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Unity Week: Christians called to live One Body and One Spirit

HONG KONG (SE): Christian unity is not achieved through structures or shared activities alone, but through a deep oneness in Christ, Father Christophor Chor Yuk-wa said during the Ecumenical Prayer Evening held at Ward Memorial Methodist Church on January 24, marking this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

"Unity does not mean forming an organisation or simply joining efforts in an activity. Rather, it is about oneness in Christ," Father Chor said, urging believers to live out the light of Christ through personal spiritual growth and faithful witness. The theme for this year's observance was drawn from Ephesians 4:4—"one body and one Spirit."

The prayer evening was attended by Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha Chi-shing, chairperson of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission; Father Joseph Chan Wing-chiu, vicar general; Archbishop Andrew Chan Au-ming of the Anglican Church; Bishop Jackson Yeung Yau-chi of the Lutheran Church; Father Dawoud Hanna of the Coptic Church; and leaders from other Christian denominations.

The gathering was co-organised by the Church Unity and Relations Committee of the Hong Kong Christian Council and the Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Ecumenical Commission, with support from the Joint Ecumenical Working Team.

In his homily, Father Chor said that the foundation of Christian unity is God himself. He noted that the seven qualities named in Ephesians—one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God—ultimately point to God as the centre and source of all creation. "Through receiving the same Spirit, believers can transcend their divisions and become brothers and sisters in Christ," he said.



Above: Nearly 400 people joined the ecumenical prayer meeting at Ward Memorial Methodist Church, Waterloo Road on January 24.

Right: Attendants receiving a souvenir designed for the occasion reminding every Christian of their mission.



At the same time, he acknowledged that living unity is an ongoing spiritual struggle requiring both the guidance of the Holy Spirit and personal commitment. He observed that contemporary Christians can become overly focused on external ministries, sometimes leading to conflict, while neglecting prayer and inner spiritual formation. "Prayer is

essential and requires intentional time," he stressed.

"Christians are called to demonstrate resilience and hope through their lives, embodying the light of Christ in the face of division," Father Chor said.

Following the homily, participants were invited to approach the altar one by one to receive

a scarf bearing the words "You are called" from Church leaders, symbolising the shared mission of all Christians to spread God's love. The evening concluded with the congregation reciting the Lord's Prayer together, followed by a joint blessing and commissioning by the Church leaders.

This year's theme was developed collaboratively by the Armenian Apostolic Church, together with Catholic and Evangelical communities. Armenia became a Christian nation as early as 301AD, and its Church has endured repeated persecution, most notably during the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1916, when clergy and laity were targeted and churches destroyed, resulting in the deaths of more than one million Armenians.

Leading the liturgy, Father Aloysius Mak Ying-kin said the steadfast faith and martyrdom of the Armenian people continues to inspire Christians to confess Christ courageously and to preserve unity in times of trial.

As part of Unity Week, a Joint Ecumenical Communion Service for Christian leaders and co-workers was held on January 22 at Truth Lutheran Church in Kowloon, led by Reverend Wong Ka-fai of the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China.

On Unity Sunday, January 18, churches across Hong Kong were encouraged to pray together and exchange pulpits. Reverend Tim Lam Chun of the Methodist Church preached at St. Margaret Mary's Church, Happy Valley, on January 17, while Father Edward Hsueh Kwan Ho delivered the homily at the Methodist Church in Wan Chai on January 18.

Upcoming ecumenical activities include a worship service on March 7 at All Saints' Cathedral, Mong Kok, organised by the Anglican Church, with the theme "Come! I Will Give You Rest" [Matthew 11:28–30].

A Passover dinner will follow on March 20 at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Kowloon, with the participation of Cardinal Stephen Chow, S.J. An ecumenical art exhibition is also planned later in the year at Saint Francis University.

Procession for the Feast of the Black Nazarene at St. Joseph's Church

HONG KONG (SE): St. Joseph's Church, Garden Road, celebrated the Feast of the Black Nazarene, or the Jesús Nazareno, with an outdoor procession on January 11. For the first time, the Filipino community in Hong Kong re-enacted the traditional procession held in Manila every year on January 9.

Millions of barefoot devotees gather every year in Manila, the capital of the Philippines from late December to catch a glimpse of the centuries-old wooden Black Nazarene image, first carved in Mexico and brought to the country in the early 17th century. The devotion is believed to bring miracles and healing to the faithful, drawing both local and international pilgrims.

While processions had been held in previous years, the official, large-scale city-wide procession from the Quirino Grandstand to the Minor Basilica and National Shrine of Jesus Nazareno, also known as Quiapo Church, began

in 2007 to mark the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the image. This event attracts millions of devotees and is one of the largest religious gatherings in the world.

This large-scale procession is known as the "traslación", meaning "passage" or "movement" in Spanish. It is a re-enactment of the transfer of the statue of Jesus Christ from San Nicolas de Tolentino Church, within the walled city of Intramuros, to Quiapo Church in 1787. The event is renowned for its intensity, with devotees striving to touch the image in hopes of receiving blessings.

The celebration at St Joseph's Church was organised by the Sons and Daughters of the Black Nazarene. The parish community was formed a few years after the arrival of a life-sized replica of the Black Nazarene at the parish in 2020, as a gift from Quiapo Church to support pastoral care for Filipino migrants in Hong Kong.



The image of the Black Nazarene was carried by community members, while others waved beautifully crafted handkerchiefs to proclaim their devotion.

Members of the Sons and Daughters of Black Nazarene participated barefoot following the tradition.



The replica is one of only a handful outside the Philippines, serving as a focal point for community gatherings and religious events.

A novena kicked off the celebration, followed by the traslación. Initially, the statue was carried by members of the Eucharistic ministry from the side of the altar in St. Joseph's Church. Later, it was taken over by the Sons and Daughters of the Black Nazarene, who walked barefoot around the parish compound carrying the image.

The group, with over 100 members, chanted "Viva Poong Hesus Nazareno" [Long live the Lord Jesus Nazarene] as they waved brown handkerchiefs adorned with the image, expressing their deep faith and devotion

Initially, the statue was carried by members of the Eucharistic ministry from the side of the altar in St. Joseph's Church. Later, it was taken over by the Sons and Daughters of the Black Nazarene

to the Black Nazarene. The act of walking barefoot symbolises humility and solidarity with the suffering of Christ.

The participants finally stopped at the parish's carpark, where Divine Word [SVD]

Father Jerry Perocho celebrated a Thanksgiving Mass and blessed attendees with holy water.

The programme for the feast began at 4.00pm with an opening prayer led by parish priest, Father Joseph Tan Leitao, SVD, who highlighted the glorious cross of Jesus and urged those present to humbly admit their sins.

The event was marked by the participation of Rosemarie Torres and over 10 other representatives from the Department of Education, Division of Cavite in the Philippines, dedicated to promoting the devotion.

In her message, Torres shared her own devotion and honoured the sacrifice and resilience of Overseas Filipino Workers.

Various community groups then presented dances, showcasing their devotion to Jesus Christ.

New bishop for Diocese of Pingliang



PINGLIANG (FIDES): Coadjutor Bishop Anthony Li Hui of Pingliang, in Gansu province, China, was installed as bishop of the diocese on January 15, succeeding 85-year-old Bishop Nicholas Han Jide.

The online portals *Xinde.org* and *chinacatholic.cn* reported that the installation took place during Mass, attended by the faithful and representatives of the civil authorities.

In his homily, Bishop Li emphasised that he will continue the pastoral approach of his predecessor—who served as bishop from 1999—supporting the clergy and faithful on their journey of faith and working to foster a new era of evangelising mission.

Bishop Li was appointed coadjutor bishop by Pope Francis on 11 January 2021 and was ordained on 28 July 2021 in Pingliang Cathedral.

He is the fifth bishop appointed after the Provisional Agreement on the appointment of bishops between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China came into effect.

Born in 1972 in Mei County, Shaanxi province, Bishop Li entered Pingliang Diocesan Seminary in 1990 and graduated from the National Seminary of the Catholic Church in China. He has been a priest since 1996.

Before his appointment as bishop, he served for many years in the Diocese of Beijing. He continued his studies at the Faculty of Chinese Literature at Renmin University of China in Beijing.

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Three years of rebuilding lives through the Light Up Fund



Father Paul Kam, flanked by parish priest Father Martin Ip, raising funds at Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Yuen Long.

Photo: Facebook

HONG KONG: Since its launch in March 2023, the diocesan Light Up Fundraising Programme, run in collaboration with Caritas-Hong Kong, has been supporting young people aged 35 or below who are incarcerated or undergoing rehabilitation, helping them to rebuild their lives with renewed hope and direction.

Working closely with the Correctional Services Department, the programme seeks to accompany young people through love, support and guidance, enabling them to rediscover purpose and reintegrate into society. As of January 2026, more than 750 funding applications had been

received, and over 200 rehabilitated young people have benefited from the programme, engaging in career planning, further education or employment opportunities.

