obstacle to inter-Korean dialogue. — **AsiaNews/Agencies**



North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un (left) and his sister Kim Yo-Jong (right) at the inter-Korean summit at the Peace House in Panmunjom, South Korea, on April 27, 2018. (AsiaNews photo)

Myanmar cardinal urges people to have faith and hope

NAYPYITAW: As Myanmar is being tossed about “in the stormy seas of man-made disaster: of unending war, anguished displacement, inflicted starvation, death, detention and despair”, the country’s Catholic Church leader is urging his fellow citizens not to lose their faith and hope, saying “a new Myanmar of peace and justice is not impossible”. “Dear Myanmar people, this darkness will go away. Let us believe. Let us hope,” Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon urged in his homily on Sunday, June 20.

Hours later, Pope Francis followed it up with another call for peace in Myanmar. “May the Heart of Christ touch the hearts of everyone, bringing peace to Myanmar!” the Pope said in his Sunday midday ‘Angelus’ prayer in the Vatican.

“I join my voice to that of the Bishops of Myanmar, who last week launched an appeal calling the entire world’s attention to the heartrending experience of thousands of people in that country who are displaced and have been dying of hunger,” the Pope said. “We implore with all courtesy that humanitarian corridors be permitted” and that “churches, pagodas, monasteries, mosques, temples, schools and hospitals” be respected as neutral places of refuge”, the Pope said, citing Myanmar’s bishops.

The impoverished south-east Asian nation has been in turmoil since the Feb 1 military coup that ousted the elected government and detained its leader, Aung San



People protesting against the military coup in Monywa, Myanmar. (Vatican News photo)

Suu Kyi. Protests and strikes against the coup have paralysed parts of the economy.

The coup has re-ignited Myanmar’s old conflicts between the military and some of the armed ethnic organisations, as well as independent civil resistance groups. Areas occupied by the Kachin, Chin, Karen and Kayah ethnic groups, who have been facing oppression and persecution at the hands of the military for decades, are largely Christian. Recently, the military has shelled churches in Chin and Kayah states and arrested priests on suspicion of supporting insurgent groups.

In May, martial law was imposed on Mindat, in Chin state, after an ambush by a local

resistance group inflicted heavy casualties on the army. Meanwhile, in Kayah state, three churches in Loikaw Diocese, where many civilians had taken shelter, were shelled by the military. Thousands have been displaced because of the clashes and military action.

In his homily, Cardinal Bo, who is president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Myanmar (CBCM), drew a parallel between Myanmar’s situation and the day’s Gospel reading where Jesus calms the stormy sea. Drawing attention to the words of Jesus – “Do you not have faith?” – the cardinal said, “To the more than 120,000 people who were displaced in the conflict zones

of Mindat and Loikaw, and those who were wounded inside the churches, Jesus’ words are consoling. Without food and medicine, with fear and anxiety, in rain and cold,” he said, “these people were tossed like the boat we see in the Gospel today.” He said that Jesus was challenging them to have faith, especially during these most difficult times when there is the temptation to lose hope.

Cardinal Bo already sees the light on the horizon with a greater mutual understanding among the Kachin, Karen, Kayah and Chin ethnic communities and their pains. “It may be long but it is dawn,” he said. Pain has united us in common humanity. This took seventy years. But this has happened. A new Myanmar of peace and justice is not impossible”, he said.

Cardinal Bo, who is also president of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC), thus urged the people to be steadfast in faith and hope, and pray that the “rocks of injustice” may melt. “Guns,” he said, “will never solve this country’s problems. Only a change of heart can heal this long-suffering nation. Let us all ‘enter the battlefield of prayer – become prayer warriors!’” he exhorted. He also urged prayers for the army, “for every soldier who holds a gun”, so that their hearts melt and they understand that their “violence is not against any enemy nation” but “against our own people”. — **By Robin Gomes, Vatican News**

Indian state’s new law aims to end Christians’ educational rights



People participate in a candlelight vigil in Ahmedabad on Feb 28, 2021 to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the Gujarat riots of 2002. (UCA News photo/Sam Panthaky)

GANDHINAGAR: Christian and other religious minorities in western India’s Gujarat state are upset about a new state law which they say curtails their right to manage their educational institutions.

Religious minorities jointly applied to the state’s High Court on June 7 seeking to quash the Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (Amendment) Act, 2021, which came into effect on June 1.

“The new law has practically erased the rights of all religious minorities guaranteed in the constitution to establish and manage educational institutions,” said Fr Teles Fernandes, secretary of Gujarat Education Board of Catholic Institutions.

Until now, church-run educational institutions enjoyed the right to appoint non-teaching and teaching staff, including the principal. They also framed rules and regulations for the administration of the institution and to discipline the students and staff.

“But the new law has withdrawn all such powers,” said Fr Fernandes on June 7.

The new law says all minority-run institutions that receive the state’s financial aid should appoint staff, including principals, according to government norms.

All appointments, the law says, must be done by the government through its Central Recruitment Committee, which will select and appoint staff in minority schools as per their merit list.

Church-run institutions mostly select Catholics, often priests and nuns, as heads of schools to retain the Catholic character of the institutions. Church leaders say the new law will take away the Christian identity of church-managed schools.

The law says school managements have to confirm appointments within seven days. In cases of delays, punitive action will be taken against the school management, including derecognition of the school’s registration. —

By Saji Thomas, ucanews.com

VACANCY ACCOUNTANT

(Archdiocesan Office, Jalan Bukit Nanas, Kuala Lumpur)

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Responsible for all accounts related spectrum and the day-to-day operations in Accounts;
- Responsible for the preparation of financial statements and monthly management reports with compliance to accounting standards and organization’s policies ;
- Responsible for the timely submission of monthly, quarterly and yearly management accounts and periodic reports ;
- Oversee preparation of quarterly forecasts, annual financial budgets, cash flow management and banking facilities ;
- Liaise with internal / external auditors, tax agents, bankers and other statutory bodies / authorities ;
- Implement effective internal controls and compliance with standard operating procedures ;
- Lead and manage a team of staff in the division ;
- Review and provide training and guidance to subordinates.

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- Degree in Finance / Accountancy / Banking or Professional Qualifications in ACCA, CPA or its equivalent ;
- Minimum five (5) years working experiences in the related field ;
- Hands-on with good knowledge of accounting principles and standards ;
- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills ;
- Good attitude, meticulous, independent, highly responsible and committed ;
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills ;
- Able to work under pressure and meet tight deadlines ;
- Mature and able to interact with Senior Management and staff at all levels ;
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- Able to commence work immediately or on short notice.

Salary shall commensurate with candidates’ experiences, track record of achievements and qualifications. Those interested are invited to send in their application along with their resume / portfolio online to recruit@archkl.org. Only shortlisted candidates will be notified.

Closing Date: 30th June 2021

Pope Francis tells grandparents and all elderly people: 'You are needed'

VATICAN: Writing to his peers, Catholics who have reached a venerable age like he has, Pope Francis told older Catholics that God is close to them and still has plans for their lives.

"I was called to become the bishop of Rome when I had reached, so to speak, retirement age, and thought I would not be doing anything new," said the Pope, who is 84 now and was elected when he was 76.

"The Lord is always — always — close to us. He is close to us with new possibilities, new ideas, new consolations, but always close to us. You know that the Lord is eternal; he never, ever goes into retirement,"

the Pope wrote in his message for the Catholic Church's first celebration of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

"Writing to his peers, Catholics who have reached a venerable age like he has, Pope Francis told older Catholics that God is close to them and still has plans for their lives."

The message was released at the Vatican June 22 in anticipation of the celebration July 25, the Sunday closest to the feast of Sts Joachim and Anne, Jesus' grandparents.

The Vatican also announced that people who attend a Mass or other

celebration for the day, "devote adequate time to actually or virtually visiting their elderly brothers and sisters in need or in difficulty" or join in prayers for the elderly July 25 can receive a plenary indulgence as long as they fulfil the usual requirements of also going to confession, receiving the Eucharist and praying for the intentions of the pope.

The indulgence also is available to "the elderly sick and all those who, unable to leave their homes for a serious reason, will unite themselves spiritually to the sacred functions of the world day, offering to the merciful God their prayers, pains or sufferings of their lives," the Vatican said.



The Pope has chosen the theme "I am with you always," for the first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, to be celebrated July 25. (Vatican Media)

There is no retirement from proclaiming the Gospel

VATICAN: Pope Francis' message for World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, which was distributed in writing and on video, acknowledged how much many older people around the world suffered and continue to suffer physically, emotionally and spiritually, because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But he also insisted that the Christian call to share the Gospel is as pertinent now for all of them as it ever was.

"Think about it: what is our vocation today, at our age? To preserve our roots, to pass on the faith to the young and to care for the little ones," he wrote. "Never forget this."

"It makes no difference how old you are, whether you still work or not, whether you are alone or have a family, whether you became a grandmother or grandfather at a young age or later, whether you are still independent or need as-

sistance," he said. "There is no retirement age from the work of proclaiming the Gospel and handing down traditions to your grandchildren. You just need to set out and undertake something new."

Pope Francis said he knew many older people might wonder how they could be called to something new when their "energy is running out" or they cannot even leave the residence where they live. They may even ask, "Isn't my solitude already a sufficiently heavy burden?"

"Think about it: what is our vocation today, at our age? To preserve our roots, to pass on the faith to the young and to care for the little ones. Never forget this."

"You are needed in order to help build, in fraternity and social friendship, the world of tomorrow: the world in which we, together

with our children and grandchildren, will live once the storm has subsided," the Pope insisted.

A better future, he said, must be built on the pillars of "dreams, memory and prayer," pillars that "even the frailest among us" can help erect with God's help.

While it is true that the energy and enthusiasm of the young is needed to help set global society on a new path, "our dreams of justice, of peace, of solidarity can make it possible for our young people to have new visions," the Pope wrote. "You need to show that it is possible to emerge renewed from an experience of hardship. I am sure that you have had more than one such experience: in your life you have faced any number of troubles and yet were able to pull through. Use those experiences to learn how to pull through now."

While many people, young and old, act as if the reminiscences of

the elderly are boring, Pope Francis said that "without memory, ... we will never be able to build; without a foundation, we can never build a house. Never. And the foundation of life is memory."

As examples, the Pope cited the experience many older people have had of war or of needing to emigrate.

Sharing "the painful memory of war," he said, is important "for helping the young to learn the value of peace."

"I also think of my own grandparents, and those among you who had to emigrate and know how hard it is to leave everything behind, as so many people continue to do today, in hope of a future," he said. "Some of those people may even now be at our side, caring for us. These kinds of memory can help to build a more humane and welcoming world."

Turning to the importance of prayer, Pope Francis cited "my

predecessor, Pope Benedict, himself a saintly elderly person who continues to pray and work for the Church" at the age of 94.

"The prayer of the elderly can protect the world, helping it perhaps more effectively than the frenetic activity of many others," the Pope quoted his predecessor as saying. "He spoke those words in 2012, toward the end of his pontificate. There is something beautiful here."

