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tel: 2522 0487 • fax: 2521 3095

Faith and friendship shine at Fun-Day for refugees and migrants

HONG KONG (SE): The Commission for Diocesan Pastoral Care for Displaced People hosted a joyful Fun Day on July 26 at Wah Yan College, Kowloon, bringing together migrants, refugees, and local supporters for a day of celebration and community building. The event welcomed around 400 participants and was made possible by the efforts of nearly 300 volunteers from Wah Yan College and other partner organisations.

Cardinal Stephen Chow, S.J., officiated at the opening of the event, saying, "This is a celebration of our common humanity and the importance of unity among all people, including young people and children."

In interviews with the *Kung Kao Po* and the *Sunday Examiner*, Cardinal Stephen highlighted the Church's mission to care for those facing hardship in Hong Kong. He called for greater respect and support for all individuals, regardless of background, and voiced particular concern for the educational needs of children from asylum-seeking and refugee families.

The cardinal pledged his support for connecting these youth with opportunities through institutions like St. Francis University and Caritas services.

Good Shepherd Sister Corazon Demetillo, who leads the Pastoral Care group, warmly welcomed attendees and emphasised the message that "we are one family" within the diocese. She thanked representatives from various organisations for their solidarity and expressed deep gratitude to the cardinal, who established the group in November 2023 to serve marginalised asylum seekers and refugees. She noted that the initiative draws inspiration from Pope Francis's call for inclusiveness, dialogue, and unity across diverse communities, as highlighted during the Synod on Synodality.



Cardinal Stephen and Sister Demetillo with the organisers and performers of the day, together with Father Franco Mella, Sister Esther Warioba and Vincent Copperfield.

Cardinal Stephen and Sister Demetillo also joined in a heartfelt performance by the Filipino Migrants Choir, which sang "Welcome to the Family," adding a joyful spirit to the day.

The entertainment programme featured a captivating magic show by Vincent Copperfield, delighting children and adults alike while subtly reinforcing positive Catholic values.

Musical and cultural performances continued with contributions from Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions [PIME] Father Franco Mella, the Right of Abode Community, and Maryknoll Sister Esther Warioba, who shared the beauty of African culture through vibrant songs and hymns of hope.

Students from Caritas Tuen Mun Marden Foundation Secondary School impressed the crowd with singing and a modern dance routine, while the African Union Chorale enriched the day with their cultural presentations.

Throughout the day, a range of interactive activities kept participants engaged. Guests enjoyed face painting, arts and crafts, Chinese calligraphy, ball games, and fitness sessions. Popcorn stands

and a calming "mellow booth" provided refreshments and relaxation.

Looking ahead, the group announced plans for a talent show in October that will highlight music, sewing, and cooking

skills among the migrant and refugee community.

The Pastoral Care group operates under the Diocesan Commission for Pastoral Care to Migrant Workers. It brings together representatives from various Church

and charitable organizations, including MercyHK Centre, the Right of Abode Community, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, PIME missionaries, the Maryknoll Sisters, the Indonesian chaplaincy, and Peduli Kasih Hong Kong. Their shared mission is to raise awareness of the challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees, challenge misconceptions, and advocate for their inclusion in society.

In its two-year mission plan, drafted in March this year, the group prioritises stronger collaboration among member centres to enhance resource sharing and service delivery. It also aims to support displaced families through educational talks, skills training, and guidance on schooling opportunities.

The group continues to expand its local and international networks and recently welcomed the Missionaries of Charity as a new partner in this growing initiative.

Pope to young people: Share Christ's Good News, not just photos and memories from Jubilee

VATICAN (CNS): Let the Jubilee of Youth be more than an event for making memories and sharing pictures; be sure to encounter Christ and share the Good News, Pope Leo XIV told a group of young people on July 28.

"I would like everything you experience during these days to be cherished in your hearts forever, but don't keep it just for yourselves," he told the group from Peru during an audience at the Vatican at the start of the week-long Jubilee and the day Peru commemorates its independence from Spanish colonial rule.

He welcomed them to Rome, where they came as "pilgrims of hope," and he recognised the sacrifice and hard work of their families and communities that had made the journey possible.

'I would like everything you experience during these days to be cherished...'

"We must learn to share," he said. "Please, don't let all of this remain just a memory, just some nice photos, just something from the past."