Father Paul Kam Po-wai, vicar general, expressed his gratitude to participating employers for their generous support. He noted that the programme's career development efforts are strengthened by a growing network of companies from a wide range of sectors, including social enterprises, information technology, engineering, education, healthcare, design and hospitality.

Together, these partners

have provided more than 100 job placements and internship opportunities.

At the same time, Father Kam expressed hope that more employers would join the initiative. He said many participating companies have observed that rehabilitated young people often demonstrate strong communication skills and a readiness to learn new skills.

He also emphasised the importance of engaging employers from diverse industries, noting that young people need time

... family-focused activities have played a key role in supporting rehabilitation

and space to explore different options as they discern their future paths in life.

According to the programme's newsletter published last summer, family-focused activities have played a key role in supporting rehabilitation. Initiatives aimed at reconnecting young people

with their families—through counselling, support talks and programmes to enhance emotional well-being—have benefited 112 families since the fund's inception.

In addition, post-release support services have reached more than 1,012 young people over the past two years. These services include hobby groups, psychological counselling, adventure sports, baking classes and expressive arts sessions, all designed to foster a smooth transition back into the community.

Reflections from the cardinal

By Stephen Cardinal Chow, S.J.

Ten thousand horses racing [萬馬奔騰]



In just over two weeks, various Asian countries will celebrate the Lunar New Year, marking the Year of the Horse. Unlike rats or snakes, horses are widely loved animals by people in general. A well-known painting of horses in China, known as the "Picture of a Hundred Horses" (百駿圖), was painted by the Jesuit artist Giuseppe Castiglione at the Qing Imperial Court back in 1728.

Those horses came in different shapes, sizes, colours, and postures. They could be seen resting, standing, or grazing peacefully. One could imagine they were, individually and communally, contemplating the world around them, exchanging their observations with neighbours, while enjoying each other's company. Perhaps, it is an equivalent form of spiritual conversation among horses, as portrayed by a Jesuit artist. Just imagine.

But the more common manifestations of horses in Chinese paintings are racing or galloping. Horses are usually appreciated for their powerful speed, besides their beautiful physique. Hence, we use "horsepower" to represent this impressive trait of horses. How many horsepower is a vehicle equipped with, that will bespeak its physical and monetary values.

Hence, if there were a hundred, a thousand or even ten thousand horses racing together towards the same direction, what an earth-shaking feeling that must yield. Just imagine the scene – clouds of dust, roaring noises, a trembling ground, exhilarating heartbeats, incredible power, freed to run, and a sense of accomplishment.

This, I think, is a desirable picture we can contemplate for our Church, our city, and even our world: running, collectively and determinately, toward a discerned direction. Encouraging and helping each other to run together for a common goal that surpasses individual desires. What a beautiful image that will likely bring us joy and hope, especially for us who trust in a Supreme Being, who empowers and guides us, and to whom we respond with faith.

Sadly, this is not the picture we are seeing in our world today, not only is this missing from the political arena, but also witness destruction inflicted on those who refuse to join the 'gang.' We are seeing gangs running in their own directions, clashing with other gangs and individuals. If you are not for us, you must be against us. Competitions have turned into ugly displays of egoism and horrific power plays. We should be worried that 'positive competition' has become a vanishing concept. But we must not allow ourselves to be drowned in the sea of sorrows or lost in the wilderness of despair either.

A neophyte recently asked if I had ever experienced hopelessness. My reply was a clear NO. That is because I believe in a God who is ever faithful and loving toward me and everyone created in the love of God. God does not disappoint if we truly let God be God in our lives, not dictating to God for what only counts in our minds. We bring sorrows and hopelessness upon ourselves when we are fixated on only one or a few options that we regard as acceptable. But I have learned to honour God and to have faith in a God who has been taking care of me, even in the times when all seems dark.

And this is certainly applicable to all of us—our Church, Hong Kong, and the world—as we approach the Lunar New Year of the Horse. Rather than focusing on the divergences, let us build on the convergences. Instead of lamenting over what is lacking, let us rejoice in what is gifted. It is about not insisting on our own ways but exploring a communal approach that brings prosperity to all. And, not letting fears or anxiety dominate our decision making and taking, or suppressing dissensions, but discerning that reassuring voice of life and love that instils peace and generates hope within.

Let the horses within us race together for the common destiny that will bring lasting peace and collective prosperity to all of us, transcending time and space. Finally, please allow me to take this opportunity to wish you all a truly loving, hope-filled and prosperous Year of the Horse!

+ Stephen Cardinal Chow, S.J.

Thank you Saint Jude for the prayers answered

O Holy St. Jude! Apostle and Martyr,
great in virtue and rich in miracles,
near kinsman of Jesus Christ,
faithful intercessor for all who invoke you,
special patron in time of need;
to you I have recourse from the depth of my heart,
and humbly beg you,
to whom God has given such great power,
to come to my assistance; help me now in my urgent need
and grant my earnest petition. I will never forget thy graces
and favors you obtain for me and I will do my utmost to
spread devotion to you. Amen.
St. Jude, pray for us and all who honor thee and
invoke thy aid.
(Say 3 Our Father's, 3 Hail Mary's,
and 3 Glory Be's after this.)

Cheung Family



Pope Leo gives his blessing at the conclusion of an evening prayer service at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome on January 25, concluding the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Photo: CNS /Lola Gomez

Humbly invite others to trust in God, pope says at close of Unity Week

ROME (CNS): All Christians are called to invite everyone to trust in Christ, who enlightens and consoles, Pope Leo XIV remarked as he closed the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on January 25 during an ecumenical evening prayer service at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.

"Every authentic encounter with the Lord is, in fact, a transformative moment that grants a new vision and a new direction for the task of building up the Body of Christ," Pope Leo said.

Every year, the week "invites us to renew our commitment to this great mission, bearing in mind that the divisions among us—while they do not prevent the light of Christ from shining—nonetheless make the face which must reflect it to the world less radiant," he said.

As the service began, Orthodox Metropolitan Polykarpos of Italy and Anglican Bishop Anthony Ball, the archbishop of Canterbury's representative to the Holy See, joined Pope Leo in descending the stairs under the main altar to pray before

the relics of St. Paul.

Several leaders and representatives of numerous Churches and Christian communions worldwide attended the prayer service, including Armenian Orthodox Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, the representative of the Armenian Apostolic Church to the Holy See.

'Reciting the Nicene Creed together in the very place where it was formulated was a profound and unforgettable testimony to our unity in Christ'

The theme for the 2026 celebration of the week was inspired by St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians [4:4], "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling."

Pope Leo said in his homily, "We are one! We already are! Let us recognise it, experience it and make it visible!"

The synodal journey of the Catholic Church, which is and must be ecumenical, he said, "is a path for growing together in mutual knowledge of our respec-

tive synodal structures and traditions."

The pope said, "As we look toward the 2,000th anniversary of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus in 2033, let us commit ourselves to further developing ecumenical synodal practices and to sharing with one another who we are, what we do and what we teach."

The mission of all Christians today is "to proclaim Christ and to invite everyone to place their trust in him," he said. This shared task is to "say humbly and joyfully to the world: 'Look to Christ! Come closer to him! Welcome his word that enlightens and consoles!'"

Pope Leo underlined the importance of celebrating the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea in Iznik, Turkey, in November with representatives of so many Christian traditions.

"Reciting the Nicene Creed together in the very place where it was formulated was a profound and unforgettable testimony to our unity in Christ," he said. "May the Holy Spirit find in us docile minds even today, so that we may proclaim the faith with one voice to the men and women of our time!"

Concluding his homily, Pope Leo prayed that "the seeds of the gospel may continue to bear fruit on this continent in unity, justice and holiness, for the benefit of peace among the peoples and nations of the whole world."

EDITORIAL

SUNDAY EXAMINER

1 FEBRUARY 2026

Let's not drive away from the scene of the accident

On February 2, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, recalling the moment when Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the Temple and offered him wholly to God. This ancient feast, this year, also marks the 30th World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life. As Pope Leo XIV presides at the Eucharist in Saint Peter's Basilica, the universal Church pauses to give thanks for consecrated men and women whose lives, like Christ's, are offered and gifted for the sake of others.

Established by Pope St. John Paul II, this day invites us to a renewal. Consecrated life is not a relic of the past; it is a living sign that God continues to claim human lives for the sake of love. The Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life reminds us that this celebration calls the Church to rediscover consecrated life as a gift—not only to ecclesial structures, but to the world itself, and to renew its missionary dynamism alongside the Holy Father.

At its heart, consecration is often misunderstood. We have reduced it to a "Church word," reserved for sacred objects such as chalices and other liturgical articles, places like churches and sanctuaries, and people who are vowed religious. However, its original meaning is more fundamental: to be consecrated means being "set aside" by circumstances, need, or the presence of suffering that calls for a response.