"Your prayer is a very precious resource: a deep breath that the Church and the world urgently need," Pope Francis told the elderly. "Especially in these difficult times for our human family, as we continue to sail in the same boat across the stormy sea of the pandemic, your intercession for the world and for the Church has great value: it inspires in everyone the serene trust that we will soon come to shore." — **By Cindy Wooden, CNS**

Vatican economy secretariat issues regulations on new norms for awarding public contracts

VATICAN: The Vatican's Secretariat for the Economy on Tuesday, June 22, issued a set of regulations related to new norms for awarding public contracts unveiled by Pope Francis last year.

The regulations are contained in a decree signed by Fr Juan Antonio Guerrero Alves, SJ, the Pontifical Delegate and prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy.

The decree, consisting of 49 articles, concerns the pope's apostolic letter, "Norms on transparency, control and competition in the procedures for awarding public contracts of the Holy See and Vatican City State," dated May 19, 2020.



Fr Juan Antonio Guerrero Alves, SJ

The apostolic letter, issued *motu proprio* ("on his own impulse"), outlined new procedures for awarding public contracts that aim to increase oversight and accountability, and ensure the Vatican and Holy See work only with vetted financial partners.

The decree says that the new regulations "apply to all purchases of services, supplies and works."

It states that "economic operators" under investigation for crimes are excluded "from participation in procedures for direct awarding of contracts and being registered in the list of authorised vendors."

It rules that "subcontracting

may be permitted to a maximum extent of 30 per cent of the contract value."

It also covers the procedures to be followed in cases of urgency.

Alongside the decree, the Secretariat for the Economy also released a 91-page document containing seven annexes to the new regulations, published on the website of the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*.

A note introducing the decree and the annexes on the website said: "The choices made combine the need for operational efficiency with the highest standards of transparency and the principles of legality and fair competition."

"This is, therefore, a further concrete step on the path of the Holy See's economic reforms."

ACI Stampa, CNA's Italian-language news partner, noted that the decree does not extend to real estate transactions, which it said would be the subject of further regulations issued before the end of 2021.

Last October, Pope Francis named Cardinal Kevin Farrell president of a committee monitoring internal Vatican financial decisions which fall outside of the new accountability norms.

The five-member group is called the "Commission for Reserved Matters." — **CNA**

Catechesis on prayer by Pope Francis



Perseverance in love



In this penultimate catechesis on prayer, we are going to speak about perseverance in praying. It is an invitation, indeed, a command that comes to us from Sacred Scripture. The spiritual journey of the Russian Pilgrim begins when he comes across a phrase of St Paul in the First Letter to the Thessalonians: “Pray constantly, always and for everything give thanks” (cf. 5:17-18). The Apostle’s words strike the man and he wonders how it is possible to pray without interruption, given that our lives are fragmented into so many different moments, which do not always make concentration possible. From this question he begins his search, which will lead him to discover what is called the prayer of

the heart. It consists in repeating with faith: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!” “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!” A simple prayer, but very beautiful. A prayer that, little by little, adapts itself to the rhythm of breath and extends throughout the day. Indeed, breath never stops, not even while we sleep; and prayer is the breath of life.

How, then, is it possible to always preserve a state of prayer? The Catechism offers us beautiful quotations from the history of spirituality which insist on the need for continuous prayer, that it may be the fulcrum of Christian existence. I will look at some of them.

We are to pray without ceasing

The monk Evagrius Ponticus states: “We have not been commanded to work, to keep watch and to fast continually” — no, this is not demanded — “but it has been laid down that we are to pray without ceasing” (CCC 2742). The heart in prayer. There is therefore an ardour in the Christian life which must never fail. It is a little like that sacred fire that was kept in the ancient temples, that burned without interruption and that the priests had the task of keeping alive. So too must there be a sacred fire in us, which burns continuously and which nothing can extinguish. It is not easy, but it must be so.

St John Chrysostom, another pastor who was attentive to real life, preached: “Even while walking in public or strolling alone, or seated in your shop, while buying or selling, or even while cooking” (CCC 2743). Little prayers: “Lord, have mercy on us”, “Lord, help me”. So, prayer is a kind of musical staff, where we arrange the melody of our lives. It is not in contrast with daily work; it does not contradict the many small obligations and appointments; if anything, it is the place where every action finds its meaning, its reason and its peace.

Certainly, putting these principles into

practice is not easy. A father and a mother, caught up in a thousand tasks, may feel nostalgia for a time in their life in which it was easy to find regular times and spaces for prayer. Then come children, work, family life, ageing parents.... One has the impression that it will never be possible to get through it all. It is good then for us to think that God, our Father, who must take care of the entire universe, always remembers each one of us. Therefore, we too must always remember Him!

We can also remember that, in Christian monasticism, work has always been held in great esteem, not only because of the moral duty to provide for oneself and others, but also for a sort of balance, an inner balance: it is risky for man to cultivate an interest so abstract that he loses contact with reality. Work helps us to stay in touch with reality. The monk’s folded hands bear the calluses of one who holds shovels and hoes. When, in the Gospel of Luke (cf. 10:38-42), Jesus tells Saint Martha that the only thing that is truly necessary is to listen to God, in no way does he mean to disparage the many services that she was performing with such dedication.

Work and prayer are complementary

Everything in the human being is “binary”: our body is symmetrical, we have two arms, two eyes, two hands... And so, work and prayer are also complementary. Prayer — which is the “breath” of everything — remains as the vital backdrop of work, even in moments in which this is not explicit. It is inhuman to be so absorbed by work that you can no longer find the time for prayer.

At the same time, a prayer that alienates itself from life is not healthy. A prayer that alienates us from the concreteness of life becomes spiritualism, or worse, ritualism. Let us remember that Jesus, after revealing his glory to the disciples on Mount Tabor, did not want to prolong that moment of ecstasy but, instead, came down from

the mountain with them and resumed the daily journey. Because that experience had to remain in their hearts as the light and strength of their faith, also a light and strength for the days that were soon to come: those of the Passion. In this way, the time dedicated to being with God revives faith, which helps us in the practicalities of living, and faith, in turn, nurtures prayer, without interruption. In this circularity between faith, life and prayer, one keeps alight that flame of Christian love that God expects of us.

And let us repeat the simple prayer that it is so good to repeat during the day. All together: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!” — vatican.va

REFLECTING ON THE PSALMS

All sufferings will turn to joy

One of the words often used in explaining the psalms is ‘eschatology’. The word means literally ‘talk about the end’. For Israel, it was the idea of the end of the nation of Israel, the end of the universe or the end of an individual’s life. Christ himself spoke of the consummation or end of the world and the New Testament bears testimony to the return of Christ at the end of time. An eschatological discourse is a speech about the end of time.

Songs of Ascent (3) Ps 125 (126) DO (Everyday Prayer) Wk 3 Wed Ev. Pr. pg 576.

A pilgrimage psalm which is also a lament or cry for help. The pilgrims come in a great procession to the Temple carrying their offering of sheaves. Notice the title in the Everyday Prayer, ‘Joy and Hope in the Lord’. Joy (Vs 1-3, first two paragraphs) and hope (Vs 4-6, paragraph 3 and 4). The

historical situation of this psalm is the return of the exiles from Babylon. They come back rejoicing, they could not believe what was taking place; it all seemed like a dream. But when it happened, they were filled with joy. Laughter and songs filled the atmosphere.

It was a known fact among the non-Israelites that Jerusalem had been destroyed and the people were exiled in Babylon in 586 BCE. Now when Cyrus, the Persian conqueror, gave an edict for them to return to Jerusalem, the pagan peoples were amazed at what the Lord did for Israel. The psalmist also sees the hand of the Lord in their return.

But at their return, the worst is not over. There were other difficulties. Perhaps their land needed water for fertility. They had to rebuild their land and country. They pray the Lord to restore their fortunes as of old.

They needed the spring rains for their land to bear fruit. Pain and suffering would accompany their hard work of sowing, but when they reap, they will rejoice. The fourth paragraph (Vs 6), expresses the reversal that takes place when the seed dies and yields the joy of a plentiful harvest. The psalmist expresses hope that after all this suffering that they are undergoing, they will once again find joy.

At his resurrection, Jesus was able to ask the Father to bring deliverance to all those in the bondage of sin and death. He had submitted to the Father in the humiliation of the cross and now he is glorified in the splendour of the resurrection. He had used similar images as this psalm in his teaching. He spoke of the grain of wheat that must die to bear fruit. He compared the future Kingdom to the harvest. And he gave hope to his disciples, saying, “So it is with you: you are

sad now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy” (Jn 16:22).

As we read and pray this psalm, let us be aware that God can turn things around. He is able to bring back the impossible in a situation of hopelessness. Hope is not a vague desire that good things will eventually come our way. It is certitude that God will finally bring a joyful result in the face of uncertainties. The early Church Fathers used to say that this is the pedagogy of God: to teach us that through chastising He will bring an even greater gift. All He needs is our cooperation: St Augustine would say that God who created us without our knowing will not save us without our willing. We continue working for the liberation of humankind from bondage with the certitude that God is gradually bringing the eschatological harvest to fruition. — *By Msgr James Gnanapiragasam*

HERALD

June 27, 2021

Synodality? To recover ecclesial spaces

Synodality is essential not only for recovering the legitimacy of ecclesial spaces. It's also vital to expose the neo-traditionalist and neo-integralist understanding of tradition contrary to what Catholics believe about communal religious and liturgical experience.

Synodality counters a neo-traditionalist idea of Catholicism that is actually anti-traditional, hyper-modern and incompatible with the theological foundations of the *ecclesia*.

A synodal event in ecclesial spaces where the people of God can meet would save the Catholic conversation from virtualisation and expose the ideological extremism responsible for our current ecclesial polarisation.

Lived synodality (as opposed to the carefully manicured religious identities presented online and through social media) could save the Church from the new demagoguery rooted in algorithms that render humanity a commodity.

Synodality would allow for a form of ecclesial accountability that does not yield to the tribal and moralistic Gnosticism of our online lives, where the perception of the lived dimension is shaped mainly by the social media dynamic of "influencing."

The upcoming synodal process could also counter the risk of sectarianism.

On paper, it may look like a bureaucratic undertaking but, in fact, synodality is about sacramentality and the Church as a sacrament. "The Church is in Christ like a sacrament, or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely-knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race. It desires now to unfold more fully, to the faithful of the Church and the whole world, its own inner nature and universal mission" (Vat II, *Lumen Gentium*, # 1).

In the long history of the Christian tradition, synods and councils have always had a liturgical core. Before and in addition to the debates and the deliberative sessions, synods are spiritual and liturgical moments.

There is an intimate relationship between the Eucharistic-sacramental moment of the liturgical assembly and the synodal moment of ecclesial life; this was clear even before Francis added the Jesuit element of "discernment" to the vocabulary of synodality.

One of the differences between Catholicism and sectarianism is that the Catholic Church is supposed to provide all its members with access to the mystery, even when some of them feel they don't have full access but remain in some way connected to the Church.

Maintaining this openness is easier when the institution isn't obsessing over numbers ("How many people are going to Mass?") and when there isn't such a rigid vertical hierarchy from bishops to clergy to laity.