Pope Leo asked that when they return home after the jubilee celebrations, they share "the joy and strength of the gospel, with the Good News of Jesus Christ."

Each person by himself or herself is small, "but we are not alone; the Lord has wanted us

to be part of a large family, the family of the Church," he said, so that, like clusters of grapes on the vine, "we can grow and bear fruit, aided by the Lord's grace."

During this joyful and important event for young people from around the world, he said, "all of you will have the beautiful experience of feeling part of the people of God, part of the universal Church, which encompasses and embraces the whole earth, without distinction of race, language or nation."

The pope said, "Love and serve freely, in everyday life, in small things, in hidden ways, because you have experienced the joy of being loved first, and because you have received everything freely from God our Father."

Chancery Notice

I. APPOINTMENTS AND TRANSFERS

Cardinal Stephen CHOW, S.J., has approved the following appointments and transfers—

(1) *Effective 1 September 2025*

Rev. Paul MENG Wei-jun, SVD, ceases to be Assistant Parish Priest in Rosary Parish, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, and is to be appointed Assistant Parish Priest in St. Jude's Parish, North Point, Hong Kong.

Rev. Arjay VENUS, SVD, ceases to be Assistant Parish Priest in Visitation Parish, Lantau Island North, Tung Chung & Discovery Bay, New Territories; he will be given a new assignment by his own Superior.

(2) *Effective 1 October 2025*

Rev. Andrew WANG Shou-zhao, SVD, is to be appointed Assistant Parish Priest in St. Jerome's Parish, Tin Shui Wai, New Territories.

Rev. Joachim LI Yong-xin, SVD, ceases to be Assistant Parish Priest in Cathedral Parish, Central District and Mid-Levels, Hong Kong, and is to be appointed Assistant Parish Priest in St. Joseph's Parish, Fanling, New Territories.

(3) *Effective 15 October 2025*

Rev. Natalius SURYANTO, SVD, ceases to be Assistant Parish Priest in Holy Family Parish, Choi Hung Estate, Choi Wan Estate, Shun Lee, Shun On, Shun Chi Court, Kowloon, and is to be appointed Assistant Parish Priest in Visitation Parish, Lantau Island North, Tung Chung & Discovery Bay, New Territories.

II. DIOCESAN COMMITTEE FOR BIOETHICS

Cardinal Stephen CHOW, S.J., has appointed/reappointed the following to be committee members for a two-year term, effective 1 September 2025 retroactively:

Dr. Daniel WONG Kei-yan, <i>Chairperson</i>	Ms. Vanessa CHUNG Ling-wai
Rev. Robert NG, SJ, <i>Ecclesiastical Adviser</i>	Dr. KU Kwok-hung
Professor Rosie YOUNG, <i>Medical Adviser</i>	Ms. Josephine LO Wai-ling
Mr. Erik SHUM Sze-man, <i>Legal Adviser</i>	Dr. Michael POON Chi-ming
Rev. Dominic LUI Chi-man	Mr. TONG Kar-wai
Dr. Peter AU-YEUNG Kar-kit	Dr. Kenneth TSANG Hing-lim
Ms. Fiona CHAN Shuk-woon	Dr. Jonas YEUNG Hon-ming
Ms. Gloria CHEUNG Suk-ye	Dr. Robert YUEN Kar-ngai
Dr. CHONG King-ye	Ms. YUEN Suk-chong

III. DIOCESAN YOUTH COMMISSION

Cardinal Stephen CHOW, S.J., has appointed/reappointed the following to be Commission members for a two-year term, effective 1 September 2025:

Rev. Fructuoso LÓPEZ MARTIN, MG, <i>Chairperson</i>	Ms. Daphne HO
Rev. Anthonius Reynolds BALUBUN, SVD	Mr. Peter KWOK Yun-shan
Rev. Martin IP	Ms. LEE Tak-man
Rev. Daniel Siwoo KIM, MM	Miss Vickie POON Wai-kiu
Br. CHANG Tai-yin	Miss Phyllis TANG Man-yin
Mr. CHAN Sin-fo	Ms. Shirley TSO Suet-lin
Mr. Dave CHEN	Mr. Stephen Anthony WONG Gwan-lung
Mr. CHENG Man-wai	
Ms. Amelia CHENG Mei-tak	Miss WONG Man-ying

IV. BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY OF HONG KONG

Cardinal Stephen CHOW, S.J., has reappointed the following to be members of the Board of Directors for a two-year term, effective 15 September 2025:

Rev. Peter CHOY, VG, *Chairman*
 Rev. Joseph LIU
 Ms. LAM Mo-han
 Mr. LAM Seung-wan
 Dr. LEUNG Mei-yung
 Dr. MAN Tim-on
 Prof. TAM Wai-lun
 Mr. Raymond TANG Wai-ming

Given at the Chancery Office,
28 July 2025.



