

MISSION STATEMENT

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

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HERALD

THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY

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1 Thess. 3:12-13

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.



MJD clergy evaluate their role and work as pastors

P5



Remembering Fr Dr John Gnanapiragasam

P12



Young people, Stand up and be witnesses of God!

P16



Pope Francis greets people with disabilities in Baghdad, Iraq, on March 5, 2021. (Vatican Media)

Pope to persons with disabilities:

The Church is truly your home

VATICAN: Pope Francis assures people with disabilities that the Church is truly their home, saying the Church is a community of imperfect people and sinners who are in need of God's forgiveness. The Pope expresses the Church's closeness to them in a message on the occasion of the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3.

The Pope's message, released by the Vatican at a press conference on Nov 25, has as its theme, *You are my friends* (Jn 15:14).

"The Church is truly your home!" the Pope assures people with disabilities. "We, all of us together, are Church, because Jesus chose to be our friend . . . Everyone has a part to play; no one is a mere extra." Hence, "each of you," he says, "is also called to make his or her own contribution to the syn-

odal journey" in "a participative and inclusive ecclesial process."

Unfortunately, the Holy Father points out, even today many people with disabilities "are treated as foreign bodies in society." He says, "You can feel that [you] exist without belonging and without participating," and that "much still prevents [you] from being fully enfranchised." "Discrimination," he notes, "continues to be all too present at various levels of society; it feeds on prejudice, ignorance, and a culture that finds it hard to appreciate the inestimable value of each person."

"The continuing tendency to regard disabilities as a kind of disease," he laments, "contributes to keeping lives separate and stigmatising you."

In the Church, the Pontiff says, "the worst form of discrimination . . . is the lack of spiritual care" which is sometimes experienced in the form of denying access to the sacraments to those with disabilities.

In this regard, the Pope stresses the Church's teaching that "no one can deny the

sacraments to persons with disabilities" — for Jesus does not call us servants, women and men of lesser dignity, but friends: confidants worthy of knowing all that He has received from the Father.

Pope Francis further says that Jesus' friendship protects us in moments of difficulty, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had grave repercussions for many disabled persons. Many of them were forced to stay at home for long periods of time; many students with disabilities had difficulties in accessing aids to distance learning. There were also lengthy interruptions in social care services and other hardships.

Those who were confined to residential facilities were particularly hard hit by the virus, with many lives lost. "Know that the Pope and the Church are especially close to you, with love and affection!" Pope Francis says.

He points out that the Church always "insists that everyone be provided with treatment, and that disabilities not prevent access

to the best care available." In this regard, the Holy Father commends the bishops' conferences of the United States and of England and Wales, which have demanded respect for the right of everyone, without discrimination, to medical care.

Addressing each one of the disabled persons, Pope Francis urges them to pray, assuring them that the Lord listens attentively to the prayers of those who trust in Him. "Prayer is a mission, a mission accessible to everyone, and I would like to entrust that mission in a particular way to you. There is no one so frail that he or she cannot pray, worship the Lord, give glory to His holy Name, and intercede for the salvation of the world."

In conclusion, Pope Francis reminds us that the pandemic has clearly shown us that we are all weak and vulnerable; we are all in the same boat, fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed; all of us are called to row together. And the "primary way to do so is precisely by praying".

— *Vatican News*

RUMINATIONS

My big leap towards adulthood

My transition from a carefree young guy to a responsible young adult took place last year. The beginning of 2020 was a big leap towards adulthood as I went for my first job interview. The interview went well. I was appointed as the Administrative and Finance Officer for a project focusing on the development of the refugee community in Kedah by the New Thessalonian Apostolate (NTA) and their international collaborator.

I started off on a three-month probation. The office was set up in the NTA School for Refugee Children in Alor Setar, close to the targeted community.

Initially it was challenging for me to adapt to the working lifestyle. However, as time passed, I began to adapt to the environment and to the work assigned to me which was related to the refugees and migrant workers.

I was really interested in the plight of the refugees and was moved when I met them in person – the community, seeing their way of living and the problems they faced while surviving in this country. It saddened me to see how they're treated, and to see how ignorant we are when they need a hand.

It was a very smooth implementation of



By
**Alexander
Anthony
Lourdes**

the project until the coronavirus pandemic hit the world. The concept of "work from home" was introduced throughout the nation as a safety precaution by the government.

Thinking that I had finally experienced working life, I began to relax. As the pandemic struck the whole nation and changed the lives of all people, so too did it change mine. One week before the MCO in Malaysia, my senior officer went back to Indonesia for personal reasons. With only a few months experience, I was left to handle the necessary while she was away.

I was adapting to the "work from home" concept and was comfortable, in a way. But my feelings of relief were short-lived when, after only a few weeks, I was informed that I would have to be out and about to give aid to the refugee community around Alor Setar. Moved by compassion and a sense of responsibility, NTA and their collaborative partner came with

aid to be distributed among the refugee community in Alor Setar. The only way this aid could be distributed was for me to go out and distribute it myself.

To be honest, I wasn't comfortable, due to the rise of COVID-19 cases throughout Malaysia, but I asked myself ... If I said no to this, who else would be willing to do it? So, I let go of all worries, to step out and get the work done. While I was distributing aid, it was a struggle to navigate along closed-down roads and to encounter police checkpoints but at the end of the day, the joy I got when I looked at the people as they received the aid, the smiles, the tears, and the heartfelt gratitude shown by them, made me tell myself, "it's worth it". From that point on, I spent most of my time out of my house, going around for the refugees. It became my passion.

My compassion towards the refugees overcame my fear and I continued to do the work I was assigned to. Seeing the condition the people were in, the joy, the tears, and the gratitude they showed when they received the aid, I was glad that I had stepped up.

One special moment for me was when I encountered a refugee father of three kids who was reduced to tears when he

received aid for the first time since he came to Malaysia. He was moved because his children had not eaten properly for almost two weeks, and now with this aid he could provide them with a proper meal. Witnessing a father's tears was a rare thing for me and it has been one of my most heart-warming and special moments of the pandemic. I have now successfully given out aid for the more than 500 families all over Alor Setar, Kedah, and I am continuing my work in serving the refugee community.

I am grateful for this opportunity which has enabled me to transit into a responsible young adult, filled with compassion for the less fortunate.

● *Alexander Anthony Lourdes is a 21-year-old from Alor Setar, Kedah who is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in psychology. He has always been interested in outreach work, an interest he was able to cultivate and nurture after joining the New Thessalonian Apostolate (NTA) and interning with the NTA School For Refugee Children. Mission work has since taken him all over the Northern region while exposing him to work, with and alongside, several international charities.*

Awaiting promises full of hope

When I was growing up, getting into trouble with my parents was a common occurrence for me. One way of getting out of trouble was to say, "I promise never to do it again" and the occasional signing of the cross over my chest saying, "I cross my heart not to do this next time". There were occasions when I got away scot free and there were times when I didn't. I am sure that, despite my promises, my parents knew at the back of their minds that I would do the same thing again soon.

Making a promise and the occasional breaking of it are common occurrences in our daily lives. All of us have made promises, broken them, or insisted that others make a promise. If someone made a promise to you, wouldn't you expect them to keep it? If someone broke the promise they made to you, wouldn't you be upset and not trust them again? Promises are important to keep because we want others to trust us, just as much as we want

to trust them.

On this first Sunday of Advent, when we begin a new liturgical year, the Liturgy of the Word (seemingly incongruously) draws attention to the end times and calls us to prepare ourselves for that day. For every beginning there is an end, and for every end, there is surely a beginning. Despite not knowing the time when all this will happen, the Alpha and the Omega is in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ.

Though the end times seem to dominate the readings today, the season of Advent that we enter is anchored on a promise – God's promise of a glorious future, rather than a destructive end. The first reading from the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 33:14-16) announces a future wherein the promise of God will be fulfilled. The promise of redemption is directed to His chosen people. Speaking through the prophet, God announces that He will deliver His people to safety and His salvation is assured

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr Dr Clarence Devadass

for all peoples.

In the Gospel (Luke 21:25-28,34-36), Jesus, using apocalyptic language, speaks of a new world that is to come. The dramatic expressions in the Gospel may lead us to think that God is "informing" us of what will happen at the end of time. However, the use of apocalyptic images was not uncommon at the time of Jesus – frequently used in describing the entrance of God (cf. Isaiah 13:9-10). The "turmoil" that Jesus speaks about here has its roots in the creation account found in the Book of Genesis (cf. Gen 1:1-10). It is from chaos that God brings about a new order, a new creation.

Though the description of the end times will cause fear in those who hear it, fear was never the intention. Vigilance and confidence are what Jesus calls His disciples to: "Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man."

In our second reading (1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2), St Paul, who was expecting the imminent second coming of Jesus, clearly explains how we should prepare for His coming. Addressing the Christians of Thessalonica, Paul prays that the Lord may increase and enrich their love for one another as this is the path to holiness and the only vigilant way of awaiting the coming of the Lord. In short, the coming of the Lord must find us enflamed with love of God and of one another.

The readings on this First Sunday of Advent, anchored on God's promise, point

1st Sunday of Advent (C)

Readings: *Jeremiah 33:14-16;*

1 Thessalonians 3:12 — 4:2;

Gospel: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

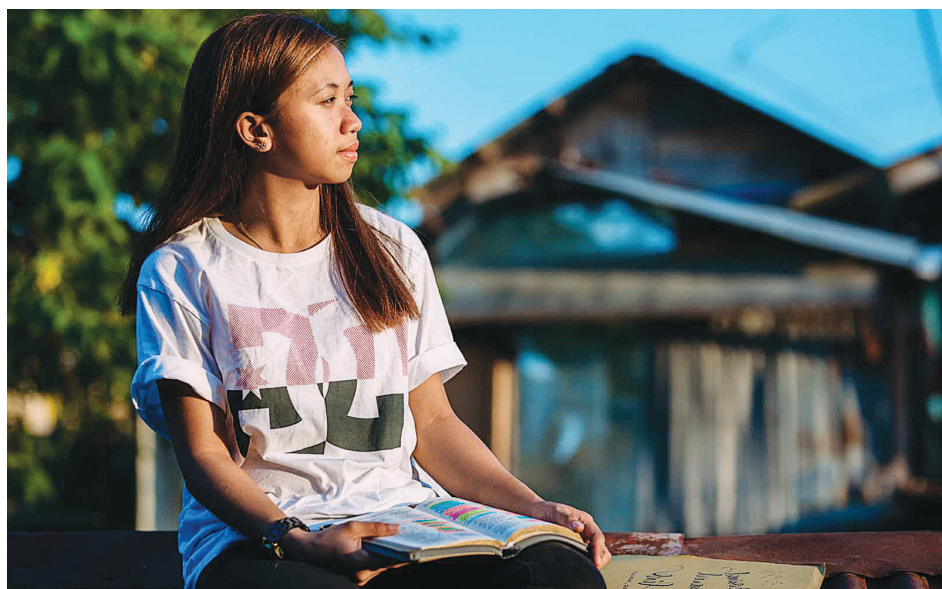
to the realities of peace and fulfilment that will be accomplished by God. The promises of the coming of the Son of Man in the Old Testament, and the promise of the second coming in the New Testament, are indeed promises full of hope – a hope that is not deceptive because God tells the prophet Jeremiah, "I will fulfil the promise I made". In the meantime, let our vigilance be filled with love, because God is pure love.

The season of Advent provides each one of us with a wonderful opportunity to reflect on what is going on inside us; to reflect on the reason for our waiting; the arrival of Jesus, the arrival of Love, in our heart in ever-new ways.

Take a few minutes of quiet time every day this Advent to "stay vigilant" before the Lord. As we look forward to that day of redemption, let our hearts be filled with hope, peace, joy, and love. May our prayer be, *O come, divine Messiah! The world in silence waits the day; When hope shall sing its triumph and sadness flee away.*

Blessed Advent everyone.

● *Fr Dr Clarence Devadass a diocesan priest of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur is the Director of the Catholic Research Centre and Editor-in-Chief of CANews.*



Penang Diocese Diary of Bishop Sebastian Francis December 2021

- Dec 1** *Parish Pastoral Assembly – Minor Basilica of St Anne, BM*
- Dec 8** *Final Profession of Sr Winnie Vun FMM – Kota Bahru*
- Dec 24-26** *Christmas – Minor Basilica of St Anne, BM*

Carmelite sister makes her simple profession

KOTA KINABALU: Sr Teresa of Jesus, 33, made her simple profession during a Eucharistic Celebration on November 14 presided over by Carmelite Chaplain Fr Mattheus Luta in the Carmelite monastery. Her mother, Dourine Oloh, was present to witness the occasion.

Upon hearing the call of the Lord and following few years of discernment, Sr Teresa of Jesus entered the Carmelite Monastery on Nov 23, 2019. She received her habit on Nov 14, 2020. After expressing her desire to dedicate herself wholly to God, she began her three year proba-

tion in preparation for her solemn profession.

During the ceremony, she made vows of obedience, chastity and poverty before the Mother Prioress.

Sr Teresa of Jesus, born on May 17, 1987, hails from Telipok. She is the fourth of six siblings (three boys and three girls). Her father is Andrew Onduk Ponsoi.

The community prays that she may continue to persevere in her religious vocation in the cloistered Carmelite community which has 19 members. — **By Agnes Moniu, Catholic Sabah**



Fr Mattheus Luta handing over the constitution of the Discalced Carmelite community to the newly professed sister through the little door at the wall.

Seminarian Raymond Lee ordained as Deacon



Bishop Julius Dusin laying hands and praying over Seminarian Raymond Lee.

SANDAKAN: Taking inspiration from Isaiah 41:10 “Do not be afraid, for I am with you; do not be alarmed, for I am your God. I give you strength, truly I help you, truly I hold you firm with my saving right hand”, seminarian Raymond Lee Seng Huat was ordained deacon on November 15 at St Mary’s Cathedral.

The Sandakan Diocese has great reason to rejoice because the diaconate ordination is indicative that God always provides workers in his vineyard. Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom was the happiest man as he ordained the seventh deacon and the first deacon from the Chinese Community since the start of the diocese in 2007. Bishop Julius mentioned that this ordination was also a sign that the faith of the Chinese community, as well as the parish community, as a whole, is active and growing from strength

to strength.

Seminarian Raymond’s pastoral formation began in 2016. He was assigned to serve in the Holy Trinity Church, Tawau. In 2019, he served in St Martin’s Church, Telupid and in 2020, he did his pastoral work with the Paitan Mission. He later served at St Theresa’s Church, Serian, Sarawak, before returning to Sandakan.

The process of the diaconate ordination started a week prior when seminarian Raymond received the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Holy Orders on Nov 10 at St Mary’s Cathedral.

The ordination Mass took place at the same place on Monday, Nov 15. About 200 parishioners, including Archbishop John Wong of the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, priests from the various parishes in the Diocese of Sandakan, families and friends

of seminarian Raymond, were present. The Mass was also live-streamed for parishioners unable to participate in person.

Bishop Julius reminded seminarian Raymond that he should uphold his good reputation, filled with wisdom and the Holy Spirit, and that he shall exercise his ministry committed to a life of celibacy. Seminarian Raymond then made his promises of obedience before Bishop Julius.

Deacon Raymond shared that his journey in the seminarian formation was met with many challenges, and the diaconate ordination was not a means to an end but the beginning of another journey. He urged the parishioners to continue praying for him and supporting him so that he would be a humble servant of God, serving his Church and the community. — **By Anathasia Thomas, Dospo**



DIocese of
MALACCA JOHORE



MJD News Update #67

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

A blessed new year as the liturgical year ends and the Advent season begins. The WYD 2021 that coincided with the feast of Christ the King was an enlightening time, with a dialogue session. Throughout the MJD, young people of both genders, of all ages, races, cultures, and languages connected online via Zoom.

Enlightening Times. The Feast of Christ the King opened discussions on today’s leadership types. Outlined were man-made kings, power seeking self-made ones; and anointed God-sent leaders. The Melaka election was a good case study. The popular votes painted a different picture, though it was a more than 2/3 majority by seats. The defeated and the many analysts are conducting post-mortems. What did the electorate vote for? For political stability? For “bossku”? For removing the frogs? For money? What did they vote for? What will we vote for at the next Pilihan Raya Umum? The world and the Church need colourblind servant leaders who hear the cry of the poor and the earth, and who come to serve without fear or favour.

A Thought for the Week: My Brother.

Someone once met a lad going to school, long before the days when transport was provided. The lad was carrying on his back a smaller boy who was clearly lame and unable to walk.

The stranger said to the lad, “Do you carry him to school every day?”

“Yes,” said the boy.

“That’s a heavy burden for you to carry,” said the stranger.

“He’s not heavy,” said the boy. “He’s my brother.”

Just a thought: No burden is ever too heavy when it is received and carried in love.

Read this sometime back: “Burdens shared are halved; joys shared are doubled”.