In the end, the synodal discernment will be in the hands of the bishops, but a truly synodal experience can bear fruit in time and space beyond what is immediately measurable. It could also do something in the very near term: synodality is also a response to the sex-abuse crisis, and the liturgical aspect of the synodal events could help us see that the missing element in the Church's handling of the scandal is a sacramental response.

Synodality is crucial to making space for the paradoxical in Catholicism, for a Catholic way to include and sanctify the messiness of the Christian experience.

Our Church is in cultural and political crisis, but there is also a crisis of the legitimacy of ecclesiastical structures. Thus our encounter with the sacred in communal spaces is itself endangered.

This encounter must be experienced; otherwise, people may leave, especially if they already sense that the hierarchy governs access to the sacred through procedural means aimed at exclusion.

It reveals the dangers of the non-Catholic understanding of the Church being advanced at the highest levels of the hierarchy. — **By Massimo Faggioli, *Commonweal***

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The collapse of the US Bishops' Conference

On Feb 22, 1899, George Washington's birthday, Pope Leo XIII published his encyclical letter *Testem Benevolentiae*, condemning the heresy "Americanism".

The document was balanced and the language was frequently indirect. It distinguished between what it called "political Americanism," those characteristics and national traits of the American people, which it commended, and "religious Americanism," the idea that America's democratic norms were for export, even for ecclesial structures, which it condemned.

Cardinal James Gibbons, the only American cardinal at the time who was primate in all but title, wrote to thank the Pope for his letter but also to assure him that no one in the United States actually held the "extravagant and absurd doctrine."

According to Gibbons, the entire controversy was the result of misinterpretations of American Catholicism in France, which was largely true.

Some archbishops echoed Gibbons, thanking the Pope for the encyclical but assuring him no one believed the condemned propositions. Others wrote to thank the Pope but did not say one way or another whether the heresy actually existed. Still others said nothing.

Archbishop Michael Corrigan of New York, always at odds with Gibbons, thanked Leo profusely for his timely and necessary condemnation.

It was the response from Archbishop Frederick Katzer of Milwaukee and his suffragans, however, that caused the

What we witnessed at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' spring meeting was outrageous; bishops questioned each other's motives without any objection from the chair.

greatest breach in the history of the US hierarchy. Katzer not only praised Leo and affirmed that the heresy existed, he specifically expressed indignation at those who: did not hesitate to proclaim again and again, in Jansenistic fashion, that there was hardly any American who had held [the condemned doctrines] and that the Holy See, deceived by false reports, had beaten the air and chased after a shadow, to use a popular expression.

It can escape no loyal Catholic how injurious to the Infallible See and how alien to the orthodox faith such conduct is, since those erroneous opinions have been most assuredly and evidently proclaimed among us orally and in writing, though perhaps not always so openly; and no true Catholic can deny that the magisterium of the Church extends not only to the revealed truth, but also to the facts connected with dogma, and that it appertains to this teaching office to judge infallibly of the objective sense of any doctrine and the existence of the false doctrines.

Behind the elegant late 19th-century ecclesial language, Katzer was calling Gibbons a liar.

In my many years studying the history of the Catholic Church in this country, I have always considered the attacks on Gibbons to be the high point of episcopal disunity.

They not only disagreed about the merits of differing approaches and argu-

ments: Katzer impugned Gibbons' integrity. It was the lowest moment in the history of intra-hierarchic relations in the United States. Until now.

What we witnessed last week at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' spring meeting was outrageous.

The bishops questioned each other's motives without any objection from the chair.

Bishops argued that this push to draft a document on the Eucharist was not motivated by politics, but then had to acknowledge that the idea came from a working group formed to cope with the Biden administration.

And, in what would appear funny were it not so tragic, every time the principals in the effort to draft the document explained that they were not motivated by politics, that this effort was not directed at any one individual, one of the culture warrior backbenchers would get up and mention President Joe Biden by name.

The final vote — the proposal passed 168 to 55, with six abstentions — could have gone the other way and the reasons to be disheartened would remain. The conference is a shambles.

If the president of the conference, Archbishop José Gomez, had a knack for leadership, he would have convoked a working group two weeks ago to hammer out a compromise. "That is leadership 101," said a seasoned Church watcher. Alas, Gomez has no such knack.

The meeting resembled a high school-level debating society

It is actually worse than merely a lack of leadership.

Gomez showed the degree to which he was willing to try and manipulate the debate when he opened the meeting on Monday by reading a letter from Archbishop J. Augustine DiNoia, adjunct secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Gomez seemed to be suggesting that the letter was intended to support the effort to draft the document, even though the prefect of the CDF, Cardinal Luis Ladaria, had written a letter urging the bishops to slow down and have an "extensive and serene dialogue" before drafting any text. As Gomez read the letter, it sounded like a form letter and, sure enough, it was.

DiNoia told *CMS'* Cindy Wooden: "The letter contained a bland sentence that has received a lot of unmerited attention in the press: The congregation 'looks forward to the informal review of the eventual draft of a formal statement on the meaning of the Eucharist in the life of the Church.' It would be helpful if you were to explain the utterly routine character of such communications." DiNoia added: "Never has a letter of so little moment received such a level of unmerited attention. When we heard about the furore, we looked high and

low for a letter bearing my signature that could possibly have created such a fuss. Finally, late this afternoon, we realised that they were talking about an *accusa di ricevuto*, which we then located in the appropriate file.

"So, either Gomez misrepresented DiNoia's letter intentionally, or he thought an *accusa di ricevuto* ("acknowledgement of receipt") was of some great significance.

Either option required Gomez to think nothing of suggesting DiNoia was distancing himself from the prefect to whom he reports, a suggestion that is laughable. Either option shows the limits of Gomez's ability to lead the bishops' conference at this important time.

The time is not important only because of this lousy proposal to find a way to deny Biden Communion. It is important because the Holy Father has called the universal Church to engage in a synodal process. How will Gomez be able to manage a synodal process?

Two years ago, the Amazon synod voted to ask Pope Francis to permit the ordination of older, chaste men as priests, *virii probati*, by a margin of 128-41 and to support additional discussion of the ordination of women deacons by a vote of 137-30. Pope Francis did not authorise the ordination of *virii probati* or women

deacons in his post-synodal document *Querida Amazonia*.

As Jesuit Fr Antonio Spadaro related at *Civiltà Cattolica*, the Holy Father understands that 128 bishops can be wrong or, to put it differently, that a synod must discern, not merely decide by majority or even super-majority vote. He told Spadaro:

There was a discussion [at the 2019 Synod] ... a rich discussion ... a well-founded discussion, but no discernment, which is something other than arriving at a good and justified consensus or relative majority. [...] We must understand that the Synod is more than a parliament; and in this specific case, the Synod could not escape this dynamic. On this issue the [2019] Synod was a rich, productive and even necessary parliament; but no more than that. For me this was decisive in the final discernment, when I thought about how to write the exhortation [*Querida Amazonia*].

Does the leadership of the US bishops' conference understand that there was no synodality last week at their meeting? No discernment of the Holy Spirit? The meeting, instead, resembled a high school-level debating society. It is too depressing. And it is not likely to change anytime soon. — **By Michael Sean Winters, NCR**

Decree on Family, Laity and Life

Not all historical documents get the rightful attention they deserve. A case in point is a decree the Vatican's Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life published June 11 on the internal governance of international associations of the faithful. Signed by the dicastery's prefect, Cardinal Kevin Farrell, and approved in *forma specifica* (that means unchangeable) by Pope Francis, the text marks a watershed in the history of the new lay movements and the Catholic Church.

It directly affects only those "international associations of the faithful recognised or erected by the Apostolic See and subject to the direct supervision of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life".

But it also sends an important message to all lay movements and to the entire Church.

This short decree, which consists of a preamble and eight articles, places time limits on the mandates of the leaders of the lay movements — five years, renewable once, for a maximum of ten years.



Cardinal Kevin Farrell

It also arranges regular elections for the replacement of leaders (article 1 and 2), orders that all members participate in the election of leaders (article 3), while granting the possibility of exceptions for the founders of the movements who are still alive (article 5). This has precise consequences for current leaders who now are suddenly term-limited.

Follow my leader

It forces an agenda of personnel change within two years (article 4). The decree also abrogates anything that in the lay movements' internal rules contradicts this provision and therefore forces these

movements to review their statutes (article 8). The decree makes clear — somehow superfluously, but significantly, to understand the intention of the document — that clerical associations, institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life are not touched by this decree (article 6).

What has motivated the publication of this decree?

In the preamble it says that "it is necessary that the exercise of government be properly organised within ecclesial communion and carried out as a means to the purposes that the association pursues". But it also talks about something that is more problematic from a legal aspect: the goal "to promote a healthy renewal" and "the usefulness of generational change in governing bodies and the appropriateness of promoting change in responsibilities in government".

In a way, that is telling of this moment in the life of the Church. And it offers another reason for this Vatican intervention.

"The Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life has considered it neces-



Pope Francis at the Vatican April 5, 2020. (LCI Photo HARING/POOL/SPAZIANI/UPI/MAXPPP)

sary to regulate the terms of office in government, with regard to their duration and number, as well as the representativeness of governing bodies, in order to promote a healthy renewal and to prevent misappropriations that have indeed led to violations and abuses," it says (emphasis added).

This is most probably the fundamental intention of the decree — to put in place measures that can help prevent unhealthy dynamics

of power and authority in ecclesial groups sometimes at high risk because of the charismatic leadership that can create cults of personality.

In this sense, the decree responds to the abuse crisis and its expansion from the original typology — abuse of minors by clerics — to the new typologies that we have seen in the last few years: abuse of power and authority against all kinds of Church members, and also in ecclesial lay movements.

Some problematic aspects in the decree

This is an emerging problem that has been pointed out by Hans Zollner SJ, who is the Vatican's top adviser on the abuse crisis, a crisis that still may only be in the early stages in terms of revelations and investigations.

So, this decree is a good sign that the Vatican is continuing to shape and refine its response to the abuse crisis.

On the other hand, there are problematic aspects in this decree.

It says that "the Church recognises that the faithful have, because of their baptism, the right of association, and it protects their freedom to found and govern them".

As someone who has done extensive research on these movements, I have often been critical of the institutional culture of the lay Catholic movements that sometimes distort the theology and ecclesiology of Vatican II. But the new decree marks an unprecedented and quite heavy-handed intervention of the Vatican in a delicate area of the life of the Church.

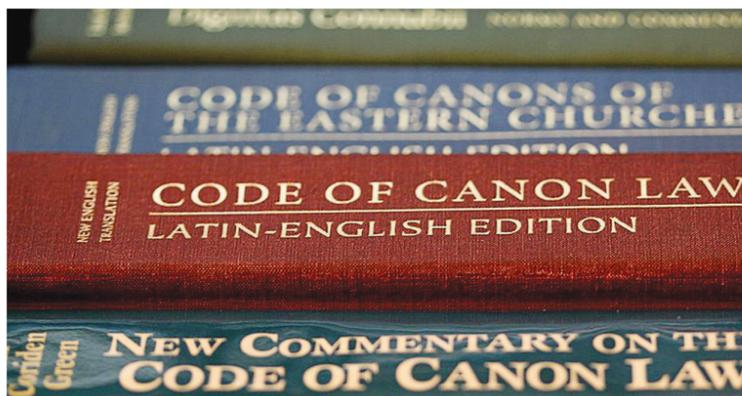
In an important analysis published a few days after its publication, Italian (lay) canon lawyer, Pierluigi Consorti, pointed out a few oddities of the decree.