Lawrence Lee
 Rev. Lawrence LEE
 Chancellor



St. Paul sister returns to the Lord

HONG KONG (SE): Sister Rosa Seto Yuen Mi of the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres passed away peacefully at St. Paul's Hospital in Hong Kong on July 18. She was 68-years-old and had been in the religious life for 41 years.

Sister Seto joined the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres on 14 August 1983, making her first vows on 28 August 1986, and her perpetual vows on 28 August 1991. She subsequently worked at the Accounting Department of St. Paul's Hospital until her death, except for a short period of time working at St. Paul's Catholic Day Nursery in Tai Po.

A quiet, gentle, friendly person, Sister Seto began to suffer from illness in 2014. Over the



years, she relied on the Lord with strong faith, accepted treatment with a positive attitude, and faced the pain with an optimistic attitude.

A Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated on July 25 at Christ the King Chapel, Causeway Bay, followed by a funeral at St Michael Cemetery, Happy Valley.

The Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres kindly request your prayers for the repose of the soul of Sister Seto.

ENGLISH LESSONS

Refer local friends to Paul Stables, Oxford grad, Zoom Video or face to face near North Point MTR, P5/6, F1-13, DSE, IELTS Tel/WhatsApp: 6012 3236 tutorialfield.com.hk



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Hong Kong Catholic Church

Sunday Mass Schedule

You can obtain the Mass times and whereabouts of churches from the Hong Kong Catholic Church's website <http://www.catholic.org.hk>

Church and government collaborate on countryside conservation education

HONG KONG (SE): Over the past two years, the Diocesan Working Committee for *Following Thy Way* has partnered with the Hong Kong government to run a pilot programme on countryside conservation education. Targeting primary school students from 10 local schools, the initiative offered interactive experiences that deepened their understanding of Hong Kong's natural ecology and rich cultural heritage.

A conference to present the results of the programme was held on July 12 at The Centre. The programme, supported by the Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme and the Countryside Conservation Office, marks a significant step forward in environmental education and rural preservation.

Based in Sai Kung, the project was designed in alignment with the local primary school curriculum, incorporating elements from both humanities and science subjects. It includes indoor theoretical lessons, outdoor field explorations, and reflective sessions aimed at nurturing students' knowledge, skills, and environmental values.

Andrew Kwok Chi-keung, principal manager of the Countryside Conservation Office, expressed his appreciation for the programme's achievements. He highlighted related efforts, including the revitalisation of the Epiphany of Our Lord Chapel in Sham Chung and a plan to connect nine churches in Sai Kung through a pilgrimage trail—projects initiated in 2018 when the office was established.

"Active citizen and community participation is essential for success in countryside conservation," Kwok said, noting that the upcoming National Ecology Day on August 15 reflects the government's ongoing commitment to this cause.

Father Peter Choy Wai-man, chairperson of the Diocesan Working Committee, spoke at the event alongside project man-



Left to right: Alice Ong, Andrew Kwok, Father Choy and Janice Lo. Photo: supplied

ager, Alice Ong. He expressed gratitude to the Environment and Ecology Bureau, as well as to the Hong Kong Outdoor Wildlife Learning Association, for their collaborative support.

"They have worked closely with us over the past two years, offering professional ecological knowledge and outdoor teaching techniques," Father Choy said. "This enabled students to gain a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the countryside's natural and cultural wealth."

He added, "We hope that the programme's teaching materials and research findings will help establish countryside conservation education as a regular and systematic feature in Catholic schools."

Janice Lo, from the Hong Kong Outdoor Wildlife Learning Association, shared insights on innovative approaches to environmental education that go beyond traditional classroom methods. She identified three essential pillars of effective learning: gaining knowledge, engaging with nature, and taking proactive steps to care for the environment.