Announcements for this Week:

1. Entering liturgical Year C: The MJD prepares to complete the diocesan level Synodal Process and consultations, launch the MJD50 Diocesan prayer and the Hymn to “prepare the way”. As a Presbyterium, the felt need was to rebuild the community, the leadership and the ministries. The pandemic exposed weak, uncommitted and fearful community leaders and organisations. Going slow but the aim is to provide pastoral care for all ages, vaccinated, the unvaccinated and the anti-vaxxers.

2. Warnings of another outbreak are out. Be wary. Be watchful. Be safe. Vaccination does not guarantee. Sanitise. Safe-distance. Shield with face masks.

3. The seminarians will be back for their term break. There is one in Kuching Seminary; four in Penang Seminary; three in pastoral; two new applicants for the 2022 intake.

4. The MJD50, the golden jubilee of the diocese, begins its launch with united prayer and hymn, with stories of faith shared online. All celebrations begin and end with preparations.

This week’s Question and Query.

The Q asks: Hearing God? How can this be?

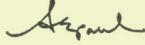
Hearing God begins with “Saying Yes to God”.

1. Faith in God is not just faith to believe in spiritual ideas. It is to have confidence in Love itself, in Reality itself, that God is in Reality and that God is revealed in everything. Faith is about learning to say yes to the moment right in front of you. Only after you say yes do you recognise that Christ is here, in this person, and in this event, that God is in all things.

2. As we say yes to God, we become God’s work of art, where love is stronger than death, Christ has risen in you. Love and life become one and the same thing. The love moves to say yes.

Thank you for reading. The Book of Revelations reminds me that “in Christ Jesus, we make all things new”. We build or gather with the Lord or we build in vain and scatter the flock.

Let us continue “Building His Kingdom” Together.


Bishop Bernard Paul
November 26, 2021

[Click here to watch the video](#)



General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

Neo-Communities participate in the Synodal Process

KOTA KINABALU: A group of 80 from the Neo Catechumenal communities gathered at the Sacred Heart Cathedral (SHC) to participate in the Synodal process at the parish level.

Fr Paul Lo, the rector of SHC, was with them, presiding over the proceedings, starting with Morning Prayers from the Divine Office.

The parish priest briefed them on the Synodal process - from when it started to the Regional Synod, up to the diocesan and parish level. He said they were the first group in the

parish to do so at the SHC.

Edward Muthu, the leader of the Neo Catechumenal communities, said it was the duty of the communities to respond to the call of the Church, "so that we can be heard by the Vatican, that we are the Church".

He said the fact that "a good number" of the community members were present showed that "we are alive (as a church) and this can be seen as a sign that we enter into the will of God".

After prayers and listening to writings of the Church Fathers like St

Charles Borromeo, a bishop whose feast day was commemorated that day, they broke into groups to spend two hours reflecting and sharing their personal experience of journeying together.

Archbishop John Wong, after listening to reports from representatives of the groups, said he felt encouraged and enriched, thanking God for his love and patience. He joined them in singing the Psalm, "Mary, Mother of the Burning Way", before closing the event with a blessing. — **By Joe Leong, Catholic Sabah**



Archbishop John Wong speaking to the Neo Catechumenal community.

Prayer for the Synod *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*

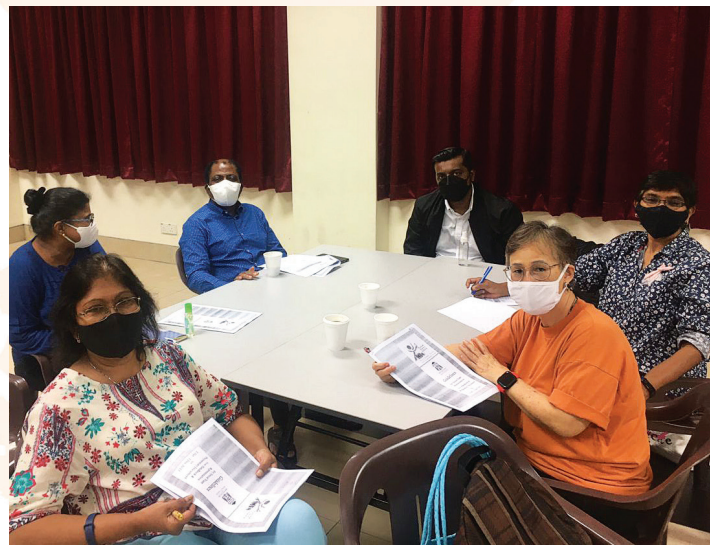
We stand before You,
Holy Spirit,
as we gather together
in Your name.
With You alone
to guide us,
make Yourself at home
in our hearts;
Teach us the way
we must go
and how we are
to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote
disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead
us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence
our actions.
Let us find in You
our unity
so that we may journey
together to eternal life
and not stray from
the way of truth
and what is right.
All this we ask of You,
who are at work in
every place and time,
in the communion of the
Father and the Son,
forever and ever.
Amen.

Synodal journey in progress for KL Archdiocese

CATHEDRAL OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

More than 30 BECs and ministry coordinators attended the parish synodal workshop on October 26. Participating in the Synodality Process of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023 was something many BECs coordinators and ministry heads weren't familiar with. Msgr Leonard Lexson and the Parish Synod Team (PST) recalled the historical event of the Aggiornamento in 1976 and all the subsequent PMPCs that took place every ten years between 1986, 1996, 2006 and 2016, acknowledgment of these important milestones of the Peninsular Malaysian Church came to the fore. He reiterated that the Peninsular Church is already living this synodality, and today through the Mother Church, the Holy Father Pope Francis is exhorting the whole Church to live it, journeying together as a People of God.

Setting the background from Jesus' life among the common folks and the legacy he left to the Apostles, we were introduced to the ten Thematic Nuclei (TN). We took moments of silence for personal reflection with one of the thematic nuclei questionnaires and the writing down of our thoughts. We proceeded with a little group sharing and then listening to each other in the larger group. After this first step of sharing and listening to each other, we were given further guidelines to assist us. We



Participants at the synod briefing.

were also invited to choose our TN and to proceed to live them out in our BECs and ministries in the coming weeks.

The parish has chosen the TN number 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 9.

TN 1, 2 3 and 5 will be answered by the BECs, while TN5 and 9 will be answered by BECs and ministries respectively. All responses are to be submitted as groups.

As the TN is chosen by the leader and the core group, each person answers to that TN. However, the parish encouraged all to do more if they wish. This invitation was met with certain resistance as many feared the extra time and effort needed to do the additional TN questions. But with the e-link, there might be a change, as the e-link is

more user friendly.

After the initial stage where most of the BECs and ministries had finished their process, the migrant communities will follow up to do the process in their own language.

There is a suggestion to reach out to Sunday Catholics. We hope to do random interviews and talk to Sunday Mass-goers. The e-link might be more utilised as there is a certain liberty and privacy for people to do it.

Meanwhile Msgr Leonard has been highlighting the Synod Process since the launch. We encourage BECs to do more as they are at the grassroots level. The time given is important as people are still wary of the pandemic and health situation. — **By Maria Yan**

CHURCH OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

The Parish Synod Team met on November 11 for a briefing by the Archdiocesan Team led by Msgr Mitchel Anthony Joseph.

Just as our Lord has always walked with us as our Good Shepherd, truly the Synodal path is Jesus' challenge to all the faithful to walk alongside one another, crossing boundaries of ministries, apostolates or even BECs.

This is especially relevant in our present days of the pandemic, where society at large has experienced much fragmentation and isolation along economic and community lines, and for the faithful in not being able to receive the sacraments for the first time in memorable history. As the Holy Father stressed in his Opening of the Synodal Path homily, it is a spiritual exercise to encounter, listen and discern. Not just the faithful but those in the peripheries, to seek out the lost and disenfranchised.

We pray that the Lord will impart the graces we need to be attentive, patient, and willing to encounter others, and to be sensitive to what troubles them in this Synodal journey.

The parish has chosen themes 1, 2, 4 and 5.

Groups, ministries and BECs are strongly recommended to collectively attempt the respective themes. Alternatively, individuals may attempt other themes outside their group, ministry or BEC as well.

There will be one collective response from each ministry, while BECs can have multiple, according to their unique needs.

Parish priest Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap held a general introduction on Synod 2023 for all parishioners. This was to help the different groups to share and to reflect as one. — **By William Cheong**

Links to Synod questionnaires

KL ARCHDIOCESE

<https://archdioceseklsynod.org/>

KOTA KINABALU ARCHDIOCESE

<https://forms.gle/N9FW9FXBGm-srvnxA7>

PENANG DIOCESE

Simple questionnaire

<https://forms.gle/hHqNadwtYnavaZ9r8>

Elaborated questionnaire

<https://forms.gle/yFJ7XNLgFSz8juvdA>

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Vpt3BKv_SYA7_CmnAKPs-FFp75hoiu3SKxAqn1EiS4gA/edit?usp=sharing

MIRI DIOCESE

<https://forms.gle/nNaru6ApijT8Ad49>
QR code for the
teens questionnaire

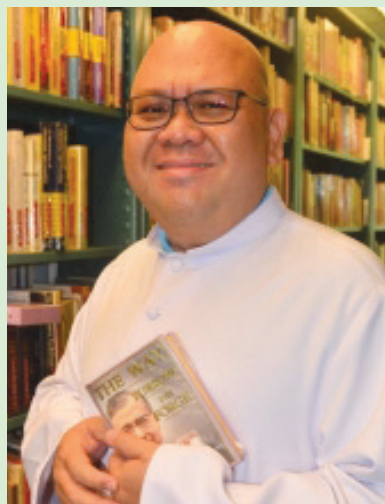




ARCHDIOCESE
OF KUCHING

Chan/CN/2021/003

Bann of Priestly Ordination



Rev Deacon Mark Noel Bonchol will be called to the Order of Presbyters on December 8, 2021. The Mass of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the Rite of Ordination to the Presbyterate will be presided over by His Grace Archbishop Simon Poh at St Joseph's Cathedral, at 7.30pm.

Canon Law (1051, 2°) requires Catholics to reveal any impediments or circumstances that would prevent Rev Deacon Mark from receiving the Sacred Orders and to contact the Chancery or Archbishop Simon Poh with such information as soon as possible.

In view of the current pandemic situation, this Ordination Mass will not be open to parishioners, but live-streamed on the Archdiocese social media platform. Attendance by family members and friends is by invitation only.

Let us offer our prayerful support to Rev Deacon Mark as he prepares for his priestly ministry and service in the Archdiocese of Kuching.

Fr Patrick Heng,
Chancellor
November 18, 2021

MJ Diocese clergy evaluate their role and work as pastors

JOHOR BAHRU: The Malacca Johore Diocese Annual Clergy Discernment (ACD) was held from November 16-18 in Majodi Centre. It was facilitated by Bishop Bernard Paul and the Vicar Generals.

The objective was to allow the clergy to evaluate their roles and work as pastors to their flock for the year 2021 and then to discern how to move to the new year and meet its challenges.

Other topics covered were the Malacca-Johore 50th Golden Jubilee Celebration in 2023, PMPT Themes and the 2026 PMPC.

We want to enter into communitarian discernment. The ACD is not an intellectual exercise or an assessment activity, check-listing successes, but a time to note our obedience and docility to the Holy Spirit in the community. The three days began with the clergy gathering for lauds and daily Mass at noon. In the evening, we had Holy Hour and Rosary together, and ended the night with fellowship among the clergy.

During the three days, Bishop Bernard led the clergy through the Five-Ds (Define-Discover-Dream-Design-Destiny) of the Appreciative Inquiry method and a review of life experiences.

The Approaches used are the:

1. **Purpose** — The goal is to create a Purpose-driven Church built on a vision and mission that is not stagnant but dynamic. This means there must be room for modification and change, a process of trial and error to improve. We must allow ourselves to make mistakes and learn from them. If things don't work out, then we must find the courage to seek a better way so that our work will bear lasting fruit.

2. **Movement (Discernment)** — Our Church should not be only activity-based; it should be guided by the Holy Spirit. What is the spirit behind our work and activities? Do we just have a to-do-checklist attitude, or are we truly making the effort to listen and discern with the Holy Spirit? Are we 'doing God's work' or 'doing work for God'? What



The clergy sharing their thoughts during the breakout session.

change do we want to see in any work or activity we do? Are our hearts changed in the end as a community and Church? All this is echoed in the Synod 2023 process as well. We want to be a people of hope.

The members of the clergy also looked at themselves from the area of self, the parish, and the community.

- Clergy – My response as a member of the clergy for the year. Am I truly available for my people? What is my focus and am I a gift to my sheep? Am I open to all and a pastor to all, especially during the pandemic? Am I adaptable as a shepherd?
- Parish – What is her response to the people in these pandemic times? How is the parish a gift to all?
- Catholic Community – Strengths and weakness?
- Parish Evaluation – Parish Pastoral Assembly report/Synod process/Yearly Planner.

There were group breakout discussions based on Bishop Bernard's sharing. The task in the group breakout was to:

- Identify main concerns in the vicariates.

- Prioritise three according to urgency and importance.
- Delegate to competent persons and teams.
- Follow through to make sure it is done or audit team to monitor progress
- (Share to the Assembly and report to the Secretary)

Other topics presented during the ACD was the *Laudato Si* Action Platform (LSAP) "Preparing the Future" together by Msgr Michel Mannayagam.

Msgr Michel gave the reasons behind the LSAP launch. It is a way to listen and respond to the cry of the Earth, the poor and our children and future generations.

"The idea is not just about doing and doing but it is based on Scriptures and Fathers of the Church in implementing *Laudato Si*'.

"The LSAP is an action oriented seven-year ecological conversion journey. We are aware that we are very weak in advocacy."

How do we realise the LSAP? Through a synodal path of communion, participation, and mission.

Community building and resource sharing are also ways that we can move forward by using three stages of See, Judge, Act — **By Fr Martinian Lee**

Vaccine hesitancy: What it means and what we need to know

Those above the age of 40 who received the Sinovac vaccine as their primary vaccine should consider getting their booster shot at least three months after their last dose, says Dr Benedict Sim, consultant infectious disease physician at Sungai Buloh Hospital. He was speaking about vaccine hesitancy on a recent episode of

Catholics@Home podcast.

Since most of the Malaysian population received Sinovac as their primary vaccine, Dr Benedict recommends the Pfizer vaccine as booster shot because research has shown that it is more efficacious compared to Sinovac. However, the possibility of experiencing side effects is higher compared to Sinovac. Dr



Benedict's advice is to receive the Pfizer vaccine on days when there are no important appointments and to refrain from strenuous activities for a few weeks after receiving the dose.

When asked whether booster shots are a one-off thing, Dr Benedict said that no decision has been made yet by the Malaysian Government as there is insufficient data available.

He explained that vaccines offer two levels of protection, i.e., protection against getting infected by the COVID-19 virus; and

protection against a severe infection of the disease which may cause a person to end up in intensive care and in danger of dying.

"If the person is not vaccinated, the risk of contracting the virus is higher compared to someone who is vaccinated. Therefore, a person who is less likely to contract COVID is less likely to spread the virus," says Dr Benedict.

"If a person has contracted the COVID-19 virus, regardless of whether he has received the vaccine or not, he has the potential to spread the virus to people around him."

Dr Benedict added that research has shown that, over time, the level of germs in the body goes down much faster for those who're vaccinated.

He says that the reasons for

vaccine hesitancy crosses a large spectrum, and many people are genuinely confused. Some of these reasons include fear of the new technology that produced the vaccine, and refusal to be controlled by medical sciences or by multinational companies which produced the vaccines. There are certain people who religiously oppose to being vaccinated too.

Dr Benedict warns against obtaining unverified information about vaccines from non-credible sources on the Internet or from messaging apps like WhatsApp. He encourages people to speak to their doctor if in doubt. — **By Julie Lim**

To view this podcast, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZBbekPHgQA>



Heeding the example of the Good Shepherd

PENANG: The new Rector for the College General Major Seminary in Penang, Fr Simon Labrooy, assumed office on November 27. He takes over from Fr Stanley Antoni.

He views his new appointment in his *alma mater* as a servant leader. In a short interview with the *HERALD*, he revealed that in his journey in the priesthood, he has learned that it is best to “think and feel with the Church” in carrying out the duties entrusted to him to the best of his ability because that is the way of Christ.

“Jesus showed us how to be a servant leader and I follow His example. He didn’t use His position or status to get things done. He did what He came to do and that is how I perceive my responsibilities,” he said.

Thus, Fr Simon’s new responsibility is to ensure that the rich history of the seminary is not only made known to the masses, but also valued for its prestigious alumnus. The history of the seminary dates to 1658, as a result of the Paris Foreign Mission’s (MEP) desire to establish seminaries in mission lands. The first seminary in South East Asia was built in Ayuthia, Thailand in 1665. It was given the name Seminary of the Holy Angels.