We all recognise such individuals—those whose freedom was limited by poverty, illness, family duties, or unexpected tragedy. They didn't select heroism; it was thrust upon them. Like the first responder at an accident, they couldn't simply ignore the situation. Their very presence became a duty. In that instant, they made silent vows—promises of loyalty, sacrifice, resilience, and love.

Scripture gives us a similar image in Moses, reluctant and protesting, yet chosen because he had seen the suffering of his people. Once he had seen, he was no longer free to look away. This is the deep logic of vocation. Consecration does not eliminate freedom; it transforms it. The question is no longer whether to respond, but how faithfully one will do so.

Those who profess public vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience embody this truth in a visible, communal way, and the Church rightly honours and supports them. But this World Day also invites us to broaden our gaze. Married couples, caregivers, migrants, single parents, and countless unnamed disciples live consecrated lives without titles or recognition. They too are bound by vows made for them—vows inscribed by love and responsibility.

On this 30th World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life, the Church is invited not only to give thanks, but to awaken. We pray for consecrated men and women, support them generously, and encourage new vocations. More than that, recognising one's own consecration—to the wounded neighbour, the fragile community, the unfinished work of justice and mercy. We are all, in different ways, at the scene of an accident. May we not drive away. *jose, CMF*

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Communication should be real faces and voices not AI, pope says

VATICAN (CNS): Pope Leo XIV's message for the World Day of Communications [on May 17] warned against the unchecked influence of technology and artificial intelligence [AI] on human dignity, creativity, and communication. Released on January 24—the feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists—the message urged humanity not to let “technology, especially AI, overshadow or suppress human voices, needs, knowledge, creativity, and critical thinking.”

The 2026 theme, “Preserving human voices and faces,” underscores the pope's focus on safeguarding each person's unique, God-given dignity and diversity. He said, “The challenge is not technological, but anthropological. Protecting faces and voices ultimately means protecting ourselves.”

While digital technology and AI bring opportunities, the pope insisted they must be embraced “with courage, determination and discernment,” and not used passively or uncritically.

Pope Leo highlighted the dangers of algorithms designed to maximise engagement on social media. These can trap users in “bubbles” of consensus and outrage, “undermining critical thinking and increasing polarisation.”

He noted that such algorithms “reward knee-jerk emotions and penalise more time-consuming human expressions such as the effort to understand and reflect.”

A “naively uncritical reliance on artificial intelligence as an omniscient ‘friend,’” he cautioned, erodes our capacity “to understand, analyse, and think creatively.”

The pope further warned: “Giving up the creative process and surrendering our mental capacities and imagination to machines means burying the talents we have received to grow as people in relation to God and others. It means hiding our face and silencing our voice.”

Without safeguards, he warned, “digital technology risks radically altering some of the fundamental pillars of human civilisation” by simulating “human voices and faces, wisdom and knowledge, awareness and responsibility, empathy and friendship.”

Pope Leo cautioned against allowing AI to dominate creative fields, turning “masterpieces of human genius” into “mere training grounds for machines.” The creative industry, he feared, could be “replaced by prod-

ucts ‘Powered by AI’, turning people into passive consumers of ‘unthought thoughts, anonymous products, without authorship, without love.’”

He raised concerns about “bots” and “virtual influencers” shaping public debate, and warned against “anthropomorphising” AI, which can imitate human emotions and deceive or exploit vulnerable individuals. Replacing real relationships with AI, he wrote, created a “world of mirrors” and deprived people of the chance “to encounter others, who are always different from us, and with whom we can and must learn to engage.”

AI's ability to “hallucinate” and fabricate reality, he said, increased the difficulty of distinguishing fact from fiction, posing “a great risk to journalism.” The decline of on-the-ground reporting and lack of verification “can create even more fertile ground for disinformation, causing a growing sense of mistrust, confusion and insecurity.”

We need faces and voices to represent people again. We need to cherish the gift of communication

The pope warned of the danger of a “handful of companies” controlling data and being able to “subtly influence behaviour and even rewrite human history—including the history of the Church—often without us even realising it.”

He urged, “not to stop digital innovation, but to guide it,” and to “raise our voices in defence of human beings, so that these tools can truly be integrated as our allies.”

Media companies, Pope Leo insisted, must not let algorithms override their professional values: “Public trust is earned through accuracy and transparency, not by chasing after any kind of engagement.”

He called for clear labelling of AI-generated material and protection of authorship and copyright, emphasising, “Information is a public good... not based on opacity, but on transparency of sources, inclusion of stakeholders and high standards of quality.”

He concluded: “We need faces and voices to represent people again. We need to cherish the gift of communication as the deepest truth of humanity, to which all technological innovation should be oriented.”

Chancery Notice

I. PLENARY INDULGENCES FOR THE SPECIAL JUBILEE YEAR OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

To commemorate the Eighth Centenary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Leo XIV has proclaimed a *Special Jubilee Year of St. Francis of Assisi* (10 January 2026 – 10 January 2027). In conformity with the will of the Supreme Pontiff, the Apostolic Penitentiary has issued a *Decree* granting a plenary indulgence to the faithful (also applicable in the form of suffrage for the souls in Purgatory) who, during the Special Jubilee Year, fulfil the basic conditions laid down under Sections A and B below:

A. Basic Conditions:

A spirit detached from any sin, sacramental confession (within three weeks either before or after the performance of one of the works listed under Section B), Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the Pope's intentions (may be satisfied by reciting one *Our Father* and one *Hail Mary*).

B. Performance of one of the following works:

Pilgrimages:

Pilgrimage to a designated place and there devoutly following the Jubilee rites or spending at least a suitable period of time in pious meditation and, in imitation of St. Francis, praying to God so as to arouse in one's own heart sentiments of Christian charity towards one's neighbours and an authentic desire for harmony and peace among peoples, and concluding with the *Our Father*, the *Credo* and invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare and all the saints of the Franciscan Family.

1.1 Local Franciscan (OFM) conventual churches or chapels:

St. Bonaventure Church (89 Po Kong Village Road, Tsz Wan Shan, Kowloon)
Franciscan House (133 Waterloo Road, Kowloon)
Prayer room at “La Verna” (99 Lai Chi Kok Road, Kowloon)
Chapel at the convent of Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels (MNDA) (3-6 Prospect Place, Bonham Road, Hong Kong)
Chapel at the convent of Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) (104 Boundary Street, Kowloon)
Chapel at the convent of Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows (OSF) (27-29 Man Lai Road, Shatin, New Territories)
Chapel at the convent of Order of St. Clare (OSC) (Yung Shue Wan, Lamma Island North)

OR

1.2 Local places of worship named after St. Francis:

St. Francis of Assisi Church (58 Shek Kip Mei Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon)
St. Francis Church (11 Hang Kwong Street, Ma On Shan, New Territories)
Ss. Francis Chapel, St. Francis University (2 Chui Ling Lane, Tseung Kwan O, New Territories)

2. The faithful who for serious reasons (especially cloistered nuns and monks, the elderly, the sick, prisoners, and healthcare workers who have to provide continuous service) are unable to leave their homes, can obtain the Plenary Indulgence, provided that they are detached from any sin and intend to fulfill the basic conditions as soon as possible, if they join spiritually in the Jubilee celebrations of the Year of St. Francis, offering their prayers and the pains or sufferings of their lives to the Merciful God.

II. ASH WEDNESDAY (February 18)

As this year Ash Wednesday (February 18) falls on the second day of the Lunar New Year, the faithful are dispensed from fast and abstinence on that day in accordance with our diocesan regulation. However, they are obliged to choose for themselves some other suitable forms of penance or perform some works of charity, in keeping with the penitential spirit of the season of Lent.

To meet pastoral needs, the rite of the giving of ashes may take place during the Stations of the Cross held immediately after Ash Wednesday. In accordance with liturgical tradition, this rite should not be held on a Sunday.

III. RITE OF ELECTION

The Rite of Election of Candidates for the Sacraments of Christian Initiation is to be held, as usual, on the First Sunday of Lent (February 22). To meet pastoral needs, the Rite may be deferred to the Second Sunday of Lent (March 1).



Given at the Chancery Office,
26 January 2026.

Lawrence Lee

Rev. Lawrence LEE
Chancellor

Philippine bishop speaks out after violent anti-mining dispersal

MANILA (UCAN): Bishop Jose Elmer Mangalino of Bayombong, in the northern Philippine province of Nueva Vizcaya, condemned the violent dispersal of an anti-mining barricade and called for accountability after police forcibly removed residents opposing mining exploration in Dupax del Norte.

The January 23 operation, conducted under a preliminary injunction from Judge Paul R. Atollba Jr., resulted in seven arrests and allowed mining equipment into the area.

"Enough is enough," the bishop said, adding, "Let us now raise our voices louder and demand accountability."