For example, he noted the choice to set a five-year term for presidents and not allow greater flexibility. Why five years and not three or seven years, for instance?

It is also well known that a change in leadership does not necessarily mean a change of culture in an organisation. New names often serve only to legitimise old practices.

A clericalist way to fight clericalism?

This decree is another example of the inconsistencies between Pope Francis' theology of the Church and discernment against clericalism, on



the one hand, and an awfully clerical way of legislating, on the other hand.

This inconsistency has been carefully studied in a volume that has just come out.

Similar inconsistencies could be seen in the new Book VI of the Code of Canon Law on the Church's penal procedures.

It seems to be more the result of a project started by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in the late 1980s (and explicitly by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007) than the work of Francis.

But there is also a clear coherence between what Francis has said and done about the new Catholic movements since his election in 2013. This pontificate represents a change of course from the post-Vatican II policy towards the new movements.

In the first phase in the history of movements (roughly from the 1950s and Vatican II up to the pontificate of Benedict XVI), the papacy had implicitly committed itself to respecting any form of internal government the movements wished to give themselves — even the most personalistic.

"Ecclesiology of the people" and anti-elitism

With Francis, we see the beginning of a second phase in the history of

the movements. And there are at least three factors for the change.

FIRST: it is one of the effects of the pontificate of the Jesuit pope, of discernment, which has always warned against the risks of the spiritualising sectarianism.

Discernment of charisms is something Francis has talked about since the beginning of his pontificate. But now it comes at a cost for the freedom of the lay movements to organise internally as they wish.

SECOND: the global sexual abuse scandal, which has recently involved some Catholic movements, suggests that mechanisms should be established to avoid the cult of personality even in the Church.

This decree is indirectly a harsh assessment of the first half a century of history of the new Catholic movements and of some of the decisions made by Francis' predecessors in this area.

THIRD: more than 50 years have passed since the foundation phase of the movements and it is time for a review in the light of experience, which John Paul II and Benedict XVI assumed it was one of the great hopes — if not the greatest — for the future of the Catholic Church.

Not so for Pope Francis: this is one of the effects of his emphasis on the "ecclesiology of the people" and its anti-elitism.

Francis interrupts the history of the movements

The Jesuit pope represents an interruption and a new phase in the history of the new movements. A first phase was the foundation, *extra legem*, and among deep suspicions of many Church leaders, between the 1950s and 1970s. A second phase was the flourishing and acknowledgement (both moral and canonical) by the institutional Church between the 1980s and the early 2000s. And a third phase was change of leadership from the generation of the founders to the second generation, but also a plateau in terms of their ability to attract and renew themselves in the last few years.

This very insightful periodisation was offered just three years ago by Piero Coda of Focolare, one of the most important theologians who is a member of a movement.

Now Francis has intervened in this history.

Several times he has reminded the movements, with singular parrhesia, that they are not the Church or the best of the Church. This provision confirms a fundamental line of the pontificate.

The lay movements will remember this pope in a very different way than John Paul II, who gave them an important space in the Church: space that remains to them, but from now on under partially different conditions.

The new decree technically applies only to the movements under the jurisdiction of the Vatican dicastery that published it. But it's a message to all movements and the laity.

This is instructive also in the context of synodality, Francis' plan for the way the Catholic Church needs to change its way of governing itself, based on the participa-

tion of the whole people of God.

A key question that emerges from this Vatican decree is: Who are the people of God?

Who determines who the people are and what are the forms in which this people find ways to express themselves in the Church?

Blind obedience or freedom of the children of God?

In this particular case, the decree can be seen as a way to force synodality in the Catholic movements, but also as a way to impose — and in a detailed fashion — a Vatican, clerical culture on ecclesial experiences whose value was also in the autonomy granted them by the institutional Church.

Now this autonomy has been reduced and the future of the movements is not very clear.

So far, we have not heard the reaction of those who are affected by this decree. It is understandable.

The history of the new, lay Catholic movements is a history sometimes of cult of personalities, of clericalised laity and of blind obedience to the Vatican.

But it is also a painful history of being misunderstood by the clerical Church, the bishops and the Vatican. Often it is also a history of obedience to the Holy Spirit and an example of the freedom of the children of God within the Catholic Church.

After Paul VI's hesitations, John Paul II became the hero of the movements. Benedict XVI then continued the line of his Polish predecessor.

Francis is a very different story, and the movements are likely to remember him in quite a different way. — **By Massimo Faggioli, LCI** ([https:// international.la-croix.com/](https://international.la-croix.com/))

What is love asking of me now?

Several years ago, a colleague of mine suffered a crushing disappointment. Her instinctual temptation was towards anger, towards shutting a series of doors and withdrawing. Instead, wounded in spirit, she asked herself the question, *what is love asking of me now?* In answering that, she found that despite her every instinct to the contrary, love was asking her to move away from bitterness and withdrawal, asking her to stretch her heart in ways it had never been stretched before.

What is love asking of me now? That is the question we need to ask ourselves every time the circumstances of our lives are shaken (by wound or by grace) to a point where we no longer want to respond graciously and lovingly because everything inside of us wants to shut down and withdraw.

Thus ...

- When I have just been through a bitter divorce, when I feel my heart hardening and find myself growing hateful towards someone I once trusted, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When I have lost a loved one

to suicide, not just to death but to a manner of death that becomes a prism that recolours every memory of that person so that my love turns to anger, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When a colleague humiliates me at a meeting with insinuations that are untrue and my blood literally boils at the unfairness, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When my own child rejects my faith and values, complete with the hint that I am naïve and out of step with the world and my temptation is to self-pity and (however subtle) to withdraw my love and support, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When a medical diagnosis reveals that my health will be forever compromised and every fibre in my body and spirit wants to sink into anger and depression, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When the church that is my mother-tongue, that gave me the faith, is found to be unfair, to be the bearer of sin, when I see its flaws and am left to ponder the question of how I can stay in



Fr Ron Rolheiser

a church with that history and those dysfunctions, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When I am betrayed in a relationship, lied to by someone I trusted, when I am tempted in bitterness never to trust anyone again, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When I myself betray a trust, when out of weakness I sin, when I want to wallow in self-hatred or rationalise or deny my weakness, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When an election in the country produces a leader whose personality and policies go

against everything I stand for, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When the parochial world I grew up in begins to give way to a multilingual, multicultural, multiracial, and multi-religious world that leaves me feeling left behind, when paranoia and defensiveness have me desperately trying to hang on to what once was, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When I live with someone in my family who is dysfunctional and my every desire is to avoid him and live my own life, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When I have to deal daily with someone who hates me and everything inside me wants to respond in kind, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

However, it is not only negative things that upset us in this way, tempt us towards hatred and withdrawal, and leave us in a space that forces us to respond in a new way, huge grace can do the same thing.

Thus ...

- When I finally get that long longed-for promotion, complete

with the big salary and a voice in decision-making and the temptation is to inflate and feel superior to those around me, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When I am invited to be the valedictorian for my graduating class and am on the podium basking in the adulation of the crowd (aware of the jealousy of my classmates) and multiple temptations beset me, most of them unhealthy. The question then becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

- When someone blesses me in a deep way with love, gratitude, and affirmation and my temptation is to feed my ego with that blessing, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?*

We cannot protect ourselves against the spontaneous feelings that beset us, both when things go well and when they go badly – and most of those feelings tempt us away from love. So, whenever either a depression or an inflation is tempting us away from what is best and most noble, the question becomes, *what is love asking of me now?* — **By Fr Ron Rolheiser, all rights reserved**

Catholic organisations ask US bishops for pastoral and moral leadership on immigration

VATICAN: At least 162 Catholic organisations from the United States, Mexico and Central America, who work to protect migrants and improve life in the communities they are fleeing, are asking bishops to respond with “bold leadership” to “the cries of our brothers and sisters on the move.”

The groups made this appeal in a jointly signed letter addressed to several bishops in the region, including Archbishop José Gómez of the US, Cardinal Rogelio Cabrera López of Mexico; Archbishop Gonzalo de Villa Vásquez of Guatemala; Archbishop Ángel Garachana Pérez of Honduras; and Archbishop Jose Luis Escobar Alas of El Salvador.

The organisations highlight the promise by the US administration to “address the root causes of migration, treat migrants humanely and put immigrants who have lived in the US for years, and in many cases decades, on a path to citizenship is a unique opportunity to relieve pain and suffering too long endured.”

“This summer and fall, we have the best opportunity in a generation to make progress on core Catholic migration priorities. We need your pastoral and moral leadership to meet this moment,” said the letter. “This moment requires a whole Church response that is regional, united and robust.

Migration needs a humane, pastoral response

Drawing attention to areas of “great urgency and opportunity,” the letter asked for a humane response to increased migration caused by drought, climate change, political instability, poverty and the pandemic’s economic consequences, driving people to migrate from Central America to the US.

The groups said that “these realities require a pastoral response to provide more safe refuge for people while they travel across the region and wait for resolution of their cases, and more support to resettle and integrate children and families on arrival in their new communities or when they return home.”

The letter went on to highlight that, as a Church accompanying migrants every step of the way, “we are uniquely situated to fill the breach by planning for the increase in migrants”.

In this way, the Church can help authorities “develop a coherent, regional migration system, focused on protecting people, respecting the right to asylum and offering safe and legal pathways for people to reunite with family, seek refuge, and work.”

Putting immigrants on a pathway to citizenship

Pointing at some political moves in the US Congress, the letter highlighted the importance of



Immigrants seeking asylum have challenged the US immigration agencies along the US Southern border. (Vatican News)

using “all the tools available to make tangible progress on the longstanding goal of providing a path to citizenship” for undocumented immigrants.

“Many families in our parishes have lived in the US for a generation without legal status, exposed to exploitation and insecurity,” the Catholic groups said.

Calling on the bishops in this regard, the letter underlined that their “leadership is critical to countering the demonisation of immigrants, reducing polarisation on this issue and making the moral and practical case for putting our parishioners, friends and neighbours on a pathway to full social inclusion.”

Tackling conditions that force people to migrate

The Catholic group then spoke on the need to address conditions that force people to migrate, pointing out that the US is preparing to spend \$4 billion over the next five

years to tackle the root causes of migration from Central America.

“Local Catholic organisations and partners are working to ensure that these resources reach the people and communities that need them the most, following local priorities and plans,” the letter said, urging that coordinated leadership from the Church in the United States, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala “would provide a much-needed boost to these efforts.”

This, the groups added, would help “channel resources into the local communities that people are fleeing to create economic opportunities, reduce violence and help small farmers adapt to climate change.”

Leadership from the Bishops

Further impressing on the need for the Church’s response on the issue of migration, the Catholic groups said that the bishops’ leadership “is pivotal in reorient-

ing US policy towards Central America, away from low-wage employment and extractive industries, toward better jobs, sustainable development and human rights protection.”