In just five years, the seminary had a total of 83 seminarians from various Asian countries in the institution. This was how it got the name College General. However, due to the uncertain political atmosphere, the college was relocated to four countries, one of that being Pulau Tikus, Penang in the year 1809. The seminary moved to its current location in 1989 as it was expanding in all aspects. Throughout its 212-year legacy on the island, the seminary has seen the martyrdom of 47 of its alumni and the sainthood of five others. Now, it is also known as the College of Mar-



College General Vietnamese Martyr-Saints, St Philip Minh and Companions.

tyrs. It’s now a full-fledged seminary.

Seminarians take about seven years to become a priest. Their courses are segmented into three parts – initiation (one year), philosophy (two years) and theology (four years). The college has four fulltime formators (lecturers) who are priests, and external lecturers consisting of religious and lay people. This offers the seminarians the opportunity to interact with people outside their community, which is good practice for their pastoral work.

The pandemic has also disrupted their studies, just like any other student in the past two years. Although they were all on campus throughout the various lockdowns, they adhered to the strict SOPs and guidelines given by the government. Their classes were moved online and since they each have their own

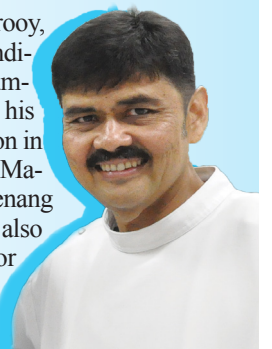
room, social distancing was fully observed. They had meals in shifts to maintain social distancing. They had daily online Masses and, just like other Catholics in Malaysia, they too only received spiritual Communion. However, when the SOPs were relaxed by the government, interaction improved, Mass was celebrated in community, and lectures were physical. The college is currently on its year end break, considering they did not have their month-long mid-semester home leave due to the travel restrictions.

The Rector’s one humble request is that we, as a community, intercede for more vocations from candidates who possess the attributes of servant leader, as this coincides with the Holy Father’s mission for the Synod in 2023. —

By Carmel Dominic

Profile of the new rector

Fr Simon Labrooy, from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, completed his seminary formation in College General, Major Seminary, Penang in 1997, where he also obtained a bachelor degree in Sacred Theology from Urbana University, Rome.



Fr Simon was ordained as a Deacon at the Church of St Anne, Port Klang in 1998 where he served his diaconate in action. Upon ordination to the priesthood that same year at the Church of our Lady of Lourdes in Klang, he served as assistant parish priest from July 1998 till February 1999 and also at Church of St Jude, Rawang, assisting the then parish priest, Fr Peter Breteudeau MEP. In March 1999, Fr. Simon was transferred to the Church of the Assumption in Petaling Jaya. He assisted Fr. Andrew Volle MEP and later Fr. Phillips Muthu until December 2006.

In 2007, Fr Simon was accepted as a member of the Association of Catholic Clinical Pastoral Counsellors, Singapore, upon completion of the Clinical Pastoral Education Programme at Mt Alvernia Hospital, Singapore. After completing his post graduate studies, Fr Simon served as parish priest of Church of St Thomas More in Subang Jaya from February 2009 until July 2015. Soon after, Fr Simon was appointed as the parish priest for the Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam until July 2017, after which he became a fulltime formator and Initiation Director of the College General, Major Seminary Penang.



ARCHBISHOP OF KUCHING

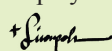
Bible.is 21-Day Christmas Challenge!

Dear Catholics, Christians and Friends,
In this COVID-19 period, many groups have used online platforms to host various events.

During this season of Advent, I invite you to take up a 21-Day Bible Challenge: Listen to the whole Gospel of Luke. Welcome to **Bible.is 21-Day Christmas Challenge!** More resources and information can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/FCB-HAsiaAudioBible>

1. Download the free Bible app Bible.is
2. Listen and Watch the Gospel daily
3. Choose your Heart Language
4. Follow the schedule in solidarity with Catholic and Christians this Advent
5. Join a group in your church
6. Start now!

With prayer and blessings,


Archbishop Simon Poh
Advent 2021

CDM Penang reviews year and plans for 2022

PENANG: The Church of the Divine Mercy will focus on *Communion: See God’s Participation: Sense God’s mercy and Mission: Savour God’s Mercy* in 2022. This was presented by parish priest Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap at the 2021 Parish Assembly at the Church of Divine Mercy (CDM) recently.

While presenting the 2022 overall and monthly *KampungKu* themes, which were part of the Parish-level BEC reflection paper, he added that it was important to have an encounter with Jesus, to sit with the Lord; and to accompany others to share that mercy. Through encounter and accompaniment, a change in lives or transformation must be witnessed, explained Fr Michael.

In his address, Fr Michael said that in his one year at CDM he observed that the parish is very promising, vibrant, and alive. Using the “see, judge, act” method of evaluation, he noted however that while we are busy with many activities, spirituality was often lacking. He cautioned that without spirituality, we end up just a worker in the Church ... and start to question, why am I doing this, and only look forward to the next activity ... we end up struggling and tired.” Fr Michael stressed the importance of putting “Christ in the centre” of everything. We need to move from being an inward-

looking parish to finding ways to get engaged in social causes outside the church walls like engaging on issues about migrants and refugees and inter-faith dialogue, for example.

At the beginning of the assembly, PPC Chairman Zeckry Chan gave an overview of parish activities and plans. He noted that the unpredictable MCO and the opening and closing of church were expected to mean a quiet year. However, contrary to expectations, the activities organised by the church continued. Ministries and BECs, including RCIA and Catechism, took to the digital platform, keeping momentum going and finding new creative ways to connect.

Touching on the status of the new building fund, Rodney Gomez from the finance team traced the timeline of events from the first letter of offer of the empty land sitting next to the parish in August of 2017 up to the present time. Over the years, several reports including soil test and hill slope reports had been submitted in response to council requirements. Despite the slowdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all reports in adherence to Council requirements were expected to be ready for submission by the year-end.

Ann Rowena David shared results of the survey on the direction and feasibility of the proposed Learn-



Parishioners participate in the Parish Pastoral Assembly.

ing Centre. The study conducted in October garnered some 270 responses in English and Bahasa Malaysia. In sharing the results of the survey, Rowena highlighted that only some 254 responses, from Penang respondents, were used for the findings. She summarised the data which showed that 83 per cent of the respondents agreed that a Learning Centre is needed and should be established. The largest chunk, over 30 per cent of respondents, pushed towards reaching out to special needs individuals. This translates to servicing the developmental skills and needs training of children, youth and adults with special needs. There was also a call for parenting support seminars from respondents.

Plans are afoot for 2022 BEC leaders’ formation programmes and family visits to the BECs, as well as Zone Masses. Formations planned include *A walk through Mass* and

another on the *Gospel of Luke*. A parish-level healing Mass and Mass for the Sick were also planned. The push towards Works of Mercy at the parish and BEC level would continue with efforts being coordinated with CARITAS. A team has also been set up to represent the parish for Synod participation and to provide relevant feedback to the diocese. Fr Michael reminded all that the cornerstone of the parish must always be mercy.

After the presentations, it was time to address questions from the congregation. These ranged from questions on Christmas plans for BECs to suggestions on running music classes for the seniors and children to beginning a Men’s fellowship group, among others.

After a final prayer, blessing and worship hymn, the Assembly ended on a hopeful note for the year to come. — **By Sharon Chandra**

Child abuse must be reported to the relevant authorities

KUALA LUMPUR: *Reporting child abuse and the role of hospital one-stop crisis centres* was the latest in a series of talks hosted by the Professional Standards Office Committee for Child Protection (PSO-CCP) held on November 20.

Presented by Dr Irene Cheah, Consultant Paediatrician, Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Team, Hospital Kuala Lumpur, the webinar aimed at encouraging people to recognise child abuse and neglect, and to not hesitate to report said crimes. Also present was PSO-CCP's new Ecclesiastical Assistant, Fr Gregory Chan.

Cheah said for people not to fear to report, they must have confidence in the system, especially after making a report. And to have confidence, one needs to know they will not get into trouble for reporting and that they have reported correctly.

Under the Child Act 2021, there are several categories where the police and the child protector can act upon.

Cheah said, "When abuse is by a parent, guardian or relative, it has a longer and more lasting impact on the child as compared to physical injury by a stranger because, in the latter case, the child will heal and be protected by the family." Children affected by poverty should not be neglected either, so cases must be reported to draw attention to their needs too. Some children suffer from medical neglect whereby the parents are not caring properly for them; this too must be reported to achieve the required results for the child's benefit.

Some children try to harm themselves by attempting suicide, taking drugs, or being sexually promiscuous. These children and their



Dr Irene Cheah gives a talk on child abuse with Fr Gregory Chan.

families also need help. Bullying, another form of abuse, is also on the rise in schools.

In Malaysia, although several forms of corporal punishment are culturally still acceptable as a form of disciplining a child, the Head of the Neonatal Unit, Paediatric Institute, Hospital Kuala Lumpur is not in favour of it. She says there is a narrow line between what is acceptable and what isn't. An adult beating his or her senior parent for wetting the floor or a colleague punching a workmate in the stomach because she doesn't like him will not be accepted, so why doesn't the same rule apply to children? Is it because they cannot fight back?

Cheah says a child should be taught by example and be led to understand the logic behind behaviour that is acceptable. There are other ways of teaching children discipline, for example time-outs.

With over 33 years of experience under her belt, Cheah said sexual abuse, which garners a lot of public attention, is also rising among school-going children. Statutory rape and 'suka sama suka' which includes acting out,

promiscuous behaviour, and one-night stands with strangers are top of the list, along with gang rape, teenage pregnancy, sexual acts without understanding, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Unfortunately, Malaysia currently plays an important role as a country of origin, a transit country, and a destination country, both internally and domestically, for child trafficking.

To curb these abuses, Cheah says we need a strong Child Protection System, and everyone must play their part.

She then explained that the One-stop Crisis Centre mainly caters to domestic violence, rape, and child abuse cases. It received referrals from the police, child protectors, general practitioners or was brought in by parents, teachers, or the public. There are doctors, police, and some NGOs present to deal with the survivor in a non-clinical environment.

The urgency with which each case is dealt with depends on whether it is an acute case – which happened within the last 72 hours or a cold case, which may have happened over a longer period. — *By Gwen Manickam*

Convent Kindergarten receives RM1 million grant



ADUN (Semuja) YB Tuan John Ilus (R3) handing the one million Ringgit government grant from UNIFOR to the Headmistress of Tadika Juara Sr Jane Mbang.

SERIAN, Sarawak: Tadika Juara of St Joseph's Convent received a government grant of one million Ringgit from UNIFOR (Unit for Other Religions) presented by ADUN (Semuja) YB Tuan John Ilus, on October 30. Among those present to receive the grant were the Headmistress of the kindergarten Sr Jane Mbang, Director of the New Kindergarten Building Fundraising Committee Dr Kiu Chiong Ching, and Sr Flora.

Dr Kiu was happy and thankful to UNIFOR and all those who had helped in one way or another to raise funds for the new building. Well-known architect Ivy Jong was invited by the Committee to plan for the whole project and agreed with no charge.

Since its establishment in 1957, St Joseph's Convent has been serving the community including the needy children and orphans under the care of the late Mother Veronica Lee in the 1970s.

A home-based Nursery was started around 1974 to help with the care and education of the young children, sent by both the Social Welfare Department and those from the local community. In 1998, the Maternity Home ceased its operation and evolved into a kindergarten.

The kindergarten, which occupies the existing Maternity Home building, has been registered with the Education Department since 2002 as Tadika Juara.

All these years, the daily running needs and maintenance of the school buildings have been sourced and managed by the congregation.

Enrolment in Tadika Juara has increased over the years. With the encouragement of the local community and benefactors, the Franciscan Sisters decided to extend their current premises to cater for the increasing demand. — *By Joseph Then, Today's Catholic*

Tadika Divine Mercy KKIP blessed after MCO-related delay

KOTA KINABALU: Originally an open space at the right wing of the Divine Mercy Church KKIP (since 2018) for children aged four to six years old to experience early childhood learning has now evolved into a fully functioning kindergarten called Tadika Divine Mercy.

After delays due to the Movement Control Order (MCO) and its consecutive orders for most of this year, the blessing of the new *tadika* was finally officiated on Nov 13 by Archbishop John Wong, during the 'by-invitation-only' opening ceremony.

"A request from the people", cited Fr David Sham, describing the birth of the kindergarten within the KKIP area since 2018. He likened the request of the people as an inspiration from God to have a kindergarten under the care of the Divine Mercy Church.

As a shepherd listening to his flock, Fr David began scouting for resources and a few generous individuals came forward to materialise 'God's project'.

While waiting for the completion of the new building, Tadika Divine Mercy KKIP started operating in April 2018 at the right wing of the church with 52 children, divided into three classes, separated by partitions.

Upon completion of the new building three years later – January 25, 2021 – all children, teachers and staff have been utilising the facility.

"With the new building, the teachers and the Board of Governors (BOG) are enjoying a better space compared to the previous one," said Pn Suchina Akang, chairperson of the Tadika BOG.

With this new facility, "we hope to provide better education for the children, to nurture their potential in all aspects of development — mastering basic skills, cultivating positive attitude, in preparation to enter primary school," Suchina added.

The new *tadika* has six classrooms which can accommodate 150 children. To date, it has registered 75 children. The staff comprises five teachers headed by Elvinah binti Kelan, a general clerk and a general worker.

Noting that each classroom is named after a saint, Archbishop John Wong said he is very happy that the school took this initiative. He assured them that the saints will be guiding, protecting, and blessing them in this new place. — *By Linda Edward, Catholic Sabah*



Archbishop John Wong signing the plaque during the Opening Ceremony of Tadika Divine Mercy KKIP, Nov 13, 2021. (Catholic Sabah photo)

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Filipino clergy 'can speak out against sinful politics'



Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen Dagupan

MANILA: Clergymen can voice support for politicians and should speak out against social sins like poverty and graft and corruption, especially when the ignorant and the poor are exploited by politicians, according to a senior Catholic churchman in the Philippines.

When nationalism and the truth are threatened, clergymen must speak out against evil, Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen Dagupan said on November 21.

"When the ignorant are exploited? When justice is sacrificed on the altar of opportunism and family dynasties? When lies are peddled and truth is muffled? Is God

glorified? These are attacks on the kingship of Christ. The men and women of Christ must speak out," said Archbishop Villegas in a homily marking the feast of Christ the King on Nov 21.

Archbishop Villegas used the homily to clarify the meaning of separation of Church and State to clear any doubts over whether clergymen can endorse candidates in the national elections next year.

"Should there be a separation of Church and State? Yes. Should there be a separation of God and man? No. Should there be a separation of God and politics? No," said Archbishop Villegas.

He said that when politicians separate God from politics, they turned to wickedness while people groan in pain.

The prelate took a swipe at government officials he claimed had attempted to silence Church leaders by intimidation and death threats.

"When churchmen preach painful messages that call for conversion, we shoot the messengers! It [politics] needs to be taught God and formed in God," Archbishop Villegas added.

"If those whom God has chosen and sent to teach choose silence, how will the people know God in

their lives?"

Love is political and Christianity must never be removed from politics, Archbishop Villegas said.

"When Christianity is removed from politics, the wicked rule, the egoists reign, the poor suffer, and sin prevails.

"A silent Church that proclaims the Kingship of Christ but is blind, deaf and dumb to godless politics is a contradiction. A deaf, dumb and blind Church has a millstone waiting for her to be tied around her neck to be drowned in the depths of the sea," he added. — ucanews.com

Pope Francis revokes priesthood of Timor-Leste priest

JAKARTA: Pope Francis has revoked the priesthood status of a diocesan priest in Timor-Leste who aims to run for president in the Catholic-majority nation.

The revocation was made public in a communique addressed to Catholics on November 21 in Baucau Diocese, to which Martinho Germano da Silva Gusmao belongs.

"Through this communique, from today onwards, Mr Martinho Germano da Silva Gusmao will live his life as an ordinary layman and continue to bear witness to the faith as a good layman," the communique said.

It explained that the priest's dismissal was in response to a request from Gusmao to Pope Francis sent last year.

Vicar General Fr Alipio Pinto Gusmao and Vice Chancellor Fr Deoniso Guterres Soares, who signed the communique, stated that Gusmao "lived his life as an ordinary layman in society, but the sacrament of priesthood he had received was not cancelled".

"Thus, when people were in a situation of deathly danger and there was no priest available to give the sacrament of confession immediately, Martinho Gusmao was able to administer the sacrament of confession and give official absolution of sins," they said.

They expressed gratitude for Gusmao's service as a priest and asked Catholics to pray that he "will still be able to be a good layman and continue to bear witness to his faith as a Christian in the community".

Fr Gusmao submitted a resignation letter in January 2020 to the bishop of Baucau, Dom Basilio Nascimento — who died last month — and a letter to the Pope in February 2020.

Bishop Nascimento suspended Gusmao from priestly duties in August.

Gusmao, who studied political science at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and was formerly the commissioner of the National Electoral Commission of Timor-Leste, claimed that his de-



Martinho Germano da Silva Gusmao

cision to resign was to allow him to get involved in political affairs, including running for president next year.