Bishop Mangalino issued a statement following the action at Purok Keon, Bitnong village, where authorities dismantled physical and human barricades that residents had maintained since September 2025 to block the exploration activities of the Woggle Mining Corporation.

The bishop said the events left many with "a mix of emotions—of compassion, discouragement,



Residents and environmental advocates gather behind a banner opposing mining in Dupax del Norte, Nueva Vizcaya, as police stand in front during a protest against the Woggle Corporation's exploration activities on January 23. Photo: Mark Saludes/LiCAS News

anger, and also questions."

He described protesters as farmers and residents defending

their land and livelihood.

"It is painful to see the suffering of our brothers and sisters at

the barricade—simple citizens and farmers who only want to defend their life and livelihood, their land," he said.

He found it disheartening that residents, after months of hardship at the barricade, were further harmed by recent events.

Bishop Mangalino criticised what he described as the lack of response from authorities, saying that despite repeated appeals to those in power and petitions before the courts, residents were met with "silence, indifference, and favouritism toward [the] Woggle Mining Corporation."

The bishop questioned whether police acted impartially during the operation and urged them to provide "an honest assessment" of the incident. He pressed regulators to address alleged irregularities in the mining permit, demanding transparency in their actions.

In a direct appeal, Bishop Mangalino said he was praying for Atollba, the judge who issued the injunction in favour of the mining company.

"We pray that your heart and mind may be enlightened so that you may be an instrument not only of human justice but even more of God's justice," he said, adding that judicial authority is "only entrusted by God" and should be exercised for "true justice for the oppressed."

Nueva Vizcaya, in northern Luzon's Caraballo and Sierra Madre ranges, has long faced mining-related conflict. Local

farming communities have raised concerns about water security, land stability, and food production.

Community groups draw parallels with earlier disputes in Kasibu and Quezon, where large-scale mining triggered protests, court cases, and environmental damage claims.

The Woggle Mining Corporation, exploring in Bitnong, is reportedly affiliated with British mining firm Metals Exploration Plc.

Human rights and environmental groups said the arrests following the injunction raise serious legal concerns.

Ryan Roset, senior legal fellow of the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Centre, said the cases filed by Woggle constitute "a clear Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation against environmental human rights defenders exercising their constitutionally guaranteed rights."

The Alyansa Tigil Mina group condemned what it described as excessive police force during the dismantling of the barricade, citing reports of a large police deployment to clear residents opposing Woggle's entry.

Human rights groups Karapatan [rights] and Hustisya [justice] also condemned the arrests and called for the immediate release of the seven protesters, saying they were punished for peaceful resistance.

Environmental coalition, Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, protested outside the Department of Environment and Natural Resources [DENR] in Quezon City, on January 23, denouncing the agency's complicity in Dupax del Norte mining.

"This barricade is not illegal—it is a people's defense against plunder, destruction, and dispossession," said Jonila Castro of Kalikasan.

Castro called it "a clear case of state-backed corporate plunder," stating DENR's decisions had immediate consequences for communities defending land and livelihood.

Kalikasan said the court order reflected a broader pattern of harassment against communities opposing mining, linked to the Marcos Jr. administration's push for extractive projects.

Bishop Mangalino urged residents to remain steadfast: "Even if our barricade has been dismantled, what we are fighting for has not."

Philippine bishops back jailing of corrupt officials, expand monitoring of government projects

MANILA (RVA NEWS): In response to growing public frustration over governance and corruption, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines [CBCP] expressed support for jailing corrupt officials. Church leaders also announced plans to expand their involvement in monitoring government projects.

Speaking on January 26 at a press conference during the 131st CBCP Plenary Assembly, Bishop Gerardo Alminaza, head of the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Social Action, Justice, and Peace, said advocacy on good governance would continue and broaden, going beyond existing partnerships.

Bishop Alminaza recalled that under his predecessor, Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo, the commission entered into a memorandum of cooperation with the Department of Public Works and Highways [DPWH], which oversees infrastructure development. It also partnered with several local government units to help monitor the implementation of infrastructure projects.

"In my term, we would like to expand that not just with DPWH

but also with other agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Department of Health, and the Department of Education," the bishop said.

He emphasised that bishops and clergy are not the only ones driving Church engagement. Ordinary Filipinos' lived experiences also shape and motivate their involvement.

"The grievances are not limited to bishops and priests. Many people share them, and Filipinos deeply feel the country's present situation," he said.

In a separate statement, Bishop Bagaforo expressed strong support for calls to hold corrupt officials accountable. Now chairperson of the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Inter-Religious Dialogue, he said imprisonment was an appropriate consequence.

"The Church stands with the call of the majority to jail corrupt officials," Bishop Bagaforo said, adding that political dynasties should also be dismantled.

"And political dynasties should be dismantled," he stressed.

Meanwhile, CBCP president, Archbishop Gilbert Garcera, framed corruption as a moral issue rooted in conscience, underscoring the need for personal and societal conversion alongside legal and institutional reforms.

"First of all, the primacy of conscience is essential," Archbishop Garcera remarked. He emphasised that, without moral awareness, statements and policies remain ineffective.

The archbishop explained that the Church continues to pray for individuals' "conversion of the heart"—be they political leaders or ordinary citizens—so they may act with moral responsibility and openness to the Holy Spirit.

He added that genuine reform requires not only accountability mechanisms but also inner transformation, which he linked to the Church's call for synodality, or collective discernment.

The statements came as the CBCP plenary assembly gathered bishops from across the country to discuss pastoral priorities, social concerns, and the Church's role in public life amid ongoing debates on corruption, governance, and political reform.



Bishop Sam blesses a statue of Carlo Acutis at the Cathedral of St. Columbanus in Kachin State. Photo credit: LiCAS News/Diocese of Myitkyina

Diocese of Myitkyina inaugurates Myanmar's first Carlo Acutis statue

MYITKYINA (LICAS NEWS): The Diocese of Myitkyina, in Myanmar's conflict-hit Kachin State, has unveiled the country's first statue of Carlo Acutis. The young saint is presented as a model of faith for youth growing up amidst war and societal upheaval.

The statue was installed at the Cathedral of St. Columbanus and unveiled during celebrations marking the 10th anniversary of priestly ordination, as well as the first anniversary of Bishop John La Sam's episcopacy in Myitkyina, according to a report by *Fides*.

"The intention behind the statue is that young people can learn from Carlo Acutis how to bear witness to their faith in their lives, even in times of trial, especially during this difficult time the nation is experiencing," said Father John Aung Htoi, a priest of the diocese.

"It is also intended to highlight that young people in Myanmar can draw inspiration from Acutis to live their faith through the internet and social media," he added.

Father Htoi said Acutis provides an example of Christian witness for young people facing the pressures of life in a country torn apart by armed conflict.

"Young Burmese face many social and moral threats: drugs, violence, family disintegration, crime, and the use of social media in a context lacking legal protections," he said.

"Therefore, they are frightened

and seek points of reference, such as the teachings of the Church. They need to trust institutions like the Catholic Church, which has solid foundations and encourages them to build their lives on the rock that is Christ himself," he added.

'...young people can learn from Carlo Acutis how to bear witness to their faith in their lives...'

Father Htoi said Catholic communities in Myitkyina and other dioceses continue to support youth outreach despite ongoing instability, organising youth camps, faith formation initiatives, and educational programmes that accompany young people in their growth.

He added that young people in Myanmar need understanding, guidance, and trust. "Young people are a vital resource for the future, and therefore we must care for them," he said.

Young people are among the most vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas, with many living on the streets, orphaned, or lacking family protection. This places them at risk of becoming a "lost generation".

In northern Myanmar, the Archdiocese of Mandalay has responded through the Don

Bosco Youth Centre, founded in 2014, which shelters around 60 adolescents and young people from difficult backgrounds, many of whom are orphans or street children.

Salesian missionaries at the centre provide shelter, food, accommodation, schooling, healthcare, and education, along with sports, music, and cultural activities rooted in the Salesian charism.

Myanmar has remained in turmoil since the military coup in 2021, which ended nearly a decade of democratic transition. *Fides* reported that thousands of young people initially joined peaceful protests before later taking up arms with the People's Defence Forces and ethnic minority groups.

The enforcement of a conscription law in 2024 further deepened the crisis, with 60,000 young men forcibly recruited and sent to the front lines. Nearly 100,000 young people have since gone into hiding or fled abroad, particularly to Thailand.

Young people aged 15 to 35 make up 33 per cent of Myanmar's population of about 60 million, with a median age of 27.

While the 2021 coup abruptly ended a period of expanded freedoms, it also intensified political awareness among young people striving to rebuild the country based on the values of peace, justice, democracy, dialogue, and unity.

Indonesia's Christian Churches hold joint Week of Prayer service



Church leaders and local officials with fruit tree seedlings during a joint ecumenical service marking the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 in Sleman, Yogyakarta.