The organisations also added that they are ready to work to “lift up the pastoral solidarity and moral witness of the Catholic Church” at this critical moment in the region”

As St Oscar Romero reminded us, the letter noted, “there are not two categories of people, some born to have everything and others who can’t enjoy the happiness that God has created for all.”

“It is Jesus Christ present in the movement of people across borders, especially those who flee in search of protection and a more dignified life,” the letter concluded, inviting all not to ignore this “divine invitation to greater solidarity and to grow in just and right relationship with one another.” — **Vatican News**

Pope Francis encourages German Church to continue on 'Synodal Way'

VATICAN: Pope Francis encouraged the German Catholic Church to continue on its controversial "Synodal Way," Bishop Georg Bätzing said, after a private audience at the Vatican.

Bätzing, the chairman of the German Bishops' Conference, said June 24 that he had assured the Pope that "rumours" that the German Church was seeking to diverge from the worldwide Church were untrue.

"I informed the Pope in detail about the status of the Synodal Way and made it clear that the rumours that the Church in Germany wants to go its own way are not true," he said in a statement on the German Bishops' Conference website.

"Pope Francis encouraged us to continue on the Synodal Way, to discuss the questions at hand openly and honestly, and to come up with recommendations for a change in the way the Church acts."

"At the same time, he called for the Church in Germany to help shape the path of synodality he proclaimed towards the 2023 Synod of Bishops."

In his statement, Bätzing recalled his first pri-



Bishop Georg Bätzing, chairman of the German Bishops' Conference, meets with Pope Francis at the Vatican, June 24, 2021. (Vatican Media)

vate audience with the Pope after his election as chairman of the German Bishops' Conference, which took place in June 2020.

He said: "After my inaugural visit to Pope Francis as president of the German bishops' conference a year ago, I was able to meet the Holy Father again today — after the long pandemic."

"Our conversation focused first on the situ-

ation of the Church in Germany in view of the processing of the sexual abuse cases and the difficult situation in several dioceses. Pope Francis is well aware of the situation of the Church in Germany. He hopes that tensions can be overcome."

German Church leaders and Vatican officials have clashed repeatedly over the Synodal Way, a process bringing together German bishops and lay people to discuss four main topics: the way power is exercised in the Church; sexual morality; the priesthood; and the role of women.

The German bishops initially said that the process would end with a series of "binding" votes — raising concerns in the Vatican that the resolutions might challenge the Church's teaching and discipline.

The Vatican sent a letter to the German bishops declaring that the plans were "not ecclesio-logically valid."

After a back-and-forth between the bishops' conference and Vatican officials, the Synodal Way began on Dec 1, 2019. It is expected to end in February 2022.

Three Catholics from the German Diocese

of Essen have submitted a "dubium" to the Vatican asking if the Church in Germany is in schism.

Bätzing has insisted that the country's Catholics are not "schismatics."

The theologian Katharina Westerhorstmann, a Synodal Way participant, recently suggested that the process should be suspended in light of plans to involve the worldwide Church in preparations for the 2023 synod on synodality in Rome.

In his statement, Bätzing said that he had informed the Pope about the recent Ecumenical Church Congress in Frankfurt.

Concluding his statement, Bätzing said: "As I did a year ago, I feel strengthened by Pope Francis in my office as Bishop of Limburg and in my task as chairman of the German Bishops' Conference."

"I am impressed by the balanced knowledge with which he perceives the situation of the Church in Germany and puts the problems into words. Pope Francis will accompany the Church in our country on its way out of the crisis." — *CNA*

The German Synodal Way: An explainer

What is the German Synodal Way, also known as Synodal Path?

The "Synodal Way" — in German: Synodaler Weg — is a discussion process underway in Germany with the declared aim by dialoguing, debating and passing resolutions on whether, or how, Catholicism needs to change ("develop") its teaching — and the Catholic Church therefore change its approach — to questions of sexuality and the exercise of power, including doctrine and the sacraments.

Who is running the German Synodal Way?

The discussion process is a joint and co-equal effort of the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics, a lay body known by its acronym ZdK.

When did it start, and when will the process conclude?

The German Synodal Way commenced on September 1, 2019, following a resolution of the German Bishops' Conference. It was scheduled to be completed within two years. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, key dates have been pushed back. A new completion date has not been confirmed, but the current official target date is some time in February of 2022.

How does it work?

The main body is the "Synodal Assembly" that has 230 members. Apart from the 69 German bishops, this assembly includes 69 members of the Central Committee of German Catholics as well as representatives of religious orders and other bodies, associations and councils. These members meet to discuss — and pass resolutions on draft declaration then to be drawn up — four official topics in four distinct forums, each presided over by a bishop and a ZdK functionary. These deal with the way power is exercised in the Church; sexual morality; the priesthood; and the role of women, respectively. The official forum titles are:

- *Power and Separation of Powers in the Church - Joint Participation and Involvement in the Mission*
- *Life in succeeding relationships - Living Love in Sexuality and Partnership*
- *Priestly Existence Today*
- *Women in Ministries and Offices in the Church*

What is the "Central Committee of German Catholics"?

Founded in 1949, the Central Committee,

For the organisers of the German Synodal way, the process is necessary to discuss the future of Church life in Germany.

known by its German acronym "ZdK," claims to represent lay Catholicism in Germany. According to its own website, the ZdK received 2.45 million Euros (almost 3 million USD) in funding from sources provided by the German Bishops' Conference in 2018.

As of 2021, the ZdK and/or its leading representatives are on record for pursuing a number of controversial goals also associated with the German Synodal Way, including the blessing of homosexual unions, the ordination of women to deacons, abolition of celibacy and intercommunion with Protestants.

Its president, Thomas Sternberg, has decried the critical interventions and concerns raised by the Vatican as "disturbances from Rome".

Why do proponents of the Synodal Way believe it is necessary?

For the organisers of the German Synodal way, the process is necessary to discuss the future of Church life in Germany. One goal is to regain trust lost after the abuse scandal. Another is to revitalise reform debates that have been brewing in German-speaking Europe for decades.

Pope Francis, in his letter to German Catholics, pointed to another challenge: "I painfully notice the growing erosion and deterioration of faith, with all it entails not only on the spiritual level but also on the social and cultural level," he wrote, calling for evangelisation instead of a false reform.

The call to add evangelisation as a forum to the process was declined by the organisers of the Synodal Way, but picked up by at least one participant in a wake-up call to reclaim the primacy of evangelisation.

Is there a precedent or role model for the German Synodal Way?

Yes. The German Synodal Way has a precedent of sorts in an actual synod held in the 1970s in then West Germany, which was undertaken with the declared goal of debating and passing resolutions about the Second Vatican Council. This synod also involved lay people as voting participants. It was held from 1971 to 1975 in the Cathedral of Würzburg. While not referencing sexual abuse, it raised several of the same — or similar — questions about sexuality



Thomas Sternberg, president of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK), speaks at a 'Synodal Way' press conference. (CNA Deutsch/Rudolf Gehrig)

and power that are now raised again, for instance, on celibacy or the ordination of female deacons, at the current process.

Until the German Synodal Way was announced, the Würzburg Synod had been largely forgotten, even in Germany, according to observers.

Is the German Synodal Way a Church synod?

No. When announced in 2019 by Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the then-president of the German Bishops' Conference, the prelate declared it to be "a process sui generis" that would be able to pass "binding resolutions" on questions that pertain to the universal Church. From the outset, this claim, and the moniker "Synodal Way," were contested: Bishop Konrad Zdarsa of Augsburg called the concept a "tautology," going so far as to decry it as a "labelling fraud".

Following several interventions and despite resistance from the two process presidents, Cardinal Marx and Thomas Sternberg of the ZdK, the discussion process has meanwhile been confirmed not to be binding — and not a synod.

Just how controversial is the German Synodal Way?

Pope Francis and the Vatican have intervened repeatedly with a number of unprecedented measures, as have a growing number of bishops and theologians, both from Germany and around the world, raising serious concerns about many aspects of the Synodal Way.

The Holy Father took the historic step of writing a letter to all Catholics in Germany in June 2019, warning of a "belief that the best

response to the many problems and shortcomings that exist is to reorganise things, change them and 'put them back together' to bring order and make ecclesial life easier".

In September 2020 Vatican Cardinal Kurt Koch went public, saying Pope Francis was "concerned" about the Church in Germany. A German bishop followed this up with a similar warning in October, referring to the Holy Father's "dramatic concern" about the situation.

On June 8, 2021, Cardinal Walter Kasper, considered to be close to Pope Francis, said that he was "very worried" about the German Catholic Church's controversial "Synodal Way."

In the main, concerns pertain to the underlying assumptions and operating premises of the process — which the Vatican initially declared "ecclesiologically invalid" in 2019, but also the legal claims and questions of basic legitimacy, given the refusal of the Synodal Assembly to rule out decisions that run counter to Catholic doctrines. Doubts have furthermore been raised about the selection of participants, choice of topics, theological claims and internal procedures.

Looking at the goals of the process, Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the former head of the Italian bishops' conference and vicar of the Diocese of Rome, said in early May 2021, the German Synodal Way pursued "not only the blessing of same-sex couples, but also the priesthood of women, the abolition of the obligation of ecclesiastical celibacy, the intercommunion between Catholics and Protestants".

In summary, as of 2021, the German Synodal Way is mired in controversies and marred by sustained and substantial criticism from leading theologians and senior prelates. These concerns have culminated in dire warnings of the threat of a new schism in Germany.

Is the Synodal Way leading to a new schism in Germany?

Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg, the chairman of the German bishops' conference, has insisted that no schism is on the horizon.

What about Catholics in Germany?

Arguably, the most concerning aspect of the German Synodal Way is that it appears to fail most of the very people it claims to reach out to: The "Pilgrim People of God in Germany".

This has raised the wider concern whether the Bishops' conference and the "Central Committee" were sincerely engaging with Catholics on the ground. — *CNA*

Fatherly thoughtfulness and kindness

Pope Francis visits Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy in Rome

“This stifling worldliness can only be healed by breathing in the pure air of the Holy Spirit who frees us from self-centredness cloaked in an outward religiosity bereft of God. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the Gospel” (EG 97)

These words summarise the visit of Pope Francis to the community of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy (PEA), which took place on the afternoon of May 27 at the institution located in Piazza della Minerva 74, which for 320 years has undertaken the formation of the future personnel of Pontifical representations throughout the world.

It was a simple, intense and familiar get-together, shaped by the fatherly thoughtfulness and care of Pope Francis towards the young priests who are preparing to live their ministry at the service of the Church and of the Holy Father in the various diplomatic missions.

Shortly before 6.30pm, the Pope was welcomed by the President of the PEA, Archbishop Joseph Marino, the Secretary of Pontifical Representations Archbishop Romeo Pawlowski, and the Bursar and Prefect for Studies of the PEA, Msgr Gabriel Marcelo Viola Csaslongue, and the students. The reun-

ion, which could not take place last year due to the pandemic, was welcomed with excitement and joy by the community as a concrete sign of the fatherly thoughtfulness and kindness of the Holy Father.