Lo elaborated on the structure of the educational approach, which includes preparation, hands-on outdoor practice, and post-activity reflection. She noted

that students benefitted from preparatory activities such as plant surveys, which fostered active observation of their surroundings, as well as reflective sessions that deepened their understanding through discussion and emotional engagement.

"This collaborative approach has encouraged a more profound connection with cultural heritage and environmental resources," she concluded.

Reflections from the cardinal

By Stephen Cardinal Chow, S.J.

Fact and Truth

When Jesus asked his disciples who did they think that he was, they gave some rather unusual replies. They could have described him as a great rabbi, a wonderful healer, or a miracle worker. These descriptions were rather 'factual' as these identities could well be perceived by those who came across Jesus, should they have the good fortune to witness him teaching, healing, or performing miracles.

However, according to the different responses relayed by the disciples, people did not see Jesus in the above categories. Jesus for them is someone with a formidable identity, such as John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or another prophet [Matthew 16:14]. In other words, they encountered Jesus at a deeper level, where he manifested himself with the identity of one of these great prophets in Jewish history. To be taken for one of these great figures must be a great honour for the recipients at Jesus' time.

However, none of these identities were 'factual' or 'truthful' about Jesus. As a matter of fact, he was not John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. But the response given by Simon Peter went even deeper than fact, much deeper than what could be perceived by the five senses, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" [Matthew 16:16]. Indeed, this 'true' identity of Jesus could not be appreciated through casual encounters or attained through some hearsay of others. It is a spiritual understanding of Simon Peter, gained through divine revelation and probably his soulful connection with Jesus.

Truth is not something to be scanned but held with appreciation through the passing of time, patience, willfulness, openness, and with love. We certainly need to be open to the truth before we can recognise it.

And with our love for truth, we can come to appreciate it. It is noteworthy that without time, patience and willfulness, truth is not likely to be grasped.

How difficult it is for us to attain truth when we mostly let ourselves be distracted by superficiality, rumours, misleading facts and partial truth? How tricky it is to hold the truth in our palms when we would rather cling to comforting lies and reinforcing our own prejudices, especially when the truth is inconvenient or far from pleasing?

It is said that we are now living in the "post-truth" era, when appeals to personal emotions and beliefs are more readily deployed to shape public opinion than objectivity, while facts are created and manipulated to suit particular agendas. With the development of artificial intelligence in leaps and bounds, the authenticity of fact becomes increasingly illusive.

The line between truth and falsity in a post-truth era appears to be deliberately blurred and misleading. A typical example is the partial truth, which is more damaging than blatant falsity. A partial truth is what appears to be true but is mixed with misleading facts or claims. It is for making the whole package appealing and convincing. And the misleading facts or claims are for leading the unsuspected further into the wicked ploys of the schemers. Ideology, though a partial truth at best, cannot be an advisable pathway leading us to the truth upheld by God.

Not all authors of partial truths are evil or malicious. Many of us have assumed that role unwittingly or even knowingly. While it is virtually impossible to secure the whole truth, we are morally responsible to adopt prudence in our pursuit of truth and being open to differences that can lead us to a greater truth.

Hence, we are responsible for continuing our sincere quest for reliable facts, listening respectfully to diverse voices, understanding with empathy the depth, discerning with balanced judgment, and being able to stand firm in our beliefs until new, credible facts urge us to review them.

Happy quests for Truth as pilgrims of hope!

+ Cardinal Stephen Chow, S.J.



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Pope welcomes young for jubilee, thanks media, renews appeal for peace



Pope Leo XIV meets with a group of young people from Peru at the Vatican July 28. He said, "I would like everything you experience during these days to be cherished in your hearts forever, but don't keep it just for yourselves," adding, "Please, don't let all of this remain just a memory, just some nice photos, just something from the past."

Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

VATICAN (CNS): "I greet with particular affection the young people from various countries who have gathered in Rome for the Jubilee of Youth, which begins tomorrow," Pope Leo XIV said in Italian, English and Spanish as he greeted all the young people who arrived in Rome for the July 28 to August 3 Jubilee of Youth, following the Angelus on July 27.

"I hope that this will be an opportunity for each of you to encounter Christ, and to be strengthened by him in your faith and in your commitment to following Christ with integrity of life," he told them in the different languages.