Photo: LiCAS News/Archdiocese of Semarang

YOGYAKARTA (LICAS NEWS): Christian Churches in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, marked the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 with a joint ecumenical worship service that highlighted both unity across denominations and the diversity of traditions.

The service on January 16, which took place at St. John the Evangelist Church in Karangkepuh, Pandowoharjo, Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta, was jointly organised by Gereja Kristen Jawa Medari, Gereja Kerasulan Baru Pandowoharjo, and Gereja Katolik St. Yohanes Paulus II Brayut.

The 2026 theme, "One Body and One Spirit, as You Were Called to the One Hope That Belongs to Your Call", draws on the Pauline image of the Church as the Body of Christ, emphasising unity amid diversity that transcends boundaries of geography, nationality, ethnicity, and tradition.

In his reflection, Father Benedictus Hanjar Krisnawan, parish priest of St. John Paul II Parish in Brayut, likened the Church to a human body, which moves under a single command.

He said Jesus Christ reigns within the life of the Christian Churches, animating faith through the Spirit and guiding believers to take part in actions rooted in God's saving love.

Romulus Dwijo Maruta, SE, district evangelist of GKBI Yogyakarta, underscored that the love of Jesus Christ must be central to every Christian action.

He said unity in one body and one Spirit, found in Jesus Christ, calls Christians to become agents of reconciliation in families and communities, while nurturing humble relationships with God and with others.

Reverend Sat Herry Suchahyo, M.Si, of GKJ Jatimulyo Yogyakarta, said the relationship between believers and God forms an inseparable organic unity, with Jesus Christ as its centre.

He said differences within the

He said unity in one body and one Spirit, found in Jesus Christ, calls Christians to become agents of reconciliation in families and communities...

body of the faithful should be valued as a richness, adding that the Week of Prayer service provides a space to celebrate diversity united in the Spirit of God.

Local officials also attended the service. Dr. Rasyid Ratnadi Sosiawan, M.Si, Panewu of Kapanewon Sleman, said the atmosphere of calm fostered by the gathering contributes to peace and comfort for the people of Pandowoharjo village and the wider Sleman community. He said the service would be a blessing for all who took part.

Activities for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in the West Yogyakarta Vicariate were held in several locations. Father Iswahyudi of the Commission for Interreligious Relations and Beliefs expressed gratitude to the local government for its presence and appreciation for the work of the organising committee.

As part of the service, organisers distributed fruit tree seedlings to representatives of St. John Paul II Church Brayut, GKJ Mancasan region, and GKBI Pandowoharjo as a sign of the Spirit's presence. The event concluded with a fellowship gathering.

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Protecting the environment means protecting our lives

Father Shay Cullen,
Preda.org

The massive landslide at a landfill facility in Binaliw village, Cebu City, the Philippines, on January 8, left at least 22 people dead and 18 others injured as of January 15 [*Sunday Examiner*, January 18]. More are still missing. It could have been prevented if there was greater respect for human life, the environment, and the implementation of the rule of law in the Philippines.

There are excellent laws in place to protect nature and preserve forests and seas. However, our once-beautiful environment is being destroyed by corruption, irresponsibility, and neglect, which allow these laws to be flouted and ignored.

One example is the enormous level of corruption and maleficence uncovered during the investigation into fraudulent flood control projects. The accumulation of rubbish and human waste, dumped in both legal and illegal sites, is polluting—and even destroying—the environment and our communities. Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, is seldom implemented or obeyed. People suffer and die as a consequence.

A workers' rights group said the death of so many workers in the Binaliw landfill was a crime against them. Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos, chairperson of Church People-Workers Solidarity [CWS], said the



Photo: Facebook page of Proud Bisaya Bai

landslide was not an accident, but was, "in truth, a crime born of greed, neglect, and the systematic violation of workers' rights."

The mountain of rubbish, said to be about 35 metres—or 20 storeys—high, collapsed on the 50 or so people working there, burying them. Some were pulled out alive; others died horribly beneath the debris.

Many were working inside adjacent buildings when the tragedy struck.

The landslide demolished the buildings and trapped the workers inside.

The waste management company operating the landfill is Prime Integrated Waste Solutions Inc. (PWS). According to its website, the site receives about 1,000 tonnes of solid waste daily from Cebu City and surrounding areas.

The Cebu City Council declared January 16 a day of mourning for the victims. Following the incident, a cease-and-desist order was issued against the landfill operator, and a state of calamity was declared in Cebu City to manage the waste crisis.

The CWS has called for justice for the affected workers, saying they were "compelled to work under dangerous and inhumane conditions—conditions that should never have been allowed and that ultimately cost them their lives."

Bishop Alminaza stood with the CWS, demanding accountability from both the company and government that failed to monitor the site and assess the dangerous condition after heavy rains and an earthquake in September made the garbage dump dangerous and unstable.

around the country increased by 84 per cent year on year. Meanwhile, legal landfill sites grew by 14.7 per cent, bringing the total to 343.

LGUs cannot cope with the growing volume of rubbish being generated, some of which is hazardous.

The region with the most serious concentration of hazardous industrial waste as of 2024 is Region 4A, or Calabarzon [Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon]. It accounted for about 43 per cent of the country's total.

Some of the illegal dumpsites on private property are located in Arenda, on the north shore of Laguna de Bay, as well as in Nosara Spring.

In Manila Bay, Baseco Beach is constantly polluted with plastic despite the ongoing heroic efforts of the "Baseco Beach Warriors," who hold regular clean-up operations and pick up hundreds of bags of rubbish every week.

This situation will only get worse everywhere unless there is strict enforcement of the rule of law and a complete change in the minds and hearts of the people—to love their environment and to clean, recycle, and segregate rubbish for organised municipal collection.

A World Bank study predicted that by 2025, the nation's waste generation would be 77,776 tonnes a day, or close to 28.39 million tonnes a year, considering the country's population growth—particularly in urban areas.

The most recent National Waste Analysis and Characterisation Study found that 56.7 per cent of municipal solid waste was generated from residential sources. A further 27.1 per cent came from commercial establishments. The industrial and manufacturing sectors contribute the remaining 12.1 per cent and 4.1 per cent, respectively.

Pope Francis linked environmental abuse to social injustice, urging humanity to hear "both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor." He described the pollution of oceans, particularly from plastic waste, as "criminal."

The late pope argued that wealthier nations have an "ecological debt" to poorer ones due to their disproportionate use of resources and export of toxic waste. He also attributed the "great majority" of global warming to human activity driven by a "predatory attitude" and the pursuit of short-term gain.

Prayer for Christian unity celebrated in Moscow

MOSCOW (FIDES): Archbishop Paolo Pezzi of the Archdiocese of the Mother of God in Moscow emphasised the importance of unity during a prayer service at the Catholic Cathedral on Tuesday, 20 January. Speaking as part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which ran from 18 to 25 January, Archbishop Pezzi stated, "Unity is not a utopia. Only facts make it possible to overcome divisions."

The event was attended by representatives of various Protestant ecclesial communities, highlighting the ecumenical nature of the celebration.

Archbishop Pezzi acknowledged the particular challenge the Week of Prayer for Chris-

tian Unity poses for Catholics. "The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a particular challenge for us Catholics, because praying for unity is only possible if we already experience this unity in Christ in some way," he said.

He elaborated on the meaning of unity, saying, "To experience it, one must experience the love of Christ, the love given by the Father that united Jesus and his disciples, as well as all those who will believe the word of the Apostles. Secondly, it is a challenge for society: when we live this love, this unity, it spreads, and when it spreads, one cannot remain indifferent; one must take a stand."

The archbishop explained

that individuals face two choices: to embrace unity, thereby building relationships and bridges, or to reject it, which can result in violence and persecution. He cautioned that such rejection occurs when people do not accept God's intervention in human affairs. Despite conflict and division, Archbishop Pezzi emphasised that unity with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit remains possible and enables believers to bear witness to love even in difficult circumstances.

On January 24, a prayer for Christian unity took place at the Catholic parish of Saints Peter and Paul, organised by and for young Christians in the Russian capital.

"As [a] Church, we affirm that work is sacred because the worker is sacred," the CWS said. The statement added that when greed and profit cause safety to be ignored, then "human dignity is gravely violated and work is reduced to exploitation."

The bishop and the group's leaders demanded that there be an "immediate, thorough, and transparent investigation."

The late Pope Francis frequently denounced the modern "throwaway culture" that treats both objects and people as disposable. He had warned that the earth was beginning to look like "an immense pile of filth" due to the vast amounts of waste generated annually.

He also criticised the wasting of food and water, saying that throwing out food is akin to stealing from the poor.

The late pope advocated for a circular production model that prioritises reusing and recycling to conserve resources for future generations.