For more than an hour, Pope Francis held a simple and open conversation with the priests. At the onset, on behalf of all, Archbishop Marino greeted and thanked the Holy Father for accepting the invitation and also presented the community, made up of 40 priests including 38 students from 25 countries. Archbishop Marino informed the Holy Father that, despite the health crisis caused by the pandemic, all the activities of the formation programme for the academic year, be it prayer moments, studies or meetings, took place as scheduled.

In a very cordial atmosphere, the Holy Father gave clear, fatherly and concrete answers to some questions presented to him by the students of the academy. Numerous issues were addressed, including the current challenges facing the Church, missionary work, the question of synodality and the important role of bilateral and multi-lateral papal diplomacy in today's world.



Pope Francis visits the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy on May 27, 2021 as Archbishop Joseph Marino (centre behind Pope Francis, president of the academy looks on.

Pope Francis outlined some traits and qualities that should characterise a good diplomat in his ministry: he should be a man of prayer, give attention to the Gospel message, be abreast of the times, but, at the same time, rooted in tradition, ready for dialogue and exchange of ideas. He emphasised that all types of rigidity are to be avoided.

Regarding the newly-introduced experience of a missionary year in the students' formation plan, the Pope stressed that it would be a formation period to be carried out on the “peripheries” of the Universal

Church, which he hopes will enrich their personal, human, cultural and linguistic qualities.

Pope Francis had dinner with the entire academy and also gave special words of encouragement to the nine students who will soon begin their service at the various Apostolic Nunciatures. He met the religious Sisters of the Comunità Apostolica de Maria Sempre Virgen, who work in the academy. Before concluding his visit, he imparted his Apostolic Blessing upon the community. He then returned to the Vatican. — *One Voice*

Editor's Note: Archbishop Joseph Marino was ordained for the Diocese of Birmingham on August 25, 1979. Shortly thereafter he began diplomatic service for the Vatican. He was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Bangladesh in January of 2008 and his Episcopal ordination took place at the Cathedral of St Paul on March 29, 2008. He was also the Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia, and Timor Leste and Apostolic Delegate to Brunei before being appointed to his current position as president of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy on October 11, 2019.

Abrahamic Family House in Abu Dhabi to open in 2022

The Abrahamic Family House, which encloses a synagogue, a church and a mosque in a single complex, and which is scheduled to be inaugurated in 2022, is 20 per cent complete, the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity (HCHF) said in a statement on Tuesday, June 22. The Committee, which is also supervising the project, said it was inspired by the 2019 Document on Human Fraternity. Constructed on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, the project is closely followed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb of al-Azhar, who endorsed the design, the HCHF said.

The Abrahamic Family House derives its name from the Old Testament biblical figure, Abraham, who is recognised and greatly revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Shared values

The Abrahamic Family House's design, by architect Sir David Adjaye, captures the values shared by Judaism, Christianity and Islam through three main buildings, including a mosque, a church, and a synagogue, in one place. “As such, the complex innovatively recounts the history and builds bridges between human civilisations and heavenly messages.”

The names of the three separate iconic houses of worship in the Abrahamic Family House complex are officially unveiled as “Imam AlTayeb Mosque,” “St Francis Church” and “Moses Ben Maimon



Abrahamic Family House in Abu Dhabi.

Synagogue”. Moses ben Maimon was a prolific and influential Sephardic Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages.

Interfaith harmonious coexistence

Besides the three places of worship, the site includes a cultural centre that aims to encourage people to exemplify human fraternity and solidarity within a community that cherishes the values of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence while the unique character of each faith is preserved.

The design of the Abrahamic Family House was first unveiled by Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, at a global gathering in New York in 2019, during the second

meeting of the HCHF. It said the design was also presented to Pope Francis and the Grand Imam during a meeting with them in November that year.

“The Abrahamic Family House epitomises interfaith harmonious coexistence and preserves the unique character of each religion,” said Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of the Department of Culture, Abu Dhabi, and an HCHF member. He said, “It personifies Abu Dhabi's vision for human fraternity and embeds coexistence into the already diverse cultural fabric of the UAE. Overseeing the development of this iconic project is inspiring and reflective of the UAE efforts in realising the values of the Document on Human Fraternity and fostering its lofty principles.”

The Document on Human Fraternity

He explained that the names of the three houses of worship recognise the work of the Grand Imam, Pope Francis and Moses Ben Maimon, and “harnesses their teachings to forge a message of goodwill for future generations around the world”.

The *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, which may simply be called the Document on Human Fraternity, was signed on February 4, 2019, by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam during the Pope's visit to Abu Dhabi.

Cultural landmark

In the spirit of this Document, the Abrahamic Family House complex will welcome all visitors wishing to worship, learn and engage in dia-

logue. In addition, it will offer a variety of daily programmes and activities and will host international conferences and world summits that feature harmonious coexistence within communities. “As a place for learning, dialogue and worship,” the HCHF said, “the Abrahamic Family House will be a cultural landmark and an inspiring global symbol that epitomises the shared values of harmonious coexistence and understanding among the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.”

The iconic geometric architecture of three cubes, representing the separate places of worship, evokes the unified commonality and mutual coexistence between the three religions. At the same time, the design reflects traditional architecture while retaining the individual traits of each of the three faiths.

The supervisors of the project said that during the design phases of the houses of worship, members of religious communities worldwide have been engaged and consulted to ensure consistency with and adherence to each religion's requirements and teachings.

On completion, the complex of the Abrahamic Family House will offer the followers of the respective faiths enough space for “real peace of mind and soul within an atmosphere in which a spirit of intimacy prevails”. The HCHF said, “Each aspect of the design is brought to life through the architectural features and unique constructional details of the facades, the external and internal views, the columns, and the windows and vaults that reflect the unique characteristics of each of the three Abrahamic faiths.” — *By Robin Gomes, Vatican News*

Little Catholics' Corner

Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe" (Mark 5:36)

Let's Colour



Dear children, In today's Gospel reading, we hear about Jesus curing the sick and dying. But we can't perform miracles like Jesus did! What can we do? Here are some ideas:

1. If someone in your family is sick, maybe you can help them out! Ask if you could read them a story or help them by bringing them

anything they need. A 'Get Well' card would be nice too!

2. Always pray for people who are sick. Your prayers can help them get better, or they might help your sick friend to understand why God is letting them suffer.

What about when you are sick?

When you are sick or hurt, think about Jesus suffering

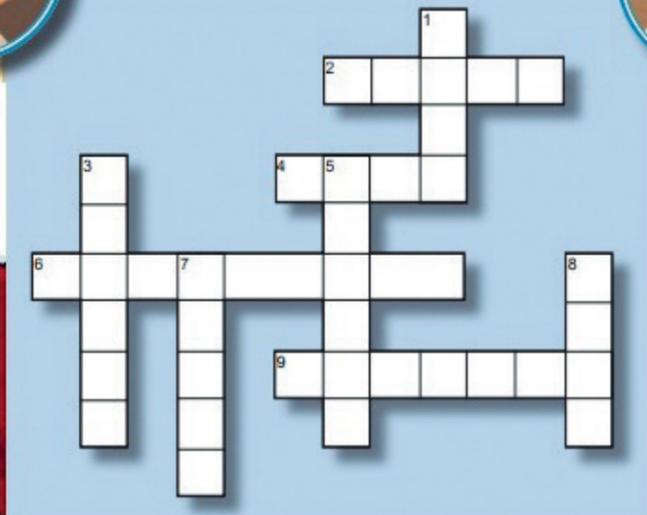
on the cross.

Offer your pain to Him and tell Him that you want to suffer with Him so that people will be saved from their sins.

Be thankful for people who help you when you are sick. Remember, they take Jesus' place!

Love
Aunty Eliz

Jesus Raises Jairus' Daughter 5:21-43



- faith
- walk
- disciples
- believe
- sick
- Jairus
- asleep
- crowd
- died

ACROSS

2. Jesus said "Your _____ has made you well."
4. Jesus told the girl to get up. She got up and began to _____.
6. Close friends of Jesus
9. Jesus said "Don't be afraid. Only _____."

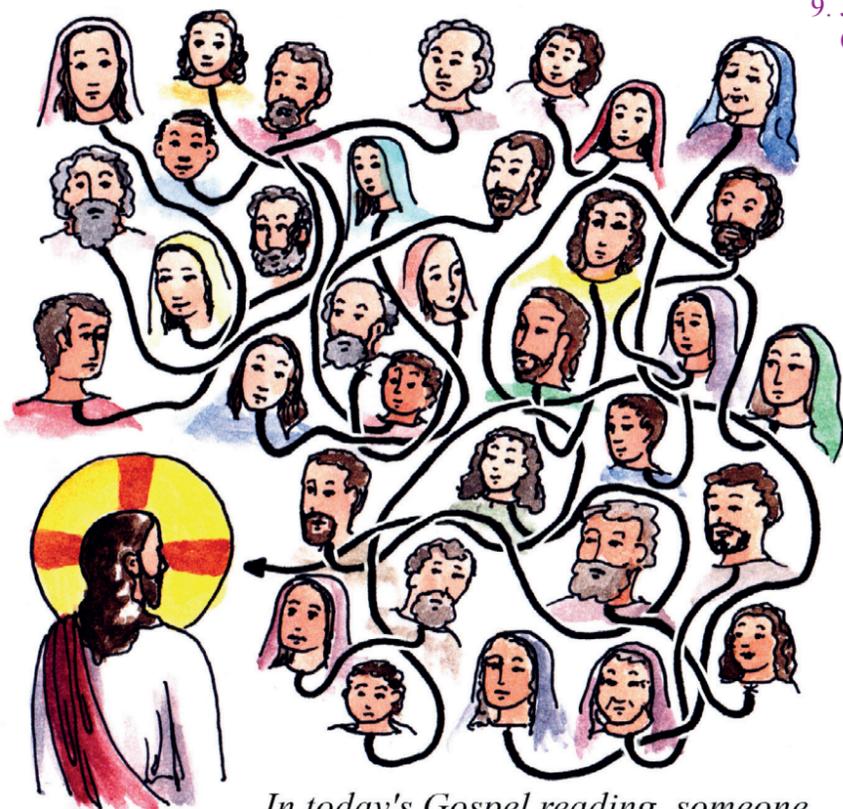
DOWN

1. Not healthy
3. He asked Jesus to help his daughter.
5. Jesus said the girl was _____.
7. A large group of people
8. At Jarius house, the people thought the girl had _____.

What did Jesus tell Jairus to do when his daughter died? To find out, write down every other letter from the circle below, beginning at the arrow ↓ and going clockwise.



Luke 8:50



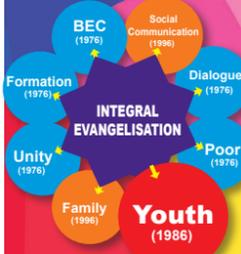
In today's Gospel reading, someone believed that they would be healed from their sickness if they touched Jesus' clothes.

The person touched Jesus and was instantly healed! But Jesus knew that power had gone out of Him, so He asked who had touched His clothes.