The priest, who was also a lecturer at the Catholic-run Instituto Superior de Filosofia e de Teologia (ISFIT), Dom Jaime Garcia Goularat in Fatumeta, Dili, said on Nov 22 that the Vatican's decision "would make my preparations to become a presidential candidate smoother".

Timor-Leste has scheduled presidential elections for March and Gusmao said he would run as an independent. — ucanews.com

Korean bishops support closure of zinc factory to save environment

SEOUL: Catholic bishops in South Korea have expressed solidarity with environmental groups who are seeking closure of one of the country's largest zinc smelters accused of polluting the environment.

A delegation of Catholic bishops led by the national bishops' conference's Environmental Committee visited the site of Young Poong Seokpo Smelter in Bonghwa-gun of Gyeongsangbuk-do province in the eastern part of the country.

The prelates included Archbishop Hyginus Hee-joong Kim of Gwangju Archdiocese, Bishop John Christostom Hyeok-ju Kwon of Andong Diocese and Auxil-

iary Bishop John Bosco Shin-Ho Chang of Daegu Archdiocese.

The team visited the factory site and surrounding areas, including the nearby Nakdong river and hillside.

Catholic Times of Korea reported that the bishops were shocked to learn that there is no trace of life in Nakdong river due to toxic chemicals flowing in from the factory. Trees on surrounding hills were either dead or yellowish with dead branches because of the toxic gas emission from the factory.

Lee Sang-sik, head of Life and Environment Coalition in Andong Diocese, briefed delegation members on the disastrous impact of

the factory on the environment and Nakdong river.

Following the approximately 40-minute visit, the bishops held a meeting and announced that the operation of the smelter should be stopped as soon as possible.

However, they also called on the authorities to address the challenge of potential job loss of workers and their families in case of closure and relocation of the factory.

Archbishop Hee-joong Kim said that it remains a matter of debate whether the factory should be relocated as the "same problem will arise again." — ucanews.com

Interfaith leaders hail prospect of papal visit to India

NEW DELHI: Religious heads of different faiths in India's national capital hailed the meeting between Pope Francis and Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month as historic and a step further to promote brotherhood.

Modi, who was in Rome for the G20 summit, met the Pope on October 30 at the Vatican City and invited him to visit India. The last papal visit to India was made by Pope John Paul II in 1999.

The preparations for the official India visit of the Holy Father were kicked off at the Press Club of India in New Delhi on Nov 22 with a seminar on the theme *Encounter*, as promoted by Pope Francis. Among those present were faith leaders, priests, nuns, laity and journalists.

In his keynote address, Archbishop Anil Joseph Couto of Delhi said: "In the background of our prime minister's meeting with Pope Francis, this gathering of leaders of different faiths has great significance to interfaith harmony for peace and progress of our nation."

He said India is bestowed with diversity and plurality of religions and cultures, customs and traditions, ethnicities and heritages, and it should continue to safeguard and celebrate its rich and unique identity.

Umer Ahmed Ilyasi, chief imam of the All India Imam Organisation, while thanking Pope Francis for receiving India's prime minister with full dignity and respect and accepting his invitation to visit India,

said the people of India should take this extraordinary and timely effort forward "by continuing to promote brotherhood in our nation."

Goswami Sushil Ji Maharaj, national president of the Indian Parliament of Religions said the gesture by the Indian prime minister "would send out a strong message down the line, especially to people at the grassroots level, to respect each other's faiths."

Swami Krishnanand Paramhans, a Hindu spiritual leader, concurred: "Our prime minister has walked in faith to express his respect for all faiths by visiting the Pope."

Acharya Vivek Muni, president of the International Mahavir Jain Mission, said Indian culture despite being so diverse had maintained unity among different faiths, while Giani Ranjit Singh, head priest of Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, called upon all to replace hatred with love, violence with peace and learn to embrace our brothers as the two great leaders did.

Swami Shantatmananda, head of the Ramakrishna Mission in Delhi, called for peace among all religions. "There is great need to cultivate this culture of encounter. True religion is caring for the poor, the widows and the orphans. It is in doing acts of kindness and goodness that we must become world leaders," he said.

The seminar concluded with the faith leaders praying that the Spirit of the Prince of Peace would sweep our nation this Christmas. — **By Bijay Kumar Minj, ucanews.com**



Heads of religious faiths attend a seminar in New Delhi, India, on Nov 22. (Photo: Bijay Kumar Minj/UCA News)

St Joseph is protecting the Catholic Church

VATICAN: St Joseph continues to protect the Catholic Church today, just as he protected the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus, Pope Francis said at his general audience on Wednesday, November 24.

While St Luke described St Joseph as the “guardian of Jesus and Mary,” the Pope said his protection extends to the whole Church and is a reminder for Christians “that our lives are made up of bonds that precede and accompany us.”

Recalling St Matthew’s compilation of Jesus’ genealogy, the Pope said that although St Joseph is not Jesus’ biological father, he is still “the father of Jesus” and

“is in fact a central element in the history of salvation.”

“Everyone can find in St Joseph — the man who goes unnoticed, the man of daily, discreet and hidden presence — an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of difficulty,” the Pope said. “He reminds us that all those who are seemingly hidden or in the ‘second row’ have unparalleled agency in the history of salvation.”

Before concluding his talk, Pope Francis led those present in praying that those who “lack the strength and courage to go on” in their lives may find in St Joseph “an ally, a friend and a support.” — *CNS/CNA*



St. Joseph and Child. (Vatican News photo)

Brisbane archbishop gives priests until Dec 15 to be fully vaccinated

BRISBANE: The Australian Archdiocese of Brisbane announced that all archdiocesan employees, including clergy, contractors and some volunteers, must be fully vaccinated by December 15 in accord with the State’s mandate, unless they have a medical exemption.

“As we view the situation in Australia and internationally, it is clear that vaccination is the most effective way to reduce the risk of exposure

or the risk of passing the virus on to others within our community,” Archbishop Mark Coleridge said in a Nov 16 statement on the archdiocese’s website.

“Therefore,” the statement continued, “the Archdiocese of Brisbane has made the decision that employees, contractors and certain volunteers will need to have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccination by Dec 15, unless they have an of-

ficial medical exemption.”

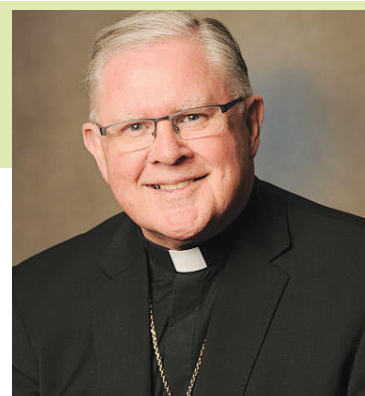
Coleridge said that clergy who are not fully vaccinated are putting the faithful at “risk.”

“A pastor or assistant pastor in parish ministry is to know the faithful, visit families, care for the faithful, strengthening them in the Lord and refresh the faithful with the sacraments,” he wrote in the letter.

“That means that clergy engaged in parish ministry must be close to people. In the circumstances of the pandemic, clergy engaged in pastoral ministry who are not doubly vaccinated put the faithful of the parish at risk. They present a risk to the faithful to whom they minister, as well as to their families,” he added.

Priests and deacons who are not “doubly vaccinated are failing in their duty of care for the faithful,” Coleridge wrote.

An official medical exemption is the only type of exemption



Archbishop Mark Coleridge

Archbishop Mark Coleridge will be accepting, according to a letter the archbishop sent to deacons and priests.

“I will not consider conscientious objection to receiving the vaccination as a valid exception to the provisions set out here,” Coleridge wrote.

“I fully respect the right of conscience, especially when properly formed in the Catholic understanding,” he stated. “But I too have a conscience, and it is not just legal obligation but conscience which has led to my decision.” — *CNA*



(Unsplash photo/National Cancer Institute)

Austrian prelates postpone Rome visit citing COVID lockdown

ROME: Austria’s bishops have postponed their *ad limina* visit to Rome, insisting they didn’t want to leave amid the country’s new strict coronavirus lockdown and fierce debate over potential vaccine mandates.

Speaking to Austrian Catholic news outlet *Kathpress*, Archbishop Franz Lackner of Salzburg, president of the Austrian Bishops’ Conference, said “Since the situation in Austria is very tense due to the fourth lockdown, we bishops now want to stay with the people as a sign of solidarity in the country.”

Lackner said the Austrian bishops, who have all been vaccinated, held a video call on November 22 in which they discussed the postponement, and there was unanimous agreement that it was the best course of action to take, given the current situation in Austria.

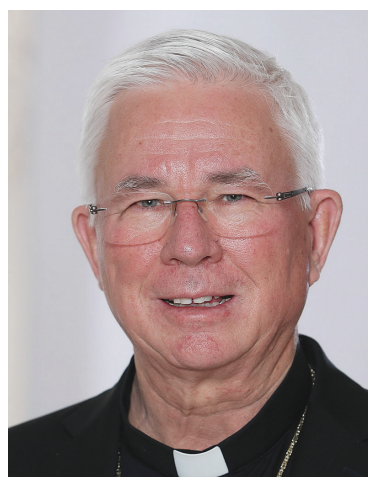
This decision, Lackner said,

was difficult, because “we have been preparing intensively for the *ad limina* visit for a long time and have been looking forward to the exchange with Pope Francis and his closest colleagues.”

He insisted the postponement of the *ad limina* is “a sign of solidarity with everyone who, as convalescent or vaccinated, currently has to do without a lot in order to find a way out of a life-threatening pandemic together.”

An *ad limina* visit, during which bishops meet with the Pope and various departments of the Roman Curia, and traditionally make a pilgrimage to the four papal basilicas in Rome, is required of all bishops’ conferences every few years.

Scheduled for Nov 29 to Dec 3, the Austrian bishops’ *ad limina* visit was initially scheduled for February of this year but was postponed because of the coronavirus, mak-



Archbishop Franz Lackner of Salzburg

ing this the second time the visit has been postponed due to the pandemic.

The decision to postpone again was made as Austria went into its fourth national COVID lockdown

on Nov 22, after the number of coronavirus-related deaths tripled in just the past few weeks. The new measures will last until Dec 12 but could be extended if numbers don’t improve.

In tandem with the national lockdown, Austria’s bishops have also announced new restrictions on Mass attendance and the administration of the sacraments.

In his remarks, Lackner said he is concerned about polarisation over the lockdown and vaccine requirements, which was particularly palpable during protests that happened over the weekend.

“Because the pandemic affects everyone, everyone must take on responsibility for it for yourself and others,” he said, urging citizens to “stay balanced, despite all irritation, let us help each other and act so that we can look each other in the eye after the pandemic.”

Few Americans blame God for suffering in the world

DENVER: A new study by the Pew Research Centre found that few Americans blame God for suffering in the world. Instead, Americans are more likely to blame suffering on random chance, the actions of others, or society at large.

The survey included questions about both religious or spiritual belief, and the meaning of suffering. Respondents who expressed a belief in God, or a higher power, were subsequently asked if they blame God when bad things happen in the world.

Nearly 75 per cent of respondents who expressed a belief in God or a higher power said they “rarely” or “never” feel angry with God in the face of suffering. Protestants in the historically Black tradition and older Americans were more likely to say this, the survey found.

Fewer than 15 per cent of those same respondents said suffering in the world makes them doubt God’s existence, omnipotence, or kindness. The survey found that doubt as a response to suffering was somewhat more common among young adults, Democrats, and religiously unaffiliated Americans.

Similarly, few of those same respondents said they believe suffering in the world is a punishment from God. Only four per cent believe “all” or “most” suffering is a punishment from God, while 18 per cent said “some,” and 22 per cent said “only a little” is a punishment from God, the survey found.

The survey found that more than 70 per cent of all respondents believe suffering in the world is mostly a consequence of people’s own actions, while 80 per cent of respondents who expressed a belief in God or a higher power believe suffering in the world is mostly a consequence of people’s own actions, not from God. — *CNA*

“With this in mind, we bishops consciously invite the faithful, indeed the entire population, to use the lockdown time for moments of silence, thoughtfulness, and prayer,” he said.

A new date for the *ad limina* has not been set, but Lackner said the Vatican wants to schedule it for some time next year.

Lackner said he was “very grateful” for the Vatican’s swift response to their request to postpone, and hopes the 2022 visit, if it happens, will not be “overshadowed by the coronavirus pandemic.”

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn backed the request to postpone the *ad limina*, saying in a brief message on Twitter that “In the current stressful situation, it is necessary to stand together, keep talking to one another and maintain what connects us. That can only be done together.” — *CruX*



EDITOR'S COLUMN

Sustained by Grace

Presenting a case for our Catholic media

Pope Francis has recently praised what he called the “mission” of journalism. “Your mission is to explain the world, to make it less obscure, to make those who live in it less afraid of it and look at others with greater awareness, and also with more confidence.”

While the words of the Holy Father are encouraging, we do not know what the year 2022 holds for us as a Catholic media organisation. There is still uncertainty as to whether the *HERALD* will remain an e-paper or whether we can look forward to resuming our printing.

On World Communications Day in 1971, the Vatican issued a lengthy statement which proclaimed, “It is hard to see how people can keep in touch with what is happening in the Church without the Catholic press. Neither can people keep a Catholic attitude towards what happens in the world without the help of commentaries on the news written in the light of Christian principles.”

Catholics, especially laity, need more than the parish bulletin and a Sunday homily to be formed in the faith. They need their own media. Newspapers and magazines have long filled that purpose in the Church, letting Catholics know about the faith experiences of others, notifying them of upcoming events and reporting on recent occurrences.

Some may argue that the heyday of newspapers is over, but the *HERALD* is not simply a newspaper — it’s a publication that (pre-pandemic) was printed on newsprint and mailed to approximately 15,000 households throughout the country and abroad. It is also an instrument of social media with an active website and a strong presence on Twitter and Facebook. Local news, complemented by stories of national and international interest, are communicated from the unique perspective of our Catholic faith. Commentaries and editorials, such as this one, address contemporary challenges facing the universal Church as well as the Church here at home.

There is no question that the Church must continuously examine the effectiveness of its instruments of communication. Perhaps we need to think out of the box like St Francis de Sales, the patron of journalists and the Catholic press. His method of evangelisation was straightforward — he wrote tracts on various aspects of Catholic teaching, had them printed and shoved them under people’s doors. He used a new technology to deal with new problems.

Those who say that print media is a relic of the past are partly correct. Newspapers will never again serve as the predominant means of communication for society or for the Church. Still, there is a strong case to be made for the *HERALD*. We can still take full advantage of the opportunities we now have to inform, inspire, and invite our sisters and brothers to experience the joy of the Gospel. In this process, we believe it would be a serious mistake to abandon the primary instrument of communication available to us today, our local Catholic newspaper.

Do we have good reasons for praying that our weekly newspaper will remain a vital part of our local Church’s ministry for many years to come? We certainly do.

Pope Francis said, “We need media capable of building bridges, defending life, and breaking down walls, visible and invisible, that prevent sincere dialogue and truthful communication between individuals and communities. We need media that can help people, especially the young, to distinguish good from evil, to develop sound opinions based on clear and unbiased presentation of facts, and to understand the importance of working for justice, social concord and respect for our common home.”

The *HERALD* aims to be this type of media. We’re keenly aware of the many obstacles we will face, and we know first-hand the hard work that will be required. We also know from our many years of experience that the work of communicating the Gospel is well worth the sacrifices it demands!

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Pope shares eight beatitudes for bishops

A model for 21st-century pastors



The Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei with Pope Francis during the Ad Limina visit on Feb 2, 2018. (HERALD photo)

VATICAN: Pope Francis has given a text called *The Beatitudes of the Bishop* to all the Italian bishops meeting in the plenary assembly in Rome. The text offers encouragement and pastoral guidance to not only the Italian bishops but to the more than 5,000 Catholic bishops in the world today.

The Vatican released the text after Pope Francis had given a card with an image of the Good Shepherd and the text of *The Beatitudes of the Bishop* to each of the more than 200 bishops present at the opening session of the plenary assembly of the Italian bishops' conference on November 22, which is being held at a hotel in Rome. Francis drove from the Vatican to the hotel to address the bishops and was welcomed on his arrival by

the president of the conference, Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti.

It was originally thought that Francis had written the text himself, but it later transpired that the text had been written by the archbishop of Naples, Domenico Battaglia, who first used it at the ordination of three new bishops for that diocese in a homily on Oct 31. The Pope learned about the text and made it his own by having it printed on a card and giving it to each of the Italian bishops.

It is modelled on the eight beatitudes given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, as recounted in Chapter 5 of the Gospel according to St Matthew. By giving it such visibility, Francis clearly wishes to provide practical guidance and inspiration to

bishops worldwide and to the men who will become bishops in the future.