Cebu City councillor, Joel Garganera, told the media that "a landfill or a mountain that is made of rubbish... is like a sponge: it really absorbs water. It doesn't [take] a rocket scientist to say that, eventually, [such an] incident will happen."

The Philippines is facing serious challenges in waste management that the government must address urgently. Otherwise, more tragic events will occur at the many dumpsites across the country, endangering thousands of people.

Many of these sites are, in fact, illegal and are growing faster than those approved by local government units (LGUs).

As of 2025, illegal dumpsites

Notice Board



Do you have an exercise goal?



As an overseas Filipino worker, my work can be very stressful. I keep myself healthy and fit by doing Zumba and walking. These exercises help me manage stress and maintain my energy levels. I also take vitamins to boost my immune system and help me stay strong and youthful. My health is important so I can provide for my children's future. I believe that being healthy motivates me physically, emotionally, and spiritually, and my faith in God plays a significant role in this. My motto is "Health is wealth."

— Jeneveb N. Arabia

To keep my body fit, I engage in regular exercise, focusing on simple movements to maintain my body's elasticity. I do my best to avoid unhealthy foods, but I don't take vitamins or supplements.

— Ineng Catapang



I always set exercise goals, especially concerning my health, like hula hooping. However, there are days when I feel lazy. I take vitamin C as a supplement and watch what I eat due to my high blood pressure and cholesterol levels. I occasionally use herbal supplements as well.

— Edna P. Jimenez

I don't have a specific exercise plan but practice self-discipline regarding my diet. I maintain a balanced diet, drink plenty of water, and walk every morning while praying the rosary. This routine has replaced riding to the market. I find relaxation and meditation beneficial for my soul and aim for at least seven hours of sleep at night.

— Lenore R. Magalong



As we age, we become more aware of our health. I don't often do heavy work, but I make it a point to exercise daily and stretch to keep fit. I avoid sweets and unhealthy foods, favouring vegetables, and I take some food supplements to maintain good health.

— Wenefreda Rasing

As we grow older, it's crucial to care for ourselves. With our bones becoming more fragile and diseases being more common, I pay close attention to my daily diet. I try to have a balanced diet, exercise regularly, manage stress, and maintain health check-ups. I also take supplements as advised by my doctor. Both physical and spiritual health are vital to me, and I strive to keep them balanced.

— Remilda Yong



The energising power of faith

Faith can truly fuel our passion and energy, enabling us to thrive in our work for the church. For many, the act of serving is not just a duty but a joyful expression of their beliefs. This inner drive often transforms tasks that might seem tiring into opportunities for connection and fulfillment. Whether it's volunteering for community outreach, leading a Bible study, or participating in service events, individuals find their strength and motivation in their faith.

As Philippians 4:13 states, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." This belief helps many church workers stay energized, feeling a deep sense of purpose and commitment in their contributions.

— Ella Torres



Keep our faith alive

Thank you, Lord, for the year 2025, which we ended well despite its challenges. We are grateful for the beautiful memories shared with family, loved ones, and all the people we've met. We leave behind the negative while carrying forward everything good—every lesson and realisation that made us better and stronger.

The journey was tough, but thanks be to God, we persevered. He has given us a glimpse of the new beginning in 2026, shaping our lives according to his plan, and strengthening our weaknesses as we follow the light of the star where Jesus is.

Life is filled with struggles because it does not promise ease. What matters is placing our trust in God's plans and workings. He understands our silent battles, sees our pain, and is the only one who can calm the storms within us. He brings peace to our hearts and minds when we are tired and weary.

We do not know what lies ahead and often feel anxious about tomorrow, overthinking things that haven't occurred. Fear of the unknown can rob us of our strength, peace, and happiness.

We make plans, but sometimes the unexpected happens, leaving us feeling disappointed as if our prayers were unheard. We must keep faith and trust that God works in mysterious ways. His plan is perfect and will always prevail.

We are blessed to reach 2026 and welcome what lies ahead. This is another journey to embark on with faith, hoping for something beautiful and fruitful. I believe in the abundance of God's love, which will sustain us. He will guide us by his star, protecting us from harm. We pray for the wellness of our family and loved ones, and for peace in the world.

Let us keep the spirit of the Lord alive in our lives, believing that God never fails. His love and mercy are vast and constant. Thank you, Lord, for the gift of You.

Lynn Salinas-Batoliño
The Philippines



Finding quiet moments during holidays

Are you able to find moments of spiritual life in the midst of the holidays? For me, the challenge is real. The pressure to meet expectations, attend events, and keep everything running smoothly often leaves little space for stillness.

Yet, I've learned that those small pockets of quiet are where I truly reconnect with myself and my faith. Sometimes it's as simple as waking up a few minutes early to sit in silence, breathe deeply, and set an intention for the day.

Other times, it's stepping outside for a brief walk, noticing the crisp winter air or the twinkling lights, and remembering the beauty of the present moment. They remind me that the holiday season isn't just about external celebrations or obligations—it's also about inner peace, gratitude, and spiritual renewal.

When I nurture this quiet spiritual life, I feel more grounded, more patient, and more open to truly connecting with loved ones. Ultimately, finding quiet moments during the holidays is an ongoing intention rather than a perfect achievement.

The real gift is learning to be gentle with myself when I fall short and grateful when I do find that stillness. It's in these moments of calm that the true spirit of the season shines brightest.

Ma. Chrissel Gaoat





YOUR DAILY MASS GUIDE

FEBRUARY 1 – FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY

TIME. Mass of the day, Gloria, Creed, preface of the day (green). Readings:

Zephaniah 2:3, 3:12-13;
1 Corinthians 1:26-31;
Matthew 5:1-12a.

FEBRUARY 2 – PRESENTATION OF THE LORD.

Mass of the feast, *Gloria*, Preface for the Eucharistic Prayer (white). Readings:

Malachi 3:1-4;
Luke 2:22-40.

FEBRUARY 3 – TUESDAY: FOURTH WEEK IN ORDINARY

Mass of the day (green).
2 Samuel 18:9-10, 14b, 24-25a, 31—19:3;
Mark 5:21-43.

FEBRUARY 4 – WEDNESDAY: FOURTH WEEK IN ORDINARY

Mass of the day (green). Readings:
2 Samuel 24:2, 9-17;
Mark 6:1-6.

FEBRUARY 5 – ST. AGATHA.

Mass of the memorial (green). Readings:
1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12;
Mark 6:7-13.

FEBRUARY 6 – SS. PAUL MIKI AND COMPANIONS.

Mass of the memorial (green). Readings: Sirach 47:2-13;
Mark 6:14-29.

FEBRUARY 7 – SATURDAY: FOURTH WEEK IN ORDINARY

Mass of the day (green). Readings:
1 Kings 3:4-13;
Mark 6:30-34.

Apostleship of Prayer

Themes for February 2026

For children with incurable diseases

Let us pray that children suffering from incurable diseases and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope.

Fourth Sunday of the Year

Deep in the heart of every human person there is a question that never goes away: What will truly make me happy? We search for joy in many places—success, security, recognition, comfort. Yet again and again, these promises disappoint us. Today, on the mountain of the Beatitudes, Jesus looks at us with tenderness and courage, and he dares to tell us the truth about joy.

Jesus goes up the mountain. This is not an escape from reality, but a change of perspective. Below, on the plain, life is governed by rivalry, competition, comparison, and fear—"all is vanity and a chasing after the wind." On the mountain, Jesus proposes another way of living, another scale of values, another path to happiness. And it surprises us, even shocks us.

"Blessed"—that is, happy—are the poor in spirit. Happy not those who accumulate, but those who know they are not owners, only

stewards. The poor in spirit are free people. They do not cling to the wealth or power; they do not close their hands or their hearts. They resemble God himself, who possesses everything yet keeps nothing for himself, who gives everything—even his Son. Where there is this freedom, there the kingdom of heaven is already present.

"Blessed are those who mourn." Jesus does not glorify suffering. He does not tell us to love pain. Rather, he blesses those who allow themselves to be wounded by the suffering of others. These are people who do not turn away, who do not say, "It is not my problem." They weep with those who weep, but they do not surrender to despair.

"Blessed are the meek." Meekness is not weakness but a sign of

Humanity's search for joy

being brave. It is strength without violence, hatred, aggression and revenge. They resist evil not by imitating it, but by disarming it. Jesus himself is meek: he confronts injustice, but with love, patience, and forgiveness. Such people, Jesus promises, will inherit the earth—they will help God build a truly human world.

Happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for God's justice. It is not the justice that punishes, but the justice that saves, mercy that restores and forgiveness that gives a future. It is the happiness to see every person healed, reconciled, and brought back to life.

Then come mercy, purity of heart, and peace making. Mercy is not a feeling; it is action. Purity of heart is not external perfection, but

Readings:

Zephaniah 2:3, 3:12-13;
1 Corinthians 1:26-31;
Matthew 5:1-12a

an undivided heart. Peace is not simply the absence of conflict, but the fullness of life for all. Those who live this way are called children of God—because they resemble the Father.