Who was cured? Follow the dark lines and see whose line points to Jesus.

YOUTH

June 27, 2021



A Closer Walk with St Joseph Through Young People's Virtual Retreat

PENANG: The Penang Diocesan Youth Network (PDYN) organised a virtual retreat for young people aged 18 - 35 years old, June 11-13. As this year is dedicated to St Joseph, about 20 young people courageously and faithfully spent 48 hours with St Joseph to discover their gifts and wonders in life. These young people, consisting of working adults and campus students, were led by Fr Ramon Borja, SDB the retreat master.

During the retreat, each participant was assigned a Spiritual Companion (Miss Agatha Teh, Fr Marshall Fernandez, Sr Shanti Mariadass, Sr Theresa Chew, Sr Mary Anne Fletcher, Sr Florence Nemesius and Sr Noemi Mejia) to listen, advise, guide and foster union with God.

Taking on the theme *Discovery of Gifts and Wonders with St Joseph*, the book *Consecration to St Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father* by Fr Donald H. Calloway inspired the inputs given throughout the retreat. Many key points from the book were beautifully simplified and delivered by Fr Ramon in his sessions. To guide the retreatants into a reflective and disciplined journey, there was a daily theme;

Day 1 - 'Our WHYs make us WISE',



Day 2 - 'GOD'S WHYs make us MORE WISE', and Day 3 - 'Our WHYs blended with GOD's WHYs make us MOST WISE'.

As one of the retreatants, I found the sessions to be very profound and inspiring as they highlighted the life of St Joseph. He was a silent man, yet a saint that is full of wonders and gifts.

Through the account of his silent lips and speaking hands, the participants of the retreat were able to better appreciate St Joseph, value silence in life and imitate his exemplary traits such as obedience, righteousness, humility, attentiveness and, most importantly, love for Jesus and Mother Mary, so much through his actions! A journey with St Joseph is surely timely with the current situation of this pandemic. While moving our hands and feet

to the needs of others, we are also called to appreciate the beauty of silence and being 'hidden' from the spotlights of this world. By now, many of us may have realised that silence and being 'hidden' are the most precious gifts for those who seek to reflect and ponder in their life. Besides the times for reflection and spiritual companionship, the retreat was also filled with activities such as ice breaking, Examen prayer, energiser, journaling, and group sharing, not forgetting the must-have of any retreat, Mass and Adoration, which in this retreat, was celebrated by Fr Simon Anand.

Taking another step in appre-

ciation of the silence and solitude, all retreatants joined in the Grand Silence, which took place on the second night and lasted until the next morning. It was a totally new experience for most, and according to the retreatants, it was very challenging to be in that silence since they were used to active, noisy and busy lifestyles. Nevertheless, they came to find a sense of solace and solitude in that Grand Silence. They also discovered that they were physically, mentally and spiritually recharged to be in silence with the Lord, as affirmed by St Mother Theresa, "We need to find God and God cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is a

"We need to find God and God cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is a friend of silence."

friend of silence. See how nature — the trees and flowers and grass — grows in silence. See the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence. The more we receive in silent prayer, the more we can give in our active life." Indeed, the moment of silence is necessary, especially for those who lead a busy and active life.

I have discovered that St Joseph is the perfect model of the silent saint. His personality is appealing. On this 48-hour journey, I realised that it is challenging to stay in silence in this noisy world. However, it is very refreshing when I put in the effort —to pray, to listen and to sleep like St Joseph. It helps me to reflect on my WHYs and GOD's WHYs, and discover my gifts and wonders when my WHYs are bent to God's.

"when we are able to appreciate the gifts and wonders we have received, then only we can give ourselves wholly to God's will."

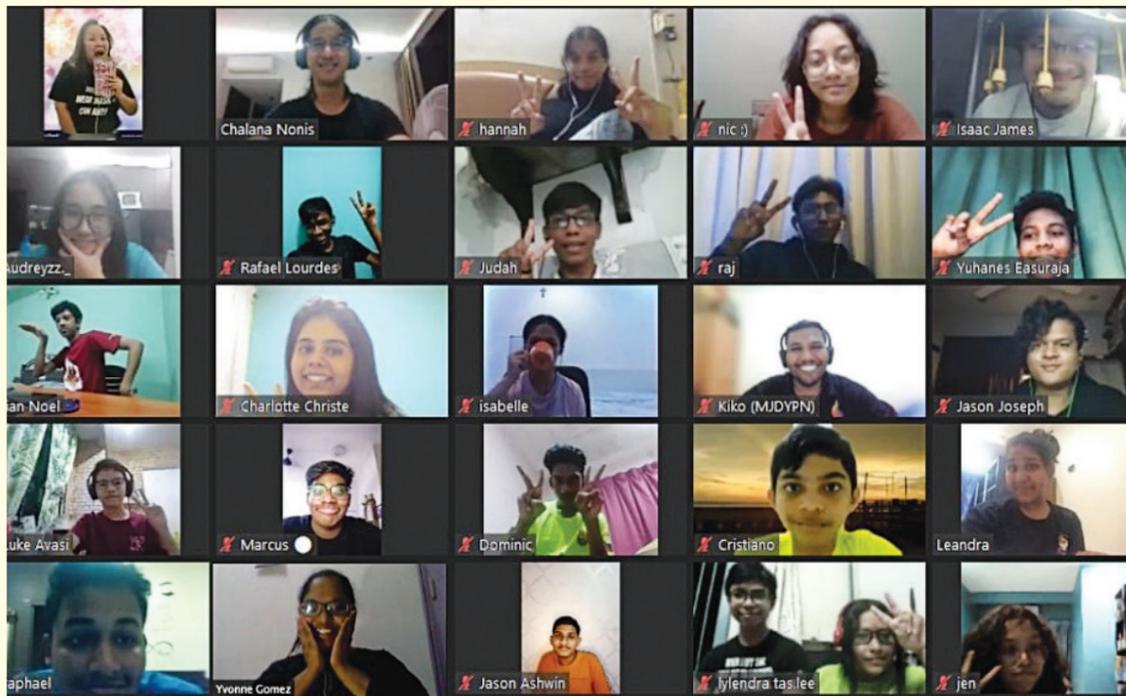
It's true that when we are able to appreciate the gifts and wonders we have received, only then can we give ourselves wholly to God's will. Last but not least, may the silent life of Joseph challenges us to create time for silence, because it is in silence that the Lord reveals to us His will and His purpose in our lives.

O glorious St Joseph, pray for us and assist us! — By Evelynne Vianney Edwin, retreatant

JOHOR BAHRU YOUTH RECONNECT

JOHOR BAHRU: Due to the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, the English-speaking student youths from the Church of the Immaculate Conception (CIC) are yet to be reunited physically. However, the youth had their inaugural virtual Zoom Youth Meet for 2021 on June 6. It had truly been quite a while since they had last met. Understandably, the aim was to renew communication and to get to know the new members, despite the Movement Control Order (MCO). It was organised by the core team and had 27 participants.

The meeting started off with a presentation of the current core team, when three new leaders were introduced and inducted with a virtual praying over. Then it continued with an ice-breaking session. The youth had to introduce themselves with their name, age and an interesting fact about themselves. For the newcomers, the core team had prepared



Immaculate Conception Church youths gather for the first time in 2021 via Zoom.

a small game for them called 'two Truths one Lie'. Participants were to guess which of the three

statements given by the newcomer was a lie. The core team had also dis-

cussed and organised beforehand a couple of fun and exciting virtual games for the youth to en-

joy — 'Zoom In' and 'Reverse Charades'. *Zoom In* was a very entertaining game as the youth had to guess the character in the picture shown from a very pixelated stage. *Reverse Charades* was a variation of the fun family game Charades and it was really amusing because of everyone's participation. Everyone had a good laugh and enjoyed playing the games.

To conclude the meeting, the overall leader led the youth in a closing prayer.

All in all, it may be said that the youth meeting was a success once again! We are absolutely grateful and really blessed to meet the youth once again even though it was virtually.

We will continue our youth meets once every three weeks, virtually for now and hopefully, physically in the near future. Either way, we will strive to stay united and pray together as a community. — **By Fabian Noel Mangalam**

INTERESTING SESSIONS LINED UP FOR V-SYD5

SABAH: Three more weeks till Virtual Sabah Youth Day-5 (V-SYD5) July 19-25! The organisers are in the final stages of preparation and have a list of programmes for this seven-day event.

The team of 35 people, led by Anna Teresa Peter Amandus, has organised a programme that conform to the needs of the youth today and aims to walk with them in searching for answers to the questions of their lives and their faith.

The objectives of V-SYD5 are

- 1) To gather the youths in Sabah to strengthen their faith;
- 2) For the youths to reflect, live, and follow the example of Mother Mary who was faithful to God's call and;
- 3) To be courageous witnesses of Christ.

These will provide them an opportunity to share their experiences of faith, bitterness, hurt, joy, and grace and to embrace God's love through the friendships they build. It will also make them aware of the challenges in today's world, to think more critically and globally, and



Kota Marudu parish youth preparing for the Thematic Night.

make them realise their role in the Church by encouraging them to become faithful and committed disciples of Jesus to serve fellow youths, family, church and community.

Below is an overview of the programmes the team has prepared for the participants.

'CHRIST IS ALIVE'

Christus Vivit (Christ is Alive) is a document issued by Pope Francis to

the young people. *Christus Vivit* reminds the youth not to give up in the face of this challenging time. There is always a way out! (CV-103). It also calls on the youth to use their gifts to spread the goodness of love for themselves, for their family, society and all beings on earth. You are the now of God! (CV-64).

Pope Francis also reminds the young people to walk with the elderly to materialize their dreams and visions. The old dream dreams, and the young see visions! (CV - 192).

The young people are presented with ways to serve their ministry. The ministry doesn't have to be big — it can start with small things — but it will have an impact in the future.

Finally, we as young people are always reminded of the calling. Whether the calling as a working person or to build a family or those who want to be a priest and religious, these are all God's callings. If we truly live according to the Gospel, we will surely bear good fruit.



Kota Marudu parish youth preparing for the Thematic Night.

CELEBRATION OF LOVE
Celebration of love is a session on God's love with the Way of the Cross, Thematic Night and Adoration. Through this Celebration of Love, the faith of the youth will be strengthened and they will be reassured that they are God's children. This is to motivate them to share God's love with one another.

with love throughout the world, especially in this digital era.

Taking the words of Pope Francis from *Evangelii Gaudium* #273 "I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world". It reminds young people that they have a reason to be in this world — they must not think they have nothing to give or think that others don't need them. "Think about it! Each of you, think in your heart: many people need me" — Pope Francis, World Mission Day 2018.

The last day of V-SYD5 is themed 'EMPOWERED' or empowering. It will end with the Youth Fiesta where we will invite the youths to celebrate and express their gratitude in their hearts after five days of meetings.

Through these constructive sessions, we hope these young Catholics will remember their baptismal vows, be strengthened and empowered, and rise to say 'Yes' to become missionaries of Jesus to spread the gospel and love throughout the world. — **By SYD-5 Team**



The organising team.