The beatitudes of the bishop are challenging and very much in Francis' style. They offer a portrait of how a pastor should be in the 21st century, in a world where there is so much poverty, injustice, conflict, suffering and human fragility. They are a call to serve, to dirty one's hands, to wipe away tears, to work for justice, peace, and reconciliation, to find goodness even in the worst situations, and to work to build fraternity in today's world.

These beatitudes also highlight the temptations faced by bishops, like that of seeking power and a comfortable lifestyle.

Beatitudes of the Bishop

1 Blessed is the bishop who makes poverty and sharing his lifestyle because with this witness he is building the kingdom of heaven.

2 Blessed is the bishop who does not fear to water his face with tears, so that in them can be mirrored the sorrows of the people and the labours [fatigue] of the priests, [and] who finds in the embrace of the one who suffers the consolation of God.

3 Blessed is the bishop who considers his ministry a service and not a power, making meekness his strength, giving to all the right of citizenship in his own heart, so as to inhabit the land promised to the meek.

4 Blessed is the bishop who does not close himself off in the palaces of government, and who does not become a bureaucrat more attentive to statistics than to faces, to procedures

than to [people's] stories, who seeks to fight at the side of people for the dream of the justice of God because the Lord, encountered in the silence of daily prayer, will be his nourishment.

5 Blessed is the bishop who has a heart for the misery of the world, who does not fear dirtying his hands with the mud of the human soul in order to find there the gold of God, who is not scandalised by the sin and fragility of the other because he is conscious of his own misery, because the look of the Risen Crucified One will be for him the seal of infinite pardon.

6 Blessed is the bishop who wards off duplicity of heart, who avoids every ambiguous dynamic, who dreams good even in the midst of evil, because he will be able to enjoy

the face of God, tracking it down in every puddle of the city of people.

7 Blessed is the bishop who works for peace, accompanies the paths of reconciliation, sows in the heart of the presbyterate the seed of communion, accompanies a divided society on the pathway of reconciliation, and takes by hand every man and every woman of good will to build fraternity: God will recognise him as his son.

8 Blessed is the bishop who for the Gospel does not fear to go against the tide, making his face “hard” like that of Christ heading to Jerusalem, without letting himself be held back by misunderstandings and by obstacles because he knows that the Kingdom of God advances in contradiction to the world. — *America* (<https://www.americamagazine.org/>)



General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

Focus on one fundamental question

ROME, Italy: Cardinal Mario Grech warned Italian bishops against the temptation to use the Synod on Synodality to further objectives other than the goal of listening to the People of God.

The General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops said on November 23 that there is a “risk — or perhaps a temptation — of wanting to overload the synodal process with other meanings and objectives, of wanting to add things to be done to achieve further results, beyond the shared experience of listening to the People of God about synodality and the synodal Church.”

“This risk especially concerns those who thought of a synodal path before the proposal formulated by the General Secretariat of the Synod,” he added.

The cardinal was speaking at the Italian bishops’ 75th Extraordinary General Assembly, which took place in Rome from Nov 22-25.

The Italian Bishops’ Conference launched its four-year national synodal process before the Vatican announced last spring that the Synod of Bishops on synodality would take place with a two-year consultative preparatory phase involving all Catholic dioceses worldwide.

Grech thanked the more than



Cardinal Mario Grech

200 Italian bishops gathered in the Ergife Palace Hotel and Conference Centre in Rome for “harmonising” their synodal process with the worldwide synod in light of the “annoying” overlapping of times.

“The virtuous realisation of the synodal process by the Churches that are in Italy will be an example to the other Churches and to the other episcopates. On the other hand, everyone knows with what insistence the Holy Father requested that a Synod of the Italian Church be held,” he noted.

In his speech, Grech highlighted that there was no questionnaire included with the Synod on Synodality preparatory documents released last September, “to avoid any misunderstanding about the consultation, which cannot and will never be a poll.”



Pope Francis addresses the Italian Bishops’ Conference in Rome, Nov 22, 2021. (Vatican Media)

The cardinal underlined that there is only “a single fundamental question” to guide the consultative process: “A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, ‘journeys together.’ How is this ‘journeying together’ happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our ‘journeying

together?’”

Grech said that the other questions listed at the end of the handbook were only “thematic points to be explored.”

“These are not 10 questions — then we would be back to the questionnaire — but aspects of the one fundamental question,” he said.

“I repeat: it is better that the People of God in our Churches confront themselves with the fundamental question, rather than talking about anything without

foundation, and above all without direction,” Grech added.

“What matters is to mature a true synodal mentality; to understand that truly ‘the Church is constitutively synodal,’ that is, that the People of God walk together, not only because they walk, but because they walk knowing where they are going — toward the fulfillment of the Kingdom — and therefore it questions itself about the road to travel, listening to what the Holy Spirit is telling the Church.” — *CNA*

Vietnamese Church ready to launch synodal process

HO CHI MINH: Catholics in Vietnam’s dioceses have been urged to live out the spirit of communion, participation, listening, discernment and mission while they celebrate and prepare for the 2023 assembly of the Synod of Bishops at diocesan level.

Bishop Louis Nguyen Anh Tuan, apostolic administrator of Ha Tinh, said the novelty of the next Synod of Bishops is that it starts from the bottom up, with the vision of a synodal Church where the whole People of God move forward together, listening to the Holy Spirit and God’s Word, being in communion with one another, and participating in the Church’s mission.

Bishop Tuan said all of God’s people are invited to get actively

involved in the synodal journey to listen to one another, and thereby to listen to the Holy Spirit speak to the Church through meeting, listening and discernment at diocesan, continental and regional levels.

The prelate said his diocese’s synodal journey starts with opening celebrations at local churches on November 28, the first Sunday of Advent, and ends on Aug 15, 2022.

Local people will focus on the theme of “synodality” through retreats, workshops, sharing sessions, liturgical services and communication coordinated by a four-member facilitation group set up by him.

He said Catholics, including everyone from children to old

people, people without relatives, abandoned people, those who have renounced their faith, followers of other faiths, and government authorities from local parishes and deaneries will be consulted at meetings and services at local churches during the coming Lent. All their positive and negative views should be documented and sent to the Office of Ha Tinh Bishop’s House by May 18.

The diocesan phase aims at offering as many people as possible a truly synodal experience in listening to one another and moving forward together under the Holy Spirit’s direction.

He said the local Church plans to hold a pre-synod assembly which will be attended by 300 people representing local clergy, religious,

seminarians, associations, parish councils, students, youths, businesspeople, disabled people and followers of other faiths, who will pray, reflect, listen to and discern their synodal experiences together.

At the event, scheduled for Pentecost, June 5, at Van Hanh Cathedral in Ha Tinh province, participants’ opinions will be documented and filed with Vietnamese bishops.

They will discuss issues and challenges suitable for their situations such as ways of journeying with others, respecting and listening to one another’s views, voice positive views freely and courageously to build the local Church, celebrate services, do evangelisation and have constructive dialogue with others in the Church and society, promote ecumenism, teamwork, co-responsibility, consultation and accountability.

“The diocesan phase aims at offering as many people as possible a truly synodal experience in listening to one another and moving forward together under the Holy Spirit’s direction,” he said in an open letter to the local people.

Bishop Tuan called on local people to spend time listening to one another, speak up courageously, candidly and responsibly, and let go of their complacent attitude and contentment that make them reach decisions based solely on old ways

of working.

He said they should break down walls that threaten their communion, such as age, gender, gaps between poverty and wealth, abilities, education, and others. They are called to be beacons of hope, not heralds of doom, for other people.

They should live out the synod of bishops’ spirit of communion, participation, listening, discernment and mission. They must be united in the same faith, and pray, listen, analyse, have dialogue and offer opinions on making pastoral decisions that are as consistent as possible with God’s will.

On Nov 10, Bishop Peter Nguyen Van Kham, secretary general of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Vietnam, announced that the country’s 27 dioceses will open the pre-synod at the diocesan phase on Nov 28.

Bishop Kham said that in their situation, they will stimulate the process of meeting, listening and discernment according to the guidance of the Office of the General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops. They are requested to file their conclusions to local bishops by Aug 2022.

He said bishops declared the local Church’s ministry theme for 2022: *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.* — *ucanews.com*



Catholics and followers of other faiths pray together at a gathering in Ho Chi Minh City on Oct 27, 2021. (UCA News Photo/tgpsaigon.net)

Priest, teacher, leader

SEREMBAN: A Requiem Mass for the late Fr Dr John Gnanapiragasam was held at the Church of the Visitation, Seremban, on November 22.

The funeral Mass was presided over by Most Rev Archbishop Julian Leow, with Bishop Bernard Paul DD of the Diocese of Malacca Johore, Msgr James Gnanapiragasam concelebrating together with 40 other priests from the three arch/dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia.

"The life and death of each of us has its influence on others, says St Paul. If we live, we live for the Lord; if we die, we die for the Lord," said Msgr James during the homily at his younger brother's funeral Mass.

"Over the few days, there have been numerous messages across social media of people sharing their experiences, feelings and relationships with Fr John. These messages shout of his love and tenderness, the caring of this pastor and priest. All of these tell us one thing – he touched many lives. Of the lonely, the depressed, the divorced, the widowed. He has touched the lives of the young, and the not so young. He has been a brother, a son, a brother-in-law, uncle and granduncle in the family," said Msgr James.

However, at the service, he wished to speak about the theological and spiritual journey his brother made. "Death we must face one day. The mystery of death, the journey we had started from our mother's womb. A



Msgr James Gnanapiragasam giving his homily.

transition we all must face."

Fr John grew up in a seminary manned by French Fathers who were known for their repute for theological reflection. They would do a theological reflection on material life. He studied there in the late 60s, just after Vatican II, and there were multiple changes taking place in the liturgy, in ecumenical dialogue and above all, the concept of Church – it was a new life.

Ordained in 1971, Fr John was a priest, a leader, and a teacher. However, his pastoral journey was cut short when he had to go to Rome, before taking over lecturing at College General, Penang. In Rome, his understanding of theology deepened. Instinctively, he was attracted to the spiritual side of the study and his doctorate dissertation was coloured by that spirituality.

Msgr James said he admired his brother's energy level. While sta-



Bishop Bernard Paul blesses the coffin with incense.

tioned at College General, Penang, he continued his pastoral work. He wanted to be with the young people, he got involved in CHOICE. He wanted to be with couples, he got involved in the couples' programme. In all this, Jesus Christ was his centre.

Yet, he was still searching, as something was missing. He went to Chicago, the United States, where he developed new perspectives and got into psycho-spirituality. Upon his return, there was a difference in his teachings. In charge of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute, he continued his vision of mystery, communion, and mission.

"My brother was an ardent advo-

cate of the new image of the Church. That was a new way and he really got into it. He had a love for the Church, the spouse of Christ, the bride of the beloved," said Msgr James.

He went into different areas of formation. He was in that vineyard, and he joined the Father and Christ, Father the vinedresser and Christ the true vine. He joined them to care for the clusters of grapes that still hung, even outside the Church.

The choice he made was Alpha. He was ardent in making it Catholic – right up to the Omega point, and that is Christ.

"It was only after retirement that we met frequently, and this made me even more conscious of this man,

a theologian, and a spiritual father. This last week was providential. I was home for more than a day and we spent a lot of time together – we dialogued, we discussed, we joked, we laughed. We spent a lot of time with the spiritual masters," said Msgr James, his voice quivering with emotion.

Fr John had the idea of synodality even without using the word. He was fired with enthusiasm, even at this age, for the Church in communion and mission," said his brother.

Remembering fondly, Msgr James said his brother was a priest who smiled at everyone, and when asked if he knew them all, Fr John's reply was always to quote [William Butler Yeats], "There are no strangers here, only friends we haven't met."

At every funeral, Fr John's favourite quote was Stephen Grellet's "I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, I shall not pass this way again."

In closing, choked with emotion, Msgr James said, "As we bid you a sudden and unexpected farewell here, the angels and saints wait to welcome you into the glory of paradise, where he will change your mortal body into a copy of his glorious body, for you believed that God is love and lived it to the hilt." — **By Gwen Manickam**

God sent him as an intervention

During my childhood and early teens, my family and I were once-a-year Catholics. Christmas was the only time we would gather in church.

The priest was a man we would see standing at the pulpit preaching about God to us. I am sure many of them were good men, even great. But to my family, they were all distant authority type figures.

That was until Fr John Gnanapiragasam walked into our lives.

My parents came back to church after their Marriage Encounter weekend in the early 1980s. However, God knew we needed stronger intervention in the form of Fr John.

Somehow, they were chosen to be a CHOICE presenting couple in Ipoh. They attended CHOICE 1 in Ipoh, and that was when they encountered Fr John and the other pioneers of the programme.

To prepare them to be presenters for the weekend programme, Fr John would spend a day or two with our family during his workshop visits, to get to know us. That for me was already mind-blowing.

In my mind, I was thinking "How could this be?" This priest was being so friendly and warm to this nominal Catholic family.

Fr John would workshop with my parents way into the wee hours of the morning. My dad would say Fr John was really good at "digging deep" to uncover the sharing needed for presenters.

Those CHOICE workshop visits became quite a highlight for

our family.

Fr John was no longer just a priest; he became our friend. He had such a sincere and loving vibe about him. He would chat and joke with my brother and me. That cheeky smile that could lead to a full-blown laugh was just so memorable.

I have a vivid memory of Fr John carrying my brother over his shoulders as we ran along one of the beaches in Penang during a CHOICE national meeting.

The other thing I remember well was Fr John occasionally mistakenly calling my brother Christopher instead of Nicholas.

I recall we used to joke about whether it was a prophecy of another sibling on the way who would be named Christopher. Well, it did not come to pass.

Fr John had a very good relationship with my parents, especially my mother. He even took them to Seremban to visit his parents.

He was a priest who laughed with us during good times and cried with us during bad times.

We lost contact after my parents stopped serving in CHOICE but his impression in our lives were deeply imprinted.

I caught up with him again, somehow, when we participated at Mass at Sacred Heart Church many years back and discovered he was the parish priest there then. We had a good reunion after Mass.

We met up again a few years later when he officiated at an aunt's funeral Mass.

It was unfortunate that my last proper meeting with him was during my mother's funeral five years ago. He was then serving at the Church of Our Lady of Mt Carmel in Cameron Highlands.

We were touched and grateful that he made it to St Ignatius Church, Petaling Jaya to officiate my mother's funeral.

After a few failed attempts to meet in Cameron Highlands, we were thrilled to reconnect with Fr John in a recently set up WhatsApp group comprising CHOICE pioneers.

He was replying to messages in the group and I knew there were many little reunions being planned by the different Choicees.

My husband had also sent an invitation to Fr John for a meet up.

However, all our grand plans came crashing down on Friday, Nov 19, when God set an even bigger appointment with Fr John.

I heard the news of his passing from a friend who told us about it after intercessory prayers. I was shocked, stunned and speechless.

That night, I could not sleep, just recalling the person that Fr John was. I cried because my being ached at the loss of a dear friend. My dad felt the same.

Fr John has indeed left an indelible mark in many hearts from the tributes written about him.

Thank you, Fr John, for being Christ to me and my family. We love you. Pray we will meet again one day. — **By Hazel Ong-Archibald**

His ministry

Fr John Gnanapiragasam was ordained a priest at the age of 27 in 1971 and received his first pastoral posting as assistant to Fr Pierre Decroq at the Church of the Risen Christ in KL.

He helmed the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, in Brickfields as parish priest after completing his doctorate in sacred theology at the Gregorian Pontifical University, Rome, in 1978.

He would later pursue post-graduate studies in psychology at Loyola University, Chicago, and from 1990 until 1992, he was a member of the theological advisory commission of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

In 1993, he served as parish priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Peel Road for five years.

His other postings included being administrator of the Church of the Holy Rosary, Kuala Lumpur (2000-2002) and as parish priest of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang (2006-2012), Church of the Visitation, Seremban (2012-2015) and Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Cameron Highlands (2015-2019).

One of the high points in Fr John's life was an audience with Pope Francis in Rome in 2014.

Fr John was also one of the most influential persons in charting the pastoral direction for the Church in Peninsular Malaysia – the New Way of Being Church (Newbec).

His passion for formation and evangelisation also saw him pioneer-



Fr Dr John Gnanapiragasam

ing and growing various initiatives in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

Seeing the thirst and need of the laity for solid formation resources, he met with key persons in the Augustine Institute based in the US, to bring in the online formation platform known as *FORMED*.

The programmes offered by *FORMED* has benefited many Catholics, enabling them to access resources which were previously inaccessible.

Many would also associate Fr John with the CHOICE programme for young adults, which he took over as spiritual advisor from Fr Steve Subramaniam in the early 1980s.

Fr John was preparing to celebrate his 77th birthday on Nov 30 and his 50th Sacerdotal anniversary on Dec 27 before his passing.

He is survived by his siblings Msgr James, Philomena, Paul, Fatima Mary and Bernadette, in-laws, nephews, and nieces.

Why were so many people in poor health in Jesus' time?