Finally, Jesus speaks of persecution. If we truly live the Gospel, we will disturb the logic of the world. Love threatens selfishness. Service threatens power. Mercy threatens injustice. Hence, persecution is not failure. It is a sign that we are walking with Christ.

The Beatitudes are not ideals for a few heroes, but the path for all the baptized. They are the roadmap of true joy. Let us ask the Lord for the courage to climb this mountain, to trust his word, and to believe that true happiness is in giving and loving.

● **Father Josekutty Mathew CMF**



Marami ang nagsasabi at nagtataka kung bakit ang mga Filipino daw ay masayahin sa kabila ng kahirapan at maraming pagsubok na hinaharap nito. Marahil likas sa ating disposisyon ang pagiging masaya. Marami tayong salitang ginagamit sa Pilipino para dito. Maaari tayong Masaya, Maligaya, Mapalad o Pinagpala.

Bagama't may luha minsan ang ating mata, may agam-agam sa puso, o hindi tayo suwertehin sa buhay, dahil sa ating pananampalataya sa Diyos, marami sa ating mga Pinoy ang maituturing ang sariling Pinagpala.

Kaya nga't hindi masyadong mahirap unawain para sa atin ang mga kataga ni Kristo sa ebanghelyo. Katunayan, dahil kadalasang mahirap ang ating kalagayan, ang 'Beatitudes' ay nagpapagaan ng ating kalooban.

Kahit na pala kapus at maraming

alalahanin sa buhay, pwede pa rin tayong maging mapa-lad.

May nagsabi rin na ang Beatitudes daw ay pwede ring basahing 'Be-attitudes'. Ibig sabihin, be poor in spirit, be clean of heart, be meek and merciful, be a peacemaker, be persecuted for righteousness sake, be hungry and thirsty for justice. Ito ang kaloobang malapit sa katangian ni Kristo.

Nais ng Panginoon na lahat ay maging maligaya, iba nga lang minsan ang pamamaraan ng Diyos kaysa sa pamantayan ng tao.

Kaya nga kahit hindi patas ang laban dito sa lupa, pinagpapantay niya ang lahat, pati ang mga aba, nagdadalamhati, inuusig at inaalmura ay binigyan niya ng dahilan upang magsaya.

Salamat sa Diyos kung tayo ay sagana sa yaman, ngunit alam din

Mapalad ka!

natin na ang kaligayahan ay hindi nasusukat sa karangyaan ng buhay. Mas nanaisin pa natin ang mapayapang kalooban na hindi nabibili ng ano mang salapi. May mga mas importanteng bagay na tanging Diyos lamang ang makapagbibigay sa pamamagitan ng tuwid nating pamumuhay.

May kasabihan nga, aanhin mo ang malambot na kama kung hindi ka naman makatulog. Ano ang kabuluhan kung ikaw nga ang amo, alipin ka naman ng iyong kasamaan? Nasaan ang kalayaan kung magawa mo man ang lahat ng nais mo, ngunit inuusig naman ng kasalanan ang iyong kunsiyensya?

Wala naman sigurong masama kung tayo ay may ambisyon at mithiin sa buhay, kahit na ba ito ay kayamanan, ari-arian, o

katanyagan. Huwag lang sana tayong maging bulag sa mga tunay na mas mahalaga —higit sa lahat ang maging kaaya-aya sa mata ng Maykapal.

Siya ang pinagmumulan ng lahat ng kabutihan; at sa lahat ng Kanyang maibibigay ang mas kanais-nais ay yung may halaga dito sa lupa pati rin sa buhay sa kabila.

Masaya ka ba? Subukan mong isabuhay ang turo ni Kristo sa ebanghelyo. Ipagpatuloy mo ang pagpapakabuti, at huwag mong aalisin ang ngiti sa iyong labi.

Tatanaw ka palagi sa kagandahan ng buhay, at huwag makalilimot magpasalamat sa Maylikha. Unahin mo ang Diyos, sundin mo ang Diyos, umasa ka sa Diyos, at hindi ka mabibigo sapagkat ang tunay na gantimpala ay nakalaan para sa mga nagtitiwala sa kanya.

● **Father Jay Flandez SVD**

The Immaculate Conception, celebrated on December 8, refers to the belief that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was conceived free from original sin. This doctrine took centuries to develop, with discussions and debates among theologians and Church councils. Many early Christians did not see Mary's conception as controversial until later theological disputes arose.

Early Church debates focused on key beliefs about the divinity of Jesus and Mary's role. The first ecumenical council in Nicaea (325) affirmed that Jesus and God are equals, countering the Arian belief that Jesus was merely a prophet. Later, Nestorius argued that Mary only birthed Jesus as a human, not as God, leading to another council at Ephesus (431) that defined Mary as the Mother of God.

That she was somehow tainted with sin was not questioned until 300 years later when a celebration of the Conception of Mary began in the Church. As early as 388, St. Ambrose wrote, "Mary, a virgin not only undefiled but a virgin whom grace has made inviolate, free from every stain of sin." By the eighth century, the Eastern Church was celebrating what it called the feast of the Conception of Mary by St. Anne, and over the next 100 years, it spread to the West, first to Southern Italy, then Ireland, and by the 11th century to France and other European countries. As the feast broadened in Europe, the emphasis of the

The evolution of the Immaculate Conception doctrine

FAITH ALIVE!



Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Thomas Aquinas argued against the notion of her sinless conception, citing Romans 5:12, which states that original sin affects all humanity, save Jesus.

By the 14th century, the feast of the Blessed Virgin's Conception was recognized, but it was not until the Council of Basel (1431-49) that bishops clearly stated their belief that Mary was free from original sin, although these decrees were not

binding.

Continued devotion led Pope Sixtus IV (1471-84) to approve the Conception feast, while Pope Clement XI (1700-21) extended it universally. In the 19th century, devotion intensified, particularly after Catherine Labouré's visions in 1830, leading to the creation of the Miraculous Medal.

Finally, on 8 December 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Immaculate Conception as Church dogma in *Ineffabilis Deus* (Ineffable God), affirming that Mary was conceived without sin. This was later echoed in the Lourdes apparition with St. Bernadette, who confirmed her identity as the Immaculate Conception.

devotion changed from St. Anne to an emphasis on Mary and that she was conceived without sin.

However, theologians like St.

● **D.D. Emmons**
OSV News
Abridged by SE

The Diocese of Macao celebrates 450th anniversary of establishment



The Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady of Macao. Photo: lienyuan lee, CC BY 3.0

MACAU (FIDES): The Diocese of Macao officially launched its year-long programme of celebrations and initiatives for the 450th anniversary of its establishment, originally founded in 1576, at 7.00pm on January 23.

The celebrations encompassed the nine parishes, where on Friday the *Lux Vera* [true light] was lit and a prayer vigil was held.

The Jubilee Year, proclaimed to mark the 450th anniversary of the diocese, is scheduled to conclude on 23 January 2027.

Macau has played a key role in the evangelising mission in the Far East, serving as a bridge between East and West, and as a driving force for charitable works, education, and cultural initiatives.

During the Jubilee Year, those who go on pilgrimage to the parish of St Joseph of the diocesan seminary have the opportunity to obtain a plenary indulgence granted by the Apostolic Penitentiary, provided they fulfil the traditional conditions.

In a pastoral letter from Bishop Stephen Lee Bun-sang, entitled "From Macau to the World: We Build Future with an Eye to the Past, Witness to the Heritage, Mission in the World", Bishop Lee retraced the history of the Diocese of Macau, expressing gratitude to missionaries and to all those who have preserved and transmitted the faith of the Apostles through the generations.

Macau has played a key role in the evangelising mission in the Far East, serving as a bridge between East and West...

Bishop Lee wrote, "Pope Gregory XIII promulgated the Papal Bull that officially established the Diocese of Macao. Since then, Macau has become an important hub for evangelisation in the Far East. Countless diocesan priests, missionaries from various lands, and members of male and female religious orders and societies of apostolic life—especially those missionaries who came to the East from Portugal in the past—used Macau as a base to sow the seeds of the gospel in Mainland China, Japan, Korea, and throughout Southeast Asia, including Singapore, Malacca, and Timor-Leste."

Solemnly celebrating the 450th anniversary of the diocese, Bishop Lee emphasised, is not about "boasting past glory, but to discern the future direction in Christ."

"It is an act of memory [Anamnesis], to give thanks in memory for God's work of redemption," the bishop wrote.

Alongside the opening cere-

mony, commemorative stamps for the Jubilee were also presented on January 23.

The diocese's new landmark, the Catholic Centre, is set to open mid-year and will host two special exhibitions: "We Build Future with an Eye to the Past" and "Witness to the Heritage, Mission in the World." The "Diocesan Family Day Carnival" will be held on 28 November, and the "Walking Together, Setting Sail Anew" Youth Gathering is scheduled for December 5.