Myanmar military wages war against Christian ethnic minorities

MYANMAR: Thousands of people have fled their homes and taken refuge at churches and in the jungle as Myanmar's military conducts air strikes and indiscriminate attacks in Kachin, Kayah, Karen and Chin states — largely Christian areas.

Amid the recent conflict, churches have been raided and shelled and troops stationed in church compounds, while Catholic priests have been arrested and unarmed civilians including Christians, have been killed.

At least 175,000 people have been displaced in Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin and Shan states following the escalation in fighting between the military and ethnic armed groups and the People's Defence Force (PDF) since March.

PDF units in various regions have taken up homemade rifles and hunting weapons against the military, which has used air strikes and heavy artillery to crush the opposition.

The Southeast Asian nation is descending into political upheaval and widespread civil war following the military coup on Feb. 1 that overthrew the elected civilian government.

The ensuing reign of terror against civilians and pro-democracy protesters has led to at least 872 deaths.

The latest military assault on Christians in ethnic regions is not the first time minority Christians have been attacked and targeted. Christians have borne the brunt of the decades-old civil war and have faced oppression and persecution at the hands of the military which ruled for more than five decades.

Myanmar has had one of the longest running civil wars in the world since gaining independence from Britain in 1948.

While the world has paid much attention to the plight of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state who face state-sponsored violence and persecution, ethnic regions with largely Christian populations have become forgotten victims during the world's forgotten war.

More than 700,000 Rohingya fled Rakhine into Bangladesh following the military's crackdown in August 2017.

In Karen state in southeastern Myanmar, where the majority are Karens, who were the first group in the country to accept Christianity in the 19th century, people have faced persecution and rights abuses during nearly 60 years of civil war.

The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the armed wing of the Karen National Union (KNU), has waged a war against the military, which has committed atrocities including arbitrary arrests, burning homes, gang rape and extrajudicial killings.

The conflict has led to thousands being killed, while more than 100,000 people, mostly Karens, have fled to neighbouring Thailand where they remain in camps.

The KNLA, made up mostly of Christians, has long called for self-determination in a federal state. It is estimated to have around 15,000 soldiers.

The world has paid little attention to military atrocities against ethnic Karen, also known as Kayin. Observers say the atrocities amount to war crimes.

The military has also engaged in a widespread campaign of violence against Kachins in predominantly Christian Kachin state where several churches have been attacked and pas-

tors have been arrested, while they committed rights abuses including arbitrary arrests, killing, torture and rape.

More than 100,000 people in Kachin and Shan state, mostly Christians, have been displaced due to the renewed fighting between the military and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) after the breakdown of a 17-year truce. Internally displaced persons remain in crowded camps as peace remains elusive.

Mountainous Chin state in western Myanmar is one of the poorest states in the country due to neglect by the military regime for decades. Over 90 per cent of Chins are Christian, with most identifying as Baptists. — ucanews.com



People take refuge in a jungle area in Demoso, Kayah state on June 3 after they fled conflict zones where fighting between the Myanmar military and members of the People's Defence Force took place. (UCA News photo)

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St Irenaeus

The Church is fortunate that Irenaeus was involved in many of its controversies in the second century. He was a student, well trained no doubt, with great patience in investigating, tremendously protective of apostolic teaching, but prompted more by a desire to win over his opponents than to prove them in error.

As bishop of Lyons, he was especially concerned with the Gnostics, who took their name from the Greek word for “knowledge.” Claiming access to secret knowledge imparted by Jesus to only a few disciples, their teaching was attractive and confused many Christians. After

thoroughly investigating the various Gnostic sects and their “secret,” Irenaeus showed to what logical conclusions their tenets led. These he contrasted with the teaching of the Apostles and the text of Holy Scripture, giving us, in five books, a system of theology of great importance to subsequent times. Moreover, his work, widely used and translated into Latin and Armenian, gradually ended the influence of the Gnostics.

The circumstances and details about his death, like those of his birth and early life in Asia Minor, are not at all clear. — *Franciscan Media*

Sts Peter and Paul

On June 29 the Church celebrates the feast day of Sts Peter & Paul. As early as the year 258, there is evidence of an already lengthy tradition of celebrating the solemnities of both Saint Peter and Saint Paul on the same day. Together, the two saints are the founders of the See of Rome, through their preaching, ministry and martyrdom there.

Peter, who was named Simon, was a fisherman of Galilee and was introduced to the Lord Jesus by his brother Andrew, also a fisherman. Jesus gave him the name Cephas (Petrus in Latin), which means ‘Rock’, because he was to become the rock upon which Christ would build His Church.

Peter was a bold follower of the Lord. He was the first to recognise that Jesus was “the Messiah, the Son of the living God,” and eagerly pledged his fidelity until death. In his boldness, he also made many mistakes, however, such as losing faith when walking on water and betraying the Lord on the night of His passion.

Yet, despite his human weaknesses, Peter was chosen to shepherd God’s flock. The Acts of the Apostles illustrates his role as head of the Church after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. Peter led the Apostles as the first Pope and ensured that the disciples kept the true faith.

St Peter spent his last years in Rome, leading the Church through persecution, and eventually being martyred in the year 64. He was crucified upside-down at his own request, because he claimed he was not worthy to die in the same way as his Lord.

He was buried on Vatican hill, and St Peter’s Basilica is built over his tomb.

St Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles. His letters are included in the writings of the New Testament, and through them we learn much about his life and the faith of the early Church.

Before receiving the name Paul, he was Saul, a



Jewish pharisee who zealously persecuted Christians in Jerusalem. Scripture records evidence that Saul was present at the martyrdom of St. Stephen.

Saul’s conversion took place as he was on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christian community there. As he was travelling along the road, he was suddenly surrounded by a great light from heaven. He was blinded and fell off his horse. He then heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He answered: “Who are you, Lord?” Christ said: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”

Saul continued to Damascus, where he was baptised and his sight was restored. He took the name Paul and spent the remainder of his life preaching the Gospel tirelessly to the Gentiles of the Mediterranean world.

Paul was imprisoned and taken to Rome, where he was beheaded in the year 67.

He is buried in Rome in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.

In a sermon in the year 395, St Augustine of Hippo said of Sts Peter and Paul: “Both Apostles

Feastday: June 29

St Paul is the patron saint of:

- missionaries,
- evangelists,
- writers,
- journalists,
- authors,
- public workers,
- rope and saddle makers,
- tent makers

St Peter is the patron saint of:

- netmakers
- shipbuilders
- fishermen
- locksmiths
- cobblers
- Rome
- Popes
- those with foot problems.

share the same feastday, for these two were one; and even though they suffered on different days, they were as one. Peter went first, and Paul followed. And so we celebrate this day made holy for us by the Apostles’ blood. Let us embrace what they believed, their life, their labours, their sufferings, their preaching, and their confession of faith.” — *CNA*

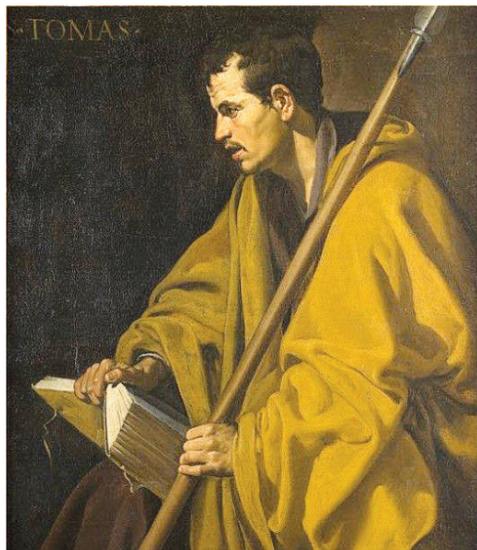
St Thomas

On July 3, the Church celebrates the feast day of St Thomas the Apostle. Best known for his initial unwillingness to believe the other apostles’ claim that Jesus had risen from the dead, St Thomas can teach the faithful about believing without seeing.

As an apostle, Thomas was dedicated to following the Lord. Upon hearing that Jesus was returning to Judea, an area that would pose dangers due to the growing animosity of the authorities there, he immediately said to the other Apostles, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (Jn 11: 16).

Yet despite this determination, Thomas proved not only too weak to stand beside Jesus as he faced his crucifixion, but also doubted the Lord’s Resurrection when he was told about it by the other Apostles. Denying their story, he told them, “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe” (Jn 20:25).

A week later, Christ appeared and said to



Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.” When Thomas did so he exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!”

In his general audience on September 27,

Feastday: July 3

Patron Saint of:

- Architects/Builders/Construction Workers/Surveyors
- India
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka
- Theologians

2006, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of St Thomas, explaining that we can learn from his doubts, which show us “that Jesus can now be recognised by his wounds rather than by his face.”

“The Apostle Thomas’ case is important to us for at least three reasons,” said the Pope. “First, because it comforts us in our insecurity; second, because it shows us that every doubt can lead to an outcome brighter than any uncertainty; and, third, because the words that Jesus addressed to him remind us of the true meaning of mature faith and encourage us to persevere, despite the difficulty, along our journey of adhesion to him.”

After Pentecost, St Thomas is traditionally believed to have preached the Good News to the Persians and Medes, until he reached India, where he evangelised and was eventually martyred in 72 A.D. — *CNA*

Daily Short Reading

Sunday, June 27
(Apocalypse 7:10,12)

Victory to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen.

Monday, June 28
(2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a gentle Father and the God of all consolation, who comforts us in all our sorrows, so that we can offer others, in their sorrows, the consolation that we have received from God ourselves. Indeed, as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so, through Christ, does our consolation overflow.

Tuesday, June 29
(1 Peter 4:13-14)

Beloved, if you can have some share in the sufferings of Christ, be glad, because you will enjoy a much greater gladness when his glory is revealed. It is a blessing for you when they insult you for bearing the name of Christ, because it means that you have the Spirit of glory, the Spirit of God resting on you.

Wednesday, June 30
(Tobit 4:14-15,16,19)

Be careful, my child, in all you do, well-disciplined in all your behaviour. Do to no one what you would not want done to you. Give your bread to those who are hungry, and your clothes to those who are naked. Whatever you own in plenty, devote a proportion to almsgiving. Bless the Lord God in everything; beg him to guide your ways and bring your paths and purposes to their end.

Thursday, July 1
(Isaiah 66: 1-2)

Thus says the Lord: With heaven my throne and earth my footstool, what house could you build me, what place could you make for my rest? All of this was made by my hand and all of this is mine - it is the Lord who speaks. But my eyes are drawn to the man of humbled and contrite spirit, who trembles at my word.

Friday, July 2
(Ephesians 4: 20-32)

Do not use harmful words in talking. Use only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you. And do not make God’s Holy Spirit sad; for the Spirit is God’s mark of ownership on you, a guarantee that the Day will come when God will set you free. Get rid of all bitterness, passion and anger. No more shouting or insults. No more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tenderhearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you in Christ.

Saturday, July 3
(Ephesians 2: 19-22)

You are no longer aliens in a foreign land, but fellow-citizens with God’s people, members of God’s household. You are built upon the foundations laid by the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the foundation-stone. In him the whole building is bonded together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you too are being built with all the rest into a spiritual dwelling for God.