We are so accustomed to reading Gospel accounts of Jesus healing the lame, the disabled and the blind that we sometimes overlook an obvious question: why were so many people disabled and falling ill in the first place?

What had gone wrong for the people of Galilee? After all, this was supposed to be the Promised Land, the land of milk and honey.

Many people thronged around Jesus to listen to his every word. But many also desperately needed his healing.

Even before his ministry began, Jesus gained a reputation for healing. Everywhere he went, so many people were pleading with him for healing. The sea of misery and suffering around Jesus must have been so overwhelming that he sometimes took time off to be alone and ponder over events.

What was behind all this misery?

We know the importance of a balanced diet — fruit, vegetables and dietary fibre, protein, grains, calcium.

Think of the older biblical accounts of healthy staple foods such as grapes, wheat, figs, dates, pomegranates and olives.

Galilee was a fertile land, ideal for farming. The fertile land around Nazareth was especially suited for growing vegetables and fruits. The secret was its natural springs supplied by underground aquifers.

But then something happened. Many small independent farmers gradually lost their farms due to poor harvests, which made it impossible for them to service their debts. So, they



Sunday
Observer

Anil Netto

lost their inherited family land to the wealthy landed gentry, who consolidated these lands into larger estates.

The healthier food, like grapes, wheat, figs, dates, pomegranates and olives, were then grown mostly behind the walls of these large estates and exported to other regions — not so much for local consumption.

Remember the early migrant workers in what was then Malaya — some of them survived on rice and a bit a salted fish. Perhaps this was not too dissimilar to the diet of many in Galilee in the time of Jesus. By then, their diet had largely been reduced to bread and salted fish.

Before Jesus performed the miracle of the multiplication of food, all that the boy had to offer him were five loaves of bread and two small fish. These loaves were poor quality barley bread — the black bread of the Galilean peasants.

That was the sad state they had been reduced to when Jesus was teaching them to pray for their daily bread.

But, unlike before, the bread for the masses was no longer made from the more nutritious emmer wheat — but barley, which was once

used for animal fodder.

No longer did many ordinary people have access to a varied, healthy diet that included grapes, wheat, pomegranates and olives.

Deprived of essential minerals and vitamins like calcium and Vitamins A and C, the health of many ordinary Galileans suffered. Eye problems, skin diseases and lesions, osteo problems and stunted growth plagued the people like never before.

This was happening in the four decades leading up to the start of Jesus' ministry from the Herodian era.

This was the time of the exploitation of the people by King Herod and, later, his son Antipas, in Galilee, facilitated by Roman imperial backing.

Herod indulged in a string of mega-projects while Antipas was busy trying to impress Rome with his reconstruction of Sepphoris and the building of a new town, Tiberias, to curry favour with the new Roman Emperor Tiberius.

The result: ordinary Galileans groaned under a threefold rise in their already burdensome tax, largely to raise funds for these mega-projects.

As they struggled to put nutritious food on the table for their families, the health — mental, emotional and physical — plunged to critical levels. And as their natural immune systems weakened, they increasingly turned to Jesus for miraculous cures.

Back then, if someone had a serious illness, it was often assumed that the parents or ancestors had done something wrong. Jesus put

to rest such misconceptions and the resulting psychological stress by saying that his or her sins had been forgiven. This was the first step in the healing process: they had to know their illness had nothing to do with whatever their sins were.

Jesus would have sized up the situation around him. He would have seen how the landed gentry and the local elites' accumulation of wealth came through the exploitation of the people and the confiscation of their farmlands. This was taking a huge toll on the people's health and causing widespread suffering.

In our times too, fishing waters and farmlands are being destroyed or degraded to make way for land reclamation, high-end property development and other mega-projects. As a result, the nation is not self-sufficient in many food items.

As our food security grows more and more vulnerable, and bad weather further erodes food supply, prices of essential items rise, as we are witnessing now. This makes it harder for the masses to put nutritious food on the table for their families. The health of the low-income masses may suffer from their inability to afford a balanced diet.

We should be careful to preserve our farmland and fishing waters so that the nation's food security is protected.

Father, give us this day our daily bread and protect our food sources from all threats.

* *Reference: Isbouts, Jean-Pierre (2008). Young Jesus. New York: Sterling Publishing*

Honest evangelisation needs honest journalism

Nearly two decades ago, I was asked to become the editor-in-chief of the weekly newspaper published by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan.

My first reaction was gut-hurting laughter. When I caught my breath, I said to the priest who had been sent to present the proposal, "Look at my face!" It was, indeed, unprecedented to ask a non-Japanese to run a Japanese-language newspaper.

Later, I met the bishop who was the liaison person for the paper and asked him if I would have the sort of editorial freedom and authority that is usual for a newspaper editor. He replied, "So long as you don't start publishing heresy, you have that freedom. Test us."

I took the job and, shortly afterward, we had the first test.

A bishop had been sued in a case that was never mentioned in any Catholic media. The only coverage had been in a local secular newspaper and a Buddhist newspaper. Catholics in his diocese who knew the story were mostly cowed into silence.

When the bishop lost the suit, I told my staff that it was news, but since the whole case had been hidden from Catholics, we would have to do an article that explained its background and history. When the reporters showed hesitancy, I assured them that the only job at risk was mine. The story went on the front page.

The day it was printed, the bishop who had told me to test the bishops happened to be in Tokyo and invited the priests who worked at the bishops' conference to join him for dinner before he headed home to his diocese.

When dessert came out, the bishop called my name. Immediately, every fork and coffee cup went down as the priests waited to hear what would come next.

"Your predecessor [who had come to the newspaper from a magazine put out by his



Pope Francis answers journalists questions aboard his flight from Antananarivo, Madagascar, to Rome Sept 10, 2019. (CNS file photo/Paul Haring)

religious order] would not have printed that story."

I replied, "My predecessor was not trying to run a newspaper."

"Yes, but we wanted him to."

Everyone went back to their dessert and coffee.

A couple of days later, a package arrived from the bishop who was the subject of the story. It contained his papers regarding the case, along with a note saying that he would not appeal the verdict and that I had free use of the papers if I felt further coverage was necessary.

My mother once complained about a totally different sort of relationship between the Catholic press and a prelate in her diocesan newspaper: "There were nine pictures of the bishop on the first 11 pages!" I assume that none of the pictures illustrated an article about a lawsuit.

Pope Francis recently honoured two journalists whose "beat" includes the Vatican. Neither works for a Church-related news agency. During the ceremony, the Pope thanked all journalists who point out "what's wrong with the Church."

With few exceptions, it has been news me-

dia with no connection to the Church that have performed that service. Sexual abuse by clergy and cover-ups by those in positions of responsibility have been spotlighted by secular media. There are other stories that will sooner or later be told, but probably not in Church-related media.

When independent Church-related news media have tried to present those stories, they have been attacked by those who claim to be "protecting the Church" though, more often than not, it is an exercise in self-defence. Non-independent sources print photos of bishops.

Catholic news sources that are objective, professional and, frankly, honest, are rare. Pope Francis praised journalists, but the institution still does not want to see real journalism.

Two thousand years ago, when there was as yet no such thing as journalism, Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy of those who exercised power among and against believers. Today, that is part of the vocation of journalism.

If that doesn't happen today, if the Church's communications are just public relations, the Church and its mission suffer.

We all suffer embarrassment when, as

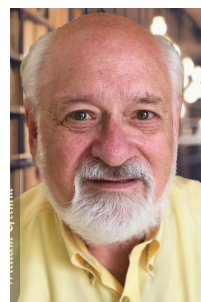
is inevitable, corruption and scandals that have been hidden are exposed by others. The shrinking number of those who have high expectations are scandalised. Idealists who might otherwise choose lives of service in the Church turn away from an institution that values cover-up over truth. Some leave the Church in disgust.

Compared to all that, how can Church managers claim that bad press, even (or especially) when true, is a problem?

The biggest problem is a loss of credibility for the true message of the Church, the Gospel. The Church desperately needs honest, objective, professional news sources or it will be useless for the proclamation of the Gospel. Such honesty, while sometimes embarrassing, will also be confirmation to the world that we are committed to the truth and therefore worthy of some trust.

The bishops of Japan knew that presenting the whole picture of the Church is ultimately a service to the People of God and the Gospel. Should not other Church managers learn from them? — **By Fr William Grimm, ucanews.com**

● *Fr William Grimm, a native of New York City, is a missionary and presbyter who, since 1973, has served in Japan, Hong Kong and Cambodia. A graduate of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York, he is the publisher of UCA News. Based in Tokyo, he regularly contributes columns. He is also the presenter of the popular Sunday homilies telecast through UCA News each week.*



Dealing with emotional paralysis

Our greatest strength is often our greatest weakness. Sensitivity is a gift, but as any sensitive person will tell you, that gift can be a mixed blessing. Sometimes a thick, calloused skin can save you from a lot of suffering, particularly from heartache.

The popular spiritual writer Henri Nouwen was a highly sensitive person. That was both his gift and his curse. He suffered a lot because of his sensitivity. For instance, several times he fell hopelessly in love with someone, but because he was a vowed celibate and because those deep feelings were not mutual, he was left alone in that obsession, frustrated, emotionally paralysed. These obsessive feelings so overpowered him that (to his credit) he sought clinical help. By his own admission, those were the darkest and most painful periods in his life.

There are many like him in this world, and there is someone like him inside everyone who is highly sensitive. Indeed, one of Nouwen's heroes was the famed Dutch painter, Vincent Van Gogh, who suffered from acute over-sensitivity for much of his life, at one point, suffering from

an emotional obsession in love, even cutting off one of his ears and sending it to the person with whom he was obsessed. Another person who Nouwen idolised was the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, whose personal loneliness deeply coloured his religious and philosophical writings. It's no accident that so many highly creative persons (artists, writers, performers) are often caught in the grip of emotional obsession. I suspect that this is true for all of us to some degree.

What's to be done when some emotional obsession paralyses us?

I have twice posed this question to psychologists. In the first instance, it was to the renowned Dutch psychologist Antone Vergote. I twice had the privilege of being in his classroom, and in one of those classes, I asked him this question. How do you help a person who is so paralysed by some heartache or other pain that it leaves him or her suicidal? His response was humble. He began by saying that this is the most difficult situation we will ever deal with, whether in ourselves, in our families and friendships, or in pastoral and counselling situations. He admitted



Fr Ron Rolheiser

that psychology was still grappling with what a helpful response might be and suggested that we might find some enlightening perspectives by reading the great novelists.

Then he offered this: emotional obsession is a form of over-concentration, a fixation that holds us in its grip until we somehow break its spell. What can be helpful (if anything can be helpful) is distraction, anything that can take that person's mind off its fixation. This may sound crass, especially when our perennial

religious counsel has been "take your troubles to the chapel". Shouldn't prayer be the answer? Yes, it should, but that too has its dangers. If you are in the paralysing grip of an obsession, alone in a chapel might be the last place you need to be. Alone and emotionally paralysed, the darkness might well overpower you. In our darkest moments, it's the incarnate God, the human touch of God through the care of another person, which constitutes the real chapel to which we need to go.

The second psychologist to whom I posed this question added this piece of advice. Never stay in this kind of darkness alone. Indeed, never enter it alone. Be with somebody – a friend, a mentor, a doctor, a guide, a fellow-sufferer, anyone. I remember an occasion some years ago when a young man came to me in the grip of this kind of obsession and suggested that he wanted to do was to drive off by himself into the mountains, rent a cabin, and "think this through". I strongly advised him that it was the last thing he should do, in that being alone and isolated with his obsession would be dangerous. What he needed, I suggested, were things

that could distract him – his work, his friends, his routines, his normal escapes.

Not everyone is Jesus, who went into the darkness of his crucifixion alone. Except, except, he wasn't alone. He was with his Father. If we trust our faith strongly enough to know that, irrespective of anything, we will know that God is there for us, then we can risk entering the darkness alone. Then we can take our emotional paralysis to the chapel and to the remote cabin in the mountains. However, if we fear our wounded selves might render us helpless and suicidal, we will want to hold fast to the hand of a trusted friend and look for any kind of distraction that can break the obsession paralysing us.

On one of those occasions when Henri Nouwen had checked himself into a clinic for depression, he wrote a book, *The Inner Voice of Love*, to share how, eventually, he did cope. What he ultimately learned is that our hearts are greater than our wounds; but we don't always know that in the darkness. — **By Fr Ron Rolheiser, all rights reserved**

WEDNESDAYS WITH POPE FRANCIS

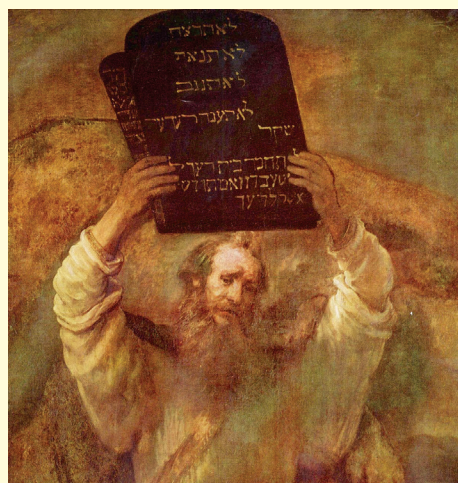
Catechesis on the Letter to the Galatians: The Mosaic law

“Why the law?” (Gal 3:19). This is the question that we want to deepen today, continuing with St Paul, to recognise the newness of the Christian life enlivened by the Holy Spirit. But if the Holy Spirit exists, if Jesus who redeemed us exists, why the law? And this is what we must reflect on today.

The Apostle writes: “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Gal 5:18). Paul's detractors, however, maintained that the Galatians had to follow the Law to be saved. They were going backward. They were nostalgic for times gone by, for the times before Christ. The Apostle was not at all in agreement. These were not the terms he had agreed on with the other Apostles in Jerusalem. He remembered very well Peter's words when he said: “Why do you make a trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?” (Acts 15:10).

The dispositions that had emerged in that 'first council' – the first ecumenical council, was the one that took place in Jerusalem – and the dispositions that emerged were very clear. They said: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us [the Apostles] to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols [that is, idolatry] and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity” (Acts 15:28-29). Some of the things touched on worshipping God, and idolatry, and some things regarding the way of understanding life at that time.

When Paul speaks about the Law, he is normally referring to the Mosaic Law, the law given by Moses, the Ten Commandments. It was in relationship to, it was on the way, it was a preparation, it was related with the Covenant that God had established with his people. According to various Old Testament texts, the Torah – that is, the Hebrew term used to indicate the Law – is the collection of all those prescriptions and norms the Israelites had to observe by virtue of the Covenant with God.



An effective synthesis of what the Torah is can be found in this text of Deuteronomy that says this: “The Lord will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (30:9-10). So, the observance of the Law guaranteed to the people the benefits of the Covenant and guaranteed a particular bond with God. This people, this population, this person, are connected with God, and they make it seen, this union with God, in the fulfilment, in the observance of the Law.

In making the Covenant with Israel, God offered them the Torah, the Law, so they could understand his will and live in justice. We must realise that at that time, a Law like this was necessary, it was a tremendous gift that God gave his people. Why? Because at that time, paganism was everywhere, idolatry was everywhere, and human behaviour was a result of idolatry. Because of this, the great gift God gave his people was the Law, so they could persevere. Several times, especially in the prophetic books, it is noted that not observing the precepts of the Law constituted a real betrayal

of the Covenant, provoking God's wrath as a consequence. The connection between the Covenant and the Law was so close that the two realities were inseparable. The Law is the way a person, a people, express that they are in covenant with God.

So, considering all this, it is easy to understand how well those missionaries who had infiltrated the Galatians found such support when insisting that adhering to the Covenant also included observing the Mosaic Law. Nevertheless, precisely regarding this point, we can discover St Paul's spiritual intelligence and the great insights he expressed, sustained by the grace he received for his evangelising mission.

The Apostle explains to the Galatians that, in reality, the Covenant and the Law are not linked indissolubly – the Covenant with God and the Mosaic Law. The first element he relies on is that the Covenant established by God with Abraham was based on faith in the fulfilment of the promise and not on the observance of the Law that did not yet exist. Abraham began his journey centuries before the Law. The Apostle writes: “This is what I mean: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years afterward [with Moses], does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God [with Abraham when he called him], so as to make the promise void”. This word is very important. The people of God, we Christians, we journey through life looking toward a promise, the promise is what attracts us, it attracts us to move forward toward the encounter with the Lord. “For if the inheritance is by the law, it is no longer by promise [that came before the Law, the promise to Abraham]; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise” (Gal 3:17-18), then the Law came four hundred and thirty years after. Through this chain of reasoning, Paul reached his first objective: the Law is not the basis of the Covenant because it came later, it was necessary and just, but prior to that there was the promise, the Covenant.