In the second quarter, a symposium entitled "Catholic Education: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" and a roundtable discussion among school principals will form part of the academic exchange programme.

Since its founding, the Diocese of Macau has venerated St Catherine of Siena and St Francis Xavier as its patron saints, affirming its missionary character, vocation for cultural exchange, and commitment to the promotion of moral virtues—qualities reflected in its motto, *Scientia et Virtus* [knowledge and virtue].

Currently, the diocese comprises nine parishes, 28 educational institutions, Caritas centres, and a publishing house responsible for communications. More than 70 priests and seminarians, together with around 130 nuns, provide pastoral service to approximately 30,000 baptised persons.

Cardinal says Ukrainian medal belongs to all Catholics, not him

(OSV NEWS): Konrad Cardinal Krajewski, papal almoner and prefect of the Dicastery for the Service of Charity, has declined a medal awarded by Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, instead urging the world's Catholics to continue helping Ukraine as the country faces a brutal winter exacerbated by relentless Russian attacks.

"In helping suffering Ukraine for the last four years, I was just doing my job," Cardinal Krajewski explained. "You can't be awarded a medal for this."

He received notice from Ukraine's president that he had been awarded a Medal of Merit.

The cardinal coordinates the Vatican's humanitarian efforts for Ukraine, distributing aid and visiting the country repeatedly to bring comfort from the Holy Father.

He said the medal should go to all Catholics who have helped Ukraine over the past four years.

Cardinal Krajewski spoke as Russian attacks continued to devastate Ukraine's infrastructure, leaving cities such as Kyiv without power and forcing residents into emergency shelters. A recent offensive has caused the worst

winter energy crisis since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

Recent Vatican humanitarian convoys have sent medicine and other vital supplies to Ukraine.

On January 21, Vatican News appealed for donations of warm clothing, blankets, heating equipment, and high-energy food for Ukrainians enduring freezing conditions.

Cardinal Krajewski described the bombardment of infrastructure during freezing temperatures as "genocide," highlighting the deadly risk for those left without power.

The cardinal echoed the words of Zelenskyy, who said January 22 in Davos, Switzerland, that Europe's response to the war is slow, fragmented and inadequate.

Cardinal Krajewski appealed to Catholics to help Ukraine and remain steadfast in assisting the invaded nation "even though you're tired. Because like Jesus asked us to forgive 77 times, we need to help 77 times if needed, this is our duty," he said.

"For me, the greatest joy is that all those humanitarian trucks that left Santa Sofia reached Ukraine safely," the cardinal said.

First public session for beatification cause of Father Gaetano

MACAU (SE): The first public session for the Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of Salesian Father Gaetano Nicosia, was held on January 17 at the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows, Ka Ho, Coloane, Macau. Bishop Stephen Lee presided, outlining the process towards Father Gaetano's beatification, *O'Clarim* reported on January 23.

This event invited the faithful to submit information and testimonies to enrich understanding of Father Gaetano's life and legacy.

After a request from the postulator general, Father Pierluigi Cameroni SDB, on 24 January 2024, and subsequent approval to transfer jurisdiction from Hong Kong to Macau—with agreement from neighbouring bishops and the Holy See's Nihil Obstat on 21 May 2025—Bishop Lee issued an edict announcing the intention to open the Cause. The vice-postulator is Father Gabriel Cruz, SDB.

The edict invited information supporting or challenging the reputation for holiness of the Servant of God. Copies of the edict were also sent to the Diocese of Hong Kong, the Diocese of Catania and the Patriarchate of Lisbon, *O'Clarim* reported.

Bishop Lee officially announced the opening of the Cause for the Beatification and Canonisation of the Servant of God, Gaetano Nicosia on 16 July 2025.

Born on 3 April 1915 in San Giovanni la Punta, Archdiocese of Catania, Italy, Father Nicosia became a missionary to China in 1935 and professed as a Salesian in Hong Kong in 1937. Ordained in Macau in 1946, he dedicated his life over eight decades to educating youth and caring for the marginalised in Macau and Hong Kong.

From 1963 until he incurred a serious injury at the end of 2010, he ministered at the Hansenian Village near Ká-Hó, later widening his service to include the families of former patients both in Hong Kong and in Macau.

In 2010, after his injury, Father Nicosia was transferred to Hong Kong, where the Little Sisters of the Poor cared for him at St Mary's Home until his death on 6 November 2017 at age 102.

Everyone can be a good Samaritan, pope says in message for World Day of the Sick

VATICAN (CNS): People of faith and goodwill need to take time to acknowledge the needs and suffering of those around them and be moved by love and compassion to offer others concrete help, Pope Leo XIV said.

To love one's neighbour—whom Jesus identifies as anyone who has need of us—is within everyone's reach, he said in his message for the 34th World Day of the Sick, observed by the Church February 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

"The pain that moves us to compassion is not the pain of a stranger; it is the pain of a member of our own body, to whom Christ, our head, commands us attend, for the good of all," the pope wrote in the message released on January 20.

The theme chosen for the 2026 observance is inspired by the parable of the good Samaritan and Pope Francis' encyclical on human fraternity, *Fratelli Tutti*.

Titled, "The compassion of the Samaritan: Loving by bearing the pain of the other," the



message focuses on the importance of encountering and listening to others, being moved by compassion, and loving God through concrete action in solidarity with others.

While traditionally addressed to Catholic healthcare and pastoral workers, this year's message is offered to everyone, Michael Cardinal Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, explained at a Vatican news conference to present the message on January 20.

The message is offered to everyone because "we're one body,

one humanity of brothers and sisters, and when someone's sick and suffering, all the other categories—which tend to divide—fade away into insignificance," the cardinal said.

Asked to comment about how people in the United States should best respond when witnessing violence toward immigrants, Cardinal Czerny said, "I don't know what to say about the larger picture," but he said it would be helpful to focus on "the underview" or what should or is happening on the ground.

"There are many situations in which the individual Christian,

the individual citizen, can extend their hand or lend their support. And that's extremely important," he said. "I suppose we could all hope that those many gestures, many Samaritan gestures, can also translate into better politics."

The Catholic "struggle for justice," he said, gets "its real depth and its real meaning" from daily lived experience helping real people.

Advocacy work, for example, should "evolve out of real experience," he said. "When, let's say, your visits to the sick reveal, for example, the injustice of inaccessibility to health care, well then you take it up as an issue, but on the basis of your lived—and indeed pastoral and Christian—experience."

The good Samaritan shows that "we are all in a position to respond" to anyone in need, he said. "And the mystery, which you can discover whether you are a Christian or not, is that by responding, in a sense, your own suffering is also addressed."

He added, "Since the major suffering for so many today,

young and not so young, is loneliness and hopelessness, by worrying about it less and reaching out to someone who needs you, you will discover that there's more life than you imagined."

In his message, Pope Leo said, "To serve one's neighbour is to love God through deeds."

In fact, the "true meaning of loving ourselves," he wrote, involves "setting aside any attempt to base our self-esteem or sense of dignity on worldly stereotypes—such as success, career, status or family background—and recovering our proper place before God and neighbour."

Pope Leo wrote, "I genuinely hope that our Christian lifestyle will always reflect this fraternal, 'Samaritan' spirit—one that is welcoming, courageous, committed and supportive, rooted in our union with God and our faith in Jesus Christ."

The pope wrote, "Enkindled by this divine love, we will surely be able to give of ourselves for the good of all who suffer, especially our brothers and sisters who are sick, elderly or afflicted."

Our journey from Lent to Easter

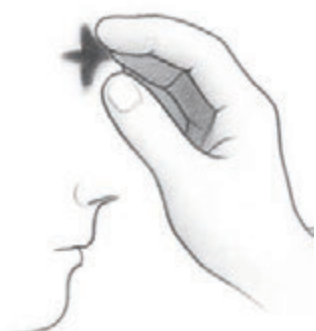
"Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15)

First Round

Date : 15 March 2026 (Sunday)
 Time : 2 pm to 5 pm
 Venue : St. Ignatius Chapel,
 Wah Yan College (Kowloon)
 Program : Spiritual talk
 Confession/Personal recollection
 Sunday Mass
 Quota : 400 people
 Language : English
 QR Code :

Second Round

Date : 22 March 2026 (Sunday)
 Time : 2 pm to 5:30 pm
 Venue : Holy Spirit Seminary,
 6 Welfare Road, Wong Chuk Hang
 Program : Guided tour
 Spiritual talk
 Confession/Personal recollection
 Sunday Mass
 Quota : 100 people
 Language : English
 QR Code :



Registration deadline:
8 March 2026

Free admission,
offerings are welcome



Organized by the Diocesan English Pastoral Ministry Team
 Inquiry: depm@catholic.org.hk