Such an argument disqualifies all those who sustain that the Mosaic Law was a constitutive

part of the Covenant. No, the Covenant comes first, and then the call came to Abraham. The Torah, the Law, in fact, was not included in the promise made to Abraham. Having said this, one should not think, however, that Saint Paul was opposed to the Mosaic Law. No, he observed it. Several times in his Letters, he defends its divine origin and says that it possesses a well-defined role in the history of salvation. The Law, however, does not give life, it does not offer the fulfilment of the promise because it is not capable of being able to fulfil it. The Law is a journey, a journey that leads toward an encounter. Paul uses a word, I do not know if it is in the text, a very important word: the law is the “pedagogue” toward Christ, the pedagogue toward faith in Christ, that is, the teacher that leads you by the hand toward the encounter (cf. Gal 3:24). Those who seek life need to look to the promise and to its fulfilment in Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, this first exposition of the Apostle to the Galatians presents the radical newness of the Christian life: all those who have faith in Jesus Christ are called to live in the Holy Spirit, who liberates from the Law and, at the same time, brings it to fulfilment according to the commandment of love. This is very important. The Law leads us to Jesus. But one of you might say to me: “But, Father, does this mean that if I pray the Creed, I do not need to observe the commandments?” No, the commandments are valid in the sense that they are “pedagogues” [teachers] that lead you toward the encounter with Christ. But if you set aside the encounter with Jesus and want to go back to giving greater importance to the commandments, this was the problem of these fundamentalist missionaries who had infiltrated the Galatians to confuse them.

May the Lord help us to journey along the path of the commandments while looking towards the love of Christ, with the encounter with Christ, knowing that the encounter with Jesus is more important than the commandments.

Little Catholics' Corner

Dear girls & boys,
 Today starts the season of Advent, the time when we prepare for Christmas. The word "advent" comes from the Latin word 'Adventus' which means "coming". During Advent we prepare for Jesus' coming. We look forward to Christmas, which is the celebration of His first coming, and we also anticipate His second coming.
 Did you know that the most important thing to have ready for Christmas is a clean soul?
 During Advent you can try extra hard to be good. It is also awesome to go to confession before Christmas so your soul will be good and clean when Jesus comes!
 Auntie Gwen

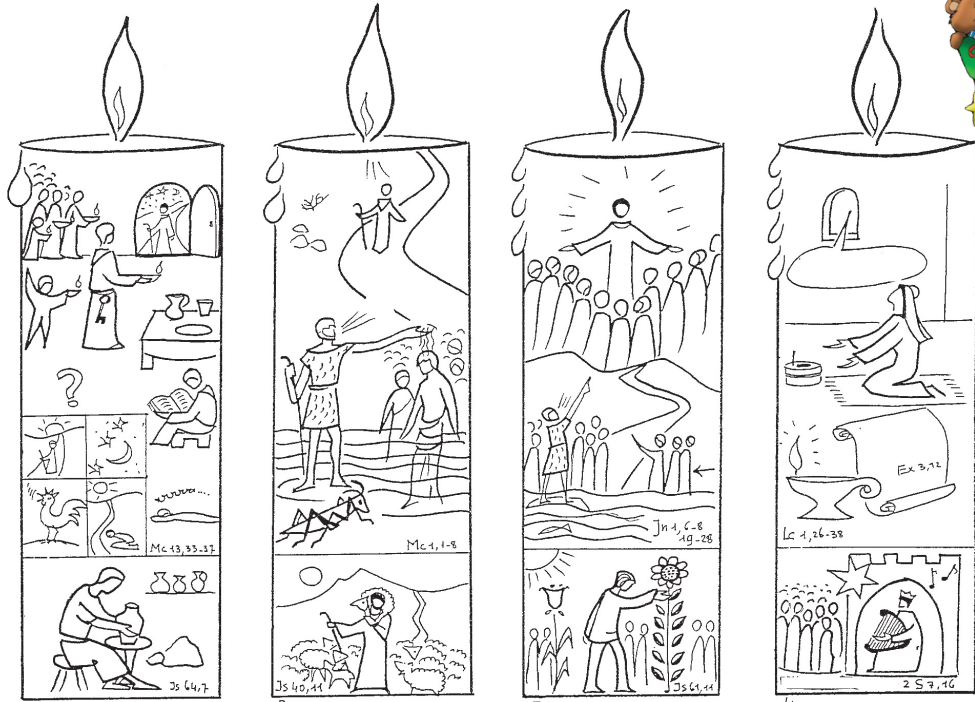
The Second Coming (Jeremiah 33 14.6)

Fill in the missing letters from today's first reading and copy them to finish the last line.

The days are c__ming (5), says __he (14) Lo__d, (10) when I will f__ll (9) the p__mise (6) I made to the __ouse (2) of Israel and Judah. In tho__e (13) days, in that tim__, (3) I will raise up for __avid (7) a just shoot; he shall d__(8) what is right and jus__(1) in the __and(4). In those days __udah (11) shall be safe and Jer__saalem (12) shall dw__ll (17) secure; th__s (15) is what they shall __all (16) her:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11 12 13 14 15 16 17



HOPE PEACE JOY LOVE

The catechists of the Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong, held a special Advent lesson for their young students in CGS, pre-primary and Year One over a period of five weeks, throughout the months of October and November 2021. The children learnt about the Christmas prophecies of the Prophets Isaiah and Micah, the Nativity story, and the significance of Advent. In the final week of the programme, the children were encouraged to dress up in costumes of their favourite nativity characters.



My little Lord Jesus,
 I love You and thank You for this Advent season.
 Please help me to understand all that You have done for me.
 Your loving mother held You in her heart and brought You into this world. Help me to do the same.

My loving Jesus,
 I choose You, this Advent, as my King and my God.
 Draw me close to You and help me to see my sins so that I can change the things that You want me to change.

Mother Mary, pray for me this Advent so that I may do all that God wants me to do. You said "Yes" to all that God asked of you. Please pray for me that I may do the same.

Come, Lord Jesus,
 Come, Lord Jesus,
 Come, Lord Jesus, come!
 I love You, Jesus.
 Amen.

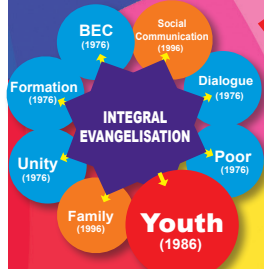
Countdown to Christmas

Random Acts of Kindness

- SUN, NOV 28**
Write a thank you note for a loved one.
- MON, NOV 29**
Call a family member just to say 'Hello'.
- TUES, NOV 30**
Help your parents prepare a meal.
- WED, DEC 1**
Give someone a compliment.
- THURS, DEC 2**
Draw & colour a Christmas card for a friend.
- FRI, DEC 3**
Say 'hello' to someone you don't know in school/church.
- SAT, DEC 4**
Donate a book or a toy.

YOUTH

November 28, 2021



YOUNG PEOPLE, Stand up and be witnesses of God!



KUALA LUMPUR: In conjunction with World Youth Day, the Arch/Bishops of Malaysia and the Malaysian Catholic Youth Ministers Committee (MCYMC) prepared a video montage in various languages to wish young people "A Blessed World Youth Day".

"Because you, young people, are so precious to God, to the whole world, to Mother Earth and Mother Church.
Bishop Sebastian Francis of Penang

"Pope Francis reminds all the young people of three great truths:
"First, God loves you, each of you, no matter who you are.
"Second, Christ our Saviour, out of love, sacrificed himself to save you. That is how much he loves you.
"Finally, the third great truth. Christ is Life, and He wants us all to be Alive! He wants you, my dear young people, to be alive, really alive, fully alive."
Bishop Bernard Paul of Malacca Johore, Bishop Cornelius Piong of Keningau and Archbishop John Wong of Kota Kinabalu

We pray together with Catholics from all over the world on this Solemnity of Christ the King, led by Pope Francis. Together we rejoice and we arise. We are the Now of God.
Although COVID-19 is still around us, we can't just sit still and do nothing. Or just lie down, confining, sleeping, snoring and so on. Rise up, we are God's witnesses for this world! The world needs hope, love and joy, more than ever.
As we adhere to the SOPs, let us step up our efforts to encourage goodness, justice, peace, and progress in spreading God's Good News to everyone.
Let us be witnesses of God, filled with God's love. Not just through the messages we convey through social media, but through the way of our life, anytime or anywhere. World Youth Day is a celebration full of Love. — MCYMC

To our beloved young Catholics of various cultures and races all over Malaysia.
"Let us celebrate God's love for the young, and young people's love for God and for everyone."
"Stand up. I appoint you as a Witness of what you have seen."
Act 26:16."
Archbishop Simon Poh of Kuching

"But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you", from Acts 26:16.
Dear young people, this is the message of Jesus to Paul during his conversion experience in Damascus. Jesus is saying the same thing to you, 'Get up and stand on your feet, go and be servants of Jesus and witness to Him on what you have seen and experienced. Go and proclaim the Gospel of love, stand up and go!'
Bishop Richard Ng of Miri

"My dear young people, God gives you His call and His grace to be witnesses at your parish, your kampung and your family with friends at school or at work, online or in-person, whether in Malaysia or elsewhere in the world."
Bishop Joseph Hii of Sibul and Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom of Sandakan

"Dear young people, you are not just the future of the Church of the world, you are our present."
Archbishop Julian Leow of Kuala Lumpur



DREAM AND TAKE A BITE OUT OF LIFE WITH JESUS IN YOUR HEART

VATICAN: In his homily during the celebration of Holy Mass on the Solemnity of Our Lord Christ the King, and on the occasion of the diocesan World Youth Day (WYD), Pope Francis took his cue from the day's readings.

The Pope noted that, in the Revelation of Saint John and foreshadowed by the prophet Daniel in the first reading, are the words, "He is coming with the clouds."

The second image is that of the Gospel: Christ who stands before Pilate and tells him: "I am a King".

Reflecting on these two phrases, the Pope began by encouraging young people to "stop and think about these two images of Jesus", as they journey towards the 2023 World Youth Day in Lisbon.

The Pope noted that the first image: Jesus who comes with the clouds, evokes Christ's coming in glory at the end of time. "It makes us realise" said Pope Francis "that the final word

on our life will belong to Jesus."

"He comes 'with the clouds' to reassure us," said the Pope. "As if to say: 'I will not leave you alone when storms gather over your life. I am always with you. I come to bring back the bright sky.'"

The prophet Daniel, on the other hand, noted Pope Francis, "tells us that he saw the Lord coming with the clouds as he 'watched in the night visions.'"

The Pope encouraged young people to "watch in the night visions." "In other words, let your eyes remain bright even amid the darkness. Never stop seeking the light amid whatever darkness we may bear in our hearts or see all around us," he said.

Pope Francis told young people they had been "entrusted with an exciting but also a challenging task: to stand tall while everything around us seems to be collapsing; to be sentinels prepared to see the light in night visions;

to be builders amid the ruins; to be capable of dreaming."

He also told them that everyone is grateful to them when they dream because, "when you make Jesus your life's dream, and you embrace him with joy and a contagious enthusiasm, this does us good," the Pope said.

Thank you, continued Pope Francis, "because in a world that thinks only of present gain, that tends to stifle grand ideals, you have not lost the ability to dream. This helps us adults, and the Church as well."

Dwelling on the second image: Jesus who says to Pilate: "I am a King", the Pope described how we are struck by Jesus' determination, His courage, His supreme freedom. "Jesus did not hide his identity, he did not mask his intentions, or take advantage of the opening that even Pilate had left for him," Pope Francis said.

"With the courage born of truth, he answered: 'I am a king'. He took responsibility

for his own life."

By following Jesus and being inwardly free, said the Pope, we see life "as it really is", and are not deceived "by the fashions of the moment and the displays of consumerism that dazzle but also deaden." "Friends", he added, "we are not here to be enchanted by the sirens of the world, but to take our lives in hand, to 'take a bite out of life', to live it to the full."

"In this way, with the freedom of Jesus, "we find the courage we need to swim against the current."

Concluding his homily, Pope Francis urged young people to continue dreaming, even when they get older; to be "free and authentic, be the critical conscience of society."

"Be passionate about truth", he said, "so that, with your dreams, you can say: 'My life is not captive to the mindset of the world: I am free, because I reign with Jesus for justice, love and peace.'" — *Vatican News*

Called to be witnesses

PENANG: The Penang Diocesan Youth Network (PDYN) has taken the initiative to animate the *Witness Nite*, an event inspired by the World Youth Day theme for 2021, *Stand up, I appoint you as a witness of what you have done* (cf. Acts 26:16). This event gathered young adults and campus students alike via Zoom.

Attendee, Camilia Perera, recalled her experience during the event and shared this...

"On November 21, I attended WYD, *Witness Nite*. It started with praise and worship from the Seeds Ministry, followed by 'I am a witness', a testimonial sharing by Focolare Movement (they are also known as Youth4UnitedWorld).

"I was moved by the testimony given by one of the witnesses, a hotel chef, as I have also been an employee at a hotel for three years. When the MCO was announced on March 2020, many functions and rooms were cancelled and we had to donate 10 to 50 per cent of our salary to cover the hotel maintenance and to avoid the hotel closing down. I thank God that I am still employed, even with a reduction of salary, as I still have enough income to support my family. Hopefully, those struggling in one way or another will continue to persevere through this challenging time.

"So, getting back to the event, I especially enjoyed the 'fun and games' moments. It was such a precious time where I connected with other young people and had a good laugh.

"Last but not least, I learnt that the Fifth Penang Diocesan Youth Day is coming up and pretty soon, we'll be having the launching of PDYD-5! I participated in PDYD-3 and PDYD-4, and now, I look forward to PDYD-5 next year. The event concluded with the final blessing by our beloved Fr Simon Anand, head of PDYN."

Reuben Luke, who was also one of the



emcees during *Witness Nite*, shared his experience.

"My experience of being an emcee during the *Witness Nite* was wonderful. It was my first time collaborating with PDYN and I loved it, and am looking forward for more events with the youths. I am one of those who fears public speaking. But yeah, I made it as an emcee confidently, thanks to the intercession of the Holy Spirit through all those present that night.

As to how I relate my experience of be-

ing an emcee with the World Youth Day, deep down, I felt WYD would have been better if it was experienced physically. Yet, I learnt and realised the importance of staying connected with each other in whatever ways possible, amidst the current challenges. I can also testify that World Youth Day as in *Witness Nite* has empowered me with the strength to overcome my fears and to improve myself, to use the gifts God has given to me." — **By Marlinda Marcus Lundang, PDYN**

WORLD YOUTH DAY IS CELEBRATED IN A SYNODAL WAY

KOTA KINABALU: Pope Francis wants to hear the voices of the people, especially the youths. World Youth Day was celebrated in a Synodal Process at the Cathedral of Sacred Heart on November 21.

The Synodal Process this time is different from the previous process, said Fr Paul Lo, parish priest of Sacred Heart Cathedral. There were 28 participants consisting of three communities in the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, namely Ephphatha, Holy Trinity and Sacred Heart Bible Apostolate.

Quoting the Gospel, Fr Paul reminded that Jesus walks with us during difficult times or when we feel hopeless, just as we as the Church walk together in whatever we go through.



Participants were divided into groups to discuss the questionnaires. After the discussion, the groups presented the summary of their discussion. Among the issues discussed was for the Church to walk together in addressing the current issues we are facing since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

"Although I have not been able to serve



The youth during the group session.

in church for a long time, I am very grateful and happy to participate in this Synodal Process" said Vanessa, who serves with the Sacred Heart Bible Apostolate team.

"If we look at the theme chosen by Pope Francis for World Youth Day, 'Stand up. I appoint you to be a witness of what you see', I believe that today, God is calling me and all the youths around the world to rise up to be His witnesses," said Anisa, who serves with the Holy Trinity Community.

Veronita, who serves with the Ephphatha team, said, "My hope is that I, along with the other parishioners and youths, can walk together with the communities. I also hope that the youth's voice in this Synodal Process can be taken to a higher level so that the youths know that they are heard and cared for — **By Michelle George, Catholic Sabah**

HOLD ONTO HOPE AS ADVENT NEARS

VATICAN: Pope Francis told young adults and teens participating in a Christmas songwriting contest to hold onto the hope, beauty, and love present in the season which celebrates Christ's birth.

"I am happy to meet you, now at the doors of Advent, the period which every year introduces us to Christmas and its Mystery," the Pope said November 22.

"This year too its lights will be subdued due to the consequences of the pandemic, which still weighs on our time," he noted. "All the more reason we are called to examine ourselves and not to lose hope."

"The feast of the Birth of Christ does not clash with the trial we are experiencing, because it is the feast of compassion, of tenderness par excellence. Its beauty is humble and full of human warmth," Pope Francis told the contestants and its organisers.

He added: "I like to repeat the words of St Paul VI: 'This world in which we live needs beauty in order not to fall into despair.' What kind of beauty? Not the false one made up of appearance and earthly wealth, which is empty and generates emptiness. No."

"But that [beauty] of a God who became flesh, that of faces, of stories; that of the creatures who form our common home and who — as St Francis teaches us — participate in the praise of the Most High," he said.



Pope Francis met participants in a Christmas song contest initiative at the Vatican on Nov 22, 2021. (Vatican Media)

Pope Francis addressed participants of the Christmas song competition and others involved in its organisation, including its creators, the Pontifical Gravissimum Educationis Foundation and the non-profit Missioni Don Bosco, in a hall of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace.

The Pontifical Gravissimum Educationis Foundation was founded by Pope Francis in 2015. The foundation's website says the Christmas Concert wants to enrich the repertoire of Christmas songs and carols known all over the world "through the creativity of young people, inviting them to produce new songs inspired by Christmas and its values: life, love, peace, light."

The contest, which was open to young people ages 16-35, is divided into the categories of lyrics, music, and interpretation. The three best songs, as chosen by a jury, will be performed at the 29th edition of the Christmas Concert in the Vatican, a benefit for Scholas Occurrentes and Missioni Don Bosco.

Pope Francis said "the beauty of Christmas shines through in the sharing of small gestures of concrete love. It is not alienating, is not superficial, is not evasive; on the contrary, it widens the heart, opens it to give freely — you artists know — opens it to the gift of self, and can also generate cultural, social and educational dynamics." — **By Hannah Brockhaus CNA**

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MEMORIAM

1st Year Anniversary
Precious and Loving Memory of
Phyllis Nathan (Fernandez)
(13 September 1938 to 2 December 2020)



*Then I heard a voice from heaven say to me,
"Write down: Happy are those who die
in the Lord! Happy indeed, the Spirit says;
now they can rest for ever after their work,
since their good deeds go with them."*
Revelation 14:13

Dearest Mum,
a year has passed since you returned to the Lord.
Your journey was one of strength and resilience.
God held your hands as you bore
life's crosses with great courage.
Mum, we love you and we miss you so much.
You will be in our hearts forever.
Rejoice in God's heavenly home.
Till we meet again on that beautiful shore.

With all our love,
your children, grandchildren,
in-laws, & great-grandchildren.

In Loving Memory of
5th Anniversary 30th Anniversary



R. Anthonymsamy
Departed:
13/10/2016

*Our hearts will always love and cherish you.
Deeply missed and always remembered by
Loved ones.*



**Michael Peter
Anthonymsamy**
Departed: 29/7/1991

In Loving Memory of
31st Anniversary 35th Anniversary



**Philip Anthony
D'Cruz**
Departed: 27-11-1990

*Our hearts will always love and cherish you.
Deeply missed and always remembered by
Loved ones.*



Rajamah D'Cruz
Departed: 2-12-1986

Remembrance



**Fr Ignatius Huan
Kin Kwang**

**Gifted: 23rd Nov 1941
Returned to the Lord:
3rd Dec 2018**

6th Anniversary
In Ever Loving Memory of
a Beloved Husband, Father, Grandfather



**Mickey Hoe
Voon Ping**
Departed:
29th Nov 2015

*In loving memory of a very special husband.
When God was making husbands as far as I can see,
He made a special soulmate especially for me,
He made a perfect gentleman, compassionate and kind,
with more love and affection than you could ever wish to find,
He gave my darling a heart of solid gold,
He gave me wonderful memories only my heart can hold,
He was someone I could talk to that no one can replace,
He was someone I could laugh
with till tears ran down my face,
Next time we meet will be at heavens door,
When I see you standing there I won't cry anymore,
I will put my arms around you and kiss your smiling face,
Then the pieces of my broken heart will fall back into place.
Miss you so much.*

Deeply missed, always loved and cherished by
Your beloved wife Philo,
children, daughters-in-law and grandchildren.

In Loving Memory of



Peter & Stella Dass

21st Anniversary	8th Anniversary
From the Lord: 16 July 1921	From the Lord: 6 June 1931
To the Lord: 17 June 2000	To the Lord: 29 November 2013

*Close in our hearts you will stay,
loved and remembered everyday by
Children, Grandchildren and loved ones.*



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Light of Hope



As we enter a new liturgical calendar and prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ this Advent, the Diocese of Malacca-Johore has prepared a series of reflections beginning from the first week of Advent till Christmas. In this issue, we feature the reflection and activities for Week 1.

The theme of the Advent reflection is *Light of Hope*, in line with MJD50.

Click here to download the Advent e-brochure:

English: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1X_2wHT_hQyYGTZ_NLZi-BJ_IdPkstCX0X/view

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, welcome to the Reflections at Home during Advent 2021.

It has been a very challenging year for most of us due to the pandemic. Many of us have suffered financial hardships and constraints while distancing ourselves from friends and family members who would normally support and counsel us during our time of need. We have also not been able to attend Mass regularly or seek the comfort of being in our sanctuary, the Church. When we reflect on this year, let us remember how the Virgin Mary and Joseph overcame the difficult Journey of Incarnation by placing their complete trust in the Lord and believing that He knew what was best for them.

The Journey of Incarnation began with the Immaculate Conception, when the young Virgin Mary must have been fearful of the social judgment and condemnation of being pregnant though unwed. She must have anguished over whether Joseph would still marry her. Joseph himself put his total trust in the Lord and accepted Mary without reservation. Joseph and a heavily pregnant Mary must have despaired when they were unable to find a place to stay and have the baby safely. Then, they endured extreme hardship when they were forced to flee to Egypt because of Herod's wrath. Their jour-

ney would have been extremely difficult, and they would have feared for the health of their baby and themselves.

However, throughout their Journey of Incarnation, Mary and Joseph were resolved to do God's bidding, their faith never wavered and for this, they were richly blessed.

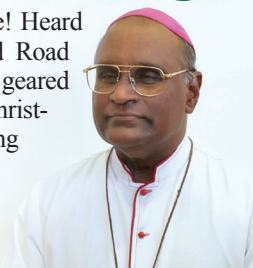
Let us too place our complete faith in God and reflect on the many blessings we have received during this year in spite of the pandemic. We were able to slow down, reflect and reassess our lives and our priorities. While we spent time apart, we realised how important we were to one another. Families have grown closer. We have grown stronger and more compassionate. We have also come to realise that we are able to do more with less.

Let us spend Advent reflecting on the many blessings we have received by drawing closer to God. As we celebrate our relationships, let us also resolve to receive God without reservation and surrender to His plan for us.

The theme of the Advent reflections this year is *Light of Hope*. As we read the selected sacred scriptures for personal and communal prayer, let us feel the warmth of the light glowing and enlightening our paths forward. — *Mission Pastoral Institute Team*

Bishop Bernard Paul's message

Advent is here! Heard that Orchard Road Singapore is geared already for the Christmas season. Shopping Malls are quick to display the newest, the most fashionable, and the best. Captivate! Attract! Spend! Use the Christ event to sell.



Or is the season meant to point to the Star, the stable at Bethlehem, to the Word became flesh or the Emmanuel-the God-With-Us?

What do you think? As we reflect on these pages, see the Christ, the *Light of Hope*. These times are hard for most. Cashless. Jobless. Homeless. Clueless. Joyless. Hopeless. Not only are we called to open a "stable" in our hearts to that light, but to point the disillusioned and despairing to the *Light of Hope*.

Hope is founded on the Word of God, the promises, and knowing what our God can do. God always makes a way. Let us be the "stars" of hope to one another, to the lost, the least, the lame, the little, and the leper this Advent and Christmas.

This is Communion, Participation and Mission

First Week of Advent: The coming of Christ

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus,
In your name,
we mark this season:
As we bring forth light
to defy the claims of darkness,
As we bring forth joy and song
to defy the claims of sadness,
As we bring forth a spirit of
generosity to defy
the claims of want,
As we bring forth peace
to defy the claims of war.
That in the darkest,
saddest, most wanting,
warring corner of the world,
All may look to Bethlehem
Where, in the humblest of
circumstances,
In a time of repression
From the person of
a poor refugee woman
In the filth of a manger
In the form of
a most vulnerable child
You came among us to say,
"No, there is a light
in this world."
Let us be this light to others.
Let us be the fruit of
the branch of Jesse's tree.
Let us be the bearers of the
indescribable gift
that is your grace
And so defy all false claims on
your people and their dignity.
And so, may you be born anew,
into every season
Into every age
Into every land and
every human heart.
Maranatha!
Come, Lord Jesus, come.
Amen

Source: Catholic Relief Services
(there is light in the world)



GOSPEL READING: LUKE 21:25-28,34-36
Jesus teaches his disciples to be vigilant so that they will be ready when the Son of Man comes in glory.

Reflection

Advent is a time of preparation for the second coming of Jesus. During this season, we are called to reflect on the incarnation of Christ, through the birth of Jesus. In the Gospel, Jesus warns us that there will be complete destruction of this physical earth sometime in the future. Many people are living in fear and agony and suffering devastating events.

Currently, we may be concerned about a family member's health, our job security, our children's education, or any number of other

concerns. All these are important matters, but what's the most critical?

Jesus does not promise an end to daily worries and fears, but he does teach his disciples that they will have the strength to withstand anxiety if they stay focused on him, do what's right and love one another. In the midst of world chaos, Jesus reminds us to hold our heads high because our liberation is near. We must remain vigilant for his return and pray for the strength to endure all tribulations.

What is most important to us as we prepare our heart to receive the birth of Jesus? What can I do now to strengthen the faith of my children so that they are able to prepare their children and enable them to hold their heads high when Christ comes?

FOR FAMILY/MINISTRIES:

What struck us in the Scripture that we have just heard? What can we do as family/ministry to be vigilant and help our future children to stand confident when facing destruction?

FOR INDIVIDUALS:

Spend time to reflect on and discern the meaning of the words that struck you. What worries or concerns of my life should I let go of in order to receive Christ this Advent? Take note and share your reflection with your companion at a convenient time.

CONCRETE ACTION:

Contact a friend or family member who is far away from the Church, or a lapsed Catholic. Share your reflections, insights, and thoughts with them, and prepare a gift for him/her during Christmas.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER /CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, help (me/friends/family's name) to be mindful of the priorities in tune with God's desire in our lives, prepare (me/friends/family's name) to receive the salvation we celebrate at Jesus' birth and anticipate His second coming.

How to use this reflection

GROUPS

1. Gather the family at home or communities through zoom before Sunday's liturgy
2. Light a candle before the opening prayer. The light symbolises Christ the Light of the world who is in the midst of us.
3. Choose a volunteer or family member to begin by reading aloud the provided Scriptures for the week. Pause for at least 5 to 10 minutes after the reading.
4. Next, read the reflection. Ponder on the questions.
5. Choose another volunteer or family member to read the Scripture again. Make the words of the Scripture your own. What does the Scripture say? What concrete action can you take to follow the Scripture?
6. Take time to share with each other what word/s or phrase/s in the Scripture touches you. Likewise, you can also share any questions you may have about the Scripture.
7. End the session with the intercessory prayer with everyone in the family or group. Everyone takes turns to pray for one another.

INDIVIDUALS:

1. Find time and create a space for prayer where you will not be distracted.
2. Light a candle before the opening prayer. The light symbolises Christ the Light of the world who is in the midst of us.
3. Read the Scripture, then reflect. Ponder on the questions.
4. Read the Scripture again. Make the words of Scripture your own. What does the Scripture say? Try to discern God's voice.
5. Take time to respond and do your own journaling on the Scripture that touches you, write down God's invitation for you. Find a companion to share your thoughts with, at a convenient time.
6. End the session with intercessory prayer or a simple closing prayer.



Download the Click To Pray updates now.



Don't be afraid to criticise, young people told

VATICAN: Pope Francis told young people that, with Jesus, people can find the courage to swim against the current, be free and authentic, and stand up for their dreams and ideals of truth, love, justice and peace.

"Be the critical conscience of society. Don't be afraid to criticise. We need your criticism," he said, citing for example, the disapproval coming from many young people about environmental destruction. "Be passionate about truth, so that, with your dreams, you can say, 'My life is not captive to the mindset of the world. I am free, because I reign with Jesus for justice, love, and peace!'"

Celebrating Mass on the feast of Christ the King in St Peter's Basilica on November 21, the Pope di-

rected much of his homily towards the world's young people. This was the first year that the world's dioceses were celebrating World Youth Day on the local level on the feast of Christ the King rather than on Palm Sunday. Pope Francis had announced the change last year.

The Holy Father encouraged young people to let Jesus' freedom "resonate within us, to challenge us, to awaken in us the courage born of truth." He encouraged everyone to look for and face the truth about themselves: what they are ashamed of, the ways they may be deceitful or duplicitous, and the ways they displease God.

He urged young people not to be "enchanted by the sirens of the world, but to take our lives in hand,



Pope Francis prays at the Marian image with the youth after Mass for the feast of Christ the King in St Peter's Basilica, Nov 21, 2021. (Vatican Media)

to 'take a bite out of life,' in order to live it to the full!"

"You have been entrusted with an exciting but also challenging task: to stand tall while everything around seems to be collapsing; to be senti-

nels prepared to see the light in night visions; to be builders amid the ruins; to be capable of dreaming," the Pope told young people.

He thanked them for working courageously "to make your dreams

come true," to make the world more beautiful, humane, and fraternal, to heal the wounds of God's creation, to protect the dignity of the vulnerable, and to spread the spirit of solidarity and sharing. — *CNA*

Pope thanks religious, lay people who help HIV/AIDS patients

VATICAN: Pope Francis has expressed gratitude to the many priests, nuns and laypeople who helped HIV and AIDS patients, even at the cost of their own lives, in the 1980s and 1990s when the epidemic of the then-unknown virus had an almost 100 per cent mortality rate.

The Pope acknowledged the service of these individuals in a letter to Michael O'Loughlin, journalist, correspondent for the US magazine *America* and author of a recently released publication titled *Hidden Mercy: AIDS, Catholics, and the Untold Stories of Compassion in the Face of Fear*.

In the brief letter, the Holy Father writes: "Thank you for illuminating the lives and witnessing of the many priests, women religious and laypeople who have chosen to accompany, support and help their brothers and sisters suffering from HIV and AIDS at great risk to their profession and reputation."

"Instead of indifference, alienation and even condemnation," the Pope continues, "these people have allowed themselves to be moved by the Father's mercy and have allowed it to become the work of their own lives; a mercy that is discreet, silent and hidden, but still capable of sustaining and restoring life and history to each of us".

In 2008, Pope Francis himself, while serving as the archbishop of Buenos Aires, washed the feet of 12 HIV/AIDS patients during the Holy Thursday celebration. More



Pope Francis blesses a mother with a baby during his visit at the Zimpeto hospital in Maputo. (Vatican News photo)

End inequalities. End AIDS

HIV remains a major public health issue that affects millions of people worldwide.

Although the world has made significant progress in recent decades, important global targets for 2020 were not met.

Division, disparity, and disregard for human rights are among the failures that allowed HIV to become and remain a global health crisis. Now, COVID-19 is exacerbating inequities and disruptions to services, making the lives of many people

recently, during his visit to Panama in January 2019 for the World Youth Day celebration, the Pope visited the Casa Hogar Buen Samaritano, which takes in many HIV-positive people.

On that occasion, Pope Francis noted that "the Good Samaritan,

living with HIV more challenging.

The theme of World AIDS Day 2021 is *End inequalities. End AIDS*. With a special focus on reaching people left behind, WHO and its partners are highlighting the growing inequalities in access to essential HIV services.

On December 1, 2021, WHO will call on global leaders and citizens to rally to confront the inequalities that drive AIDS and to reach people who are currently not receiving essential HIV services.

whether in the parable or in all of your homes, shows us that our neighbour is, first of all, a person, someone with a real, particular face, not something to avoid or ignore, whatever his or her situation may be". — *Vatican News*

Student activist jailed under security law

HONG KONG: A student activist in Hong Kong has been sentenced to three years and seven months in prison for arguing that the territory should pursue independence. Tony Chung was charged with secession, under a sweeping national security law, and money laundering in October 2020 and was denied bail. Local media reported at the time that he was detained by unidentified men along with two others at a coffee shop close to the United States Consulate and was believed to be preparing for an asylum application.

The charges related to his leadership of a small fringe group called Studentlocalism which he established as a student. The group advocated for Hong Kong's independence from China.

The 20-year-old is the youngest person to be convicted under the laws to date.

Earlier this month, he had entered a plea bargain, admitting guilt to one count of secession and one count of money laundering but declaring he had "nothing to be ashamed of".

The plea led to a 25 per cent reduction in his sentence, to 40 months for secession and 18 months for money laundering. Only three months of the latter will be served separately, resulting in a total sentence of 43 months.

Stanley Chan, one of a group of select judges picked by the government to try national secu-



Tony Chung

riety cases, said Chung's criminal intent was "clear for all to see" on social media, in interviews, at street booths and in schools.

"He actively organised, planned and implemented activities to separate the country," the judge said.

China imposed the national security law on Hong Kong in June 2020 after bypassing the territory's legislature with the consent of Chief Executive Carrie Lam.

The controversial law reduces Hong Kong's judicial autonomy and makes it easier to punish demonstrators and activists. It criminalises secession, subversion and collusion with foreign forces and carries a maximum sentence of life in prison. — *Agencies*