While half a million people were expected to be in Rome for the start of the weeklong celebration, a million people were expected to attend the outdoor closing prayer vigil and Mass in Rome's Tor Vergata neighbourhood.

Pope Leo also greeted journalists from Vatican Radio, Vatican News and *L'Osservatore Romano* who were working in a small, newly inaugurated news sta-

tion under the colonnade in the square "to be closer to the faithful and pilgrims during the Jubilee Year."

He thanked the Vatican's news outlets for their service in more than 55 languages to bring "the pope's voice to the world."

He said, "And thank you to all journalists who contribute to the communication of peace and truth."

'I hope that this will be an opportunity for each of you to encounter Christ...'

The pope also reminded Catholics that the day marked the fifth World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, dedicated to the theme, "Blessed are those who have not lost hope."

He said, "Let us not leave them alone, but instead, form a bond of love and prayer with them. Let us look to grandparents and the elderly as witnesses of hope, capable of showing the path for new generations."

After reciting the Angelus, Pope Leo appealed to leaders with power to end wars to start peace talks. He called for "negotiations aimed at securing a future of peace for all peoples, and for the rejection of anything that might jeopardize it."

The pope noted, "Eve-

ry human person possesses an inherent dignity, bestowed by God himself," adding, "I urge all parties involved in conflicts to recognise this dignity and to end every action that violates it."

Pope Leo expressed his closeness to "all those who are suffering due to conflict and violence throughout the world," particularly those in southern Syria and Gaza.

"I am following with great concern the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, where the civilian population is suffering from severe hunger and remains exposed to violence and death," he said. "I renew my heartfelt appeal for a ceasefire, the release of hostages, and the full respect of humanitarian law."

Before the Angelus, the pope reflected on the Lord's Prayer, which reminds us that "the Lord always listens to us when we pray to him."

He said, "If he sometimes responds in ways or at times that are difficult to understand, it is because he acts with wisdom and providence, which are beyond our understanding. Even in these moments, then, let us not cease to pray—and pray with confidence—for in him we will always find light and strength."

He urged the faithful, "through prayer and charity, to feel loved and to love as God loves us: with openness, discretion, mutual concern and without deceit."

EDITORIAL

SUNDAY EXAMINER

3 AUGUST 2025

Nature is speaking; are we ready to listen?

IN RECENT YEARS, Hong Kong has experienced firsthand the growing force of nature—record-breaking typhoons, flash floods, and extreme heat. These are no longer rare occurrences; they are warnings. Behind every weather alert is a deeper alarm: climate change is real, and it is accelerating.

Yet, in many parts of the world, the response remains troubling. From conspiracy theories during the Covid-19 pandemic to outright denial of climate science, we are witnessing a disturbing pattern. Powerful voices—especially from political extremes—promote the idea that humanity is innocent, that climate change is just another "natural cycle," and that shadowy powers are manipulating us for political gain. Such narratives are not only misleading; they are dangerous.

The pandemic was, in many ways, a dress rehearsal for the deeper crisis of our times: the conflict between human pride and the limits of creation. Covid-19 exposed how vulnerable we are, not only physically but socially and spiritually. It revealed how quickly fear and misinformation can spread, and how conspiracy theories—built on suspicion, denial, and false logic—can paralyse meaningful action.

Today, we're seeing these patterns play out in the issue of climate change. Some people dismiss it as a hoax, while others acknowledge the changes but refuse to accept human responsibility. Unfortunately, no matter how you look at it, the result tends to be the same: a sense of apathy, a lack of action, and a kind of moral blindness that holds us back from making positive changes.

As Christians, we cannot stand by in silence. Our faith teaches that creation is a gift from God, entrusted to us not for exploitation, but for stewardship. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us that the Earth "is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth." His words are not hyperbole; they are a cry for ecological conversion—a change not only in our actions but in our hearts.

We cannot afford to be naïve or passive. Denial, whether explicit or disguised as false optimism, does not absolve us of responsibility. It is a form of escapism that ignores the suffering of the poor, the displacement of communities, and the irreversible damage to our common home. The Church has a duty to speak out and to prepare her people—spiritually, socially, and even physically—for the challenges that lie ahead.

Preparedness is not only about emergency plans or infrastructure (though those are crucial); it is also about educating our communities, challenging consumerist habits, rethinking our economic priorities, and forming a generation that sees creation as sacred.

When the next storm arrives—and it will—what might it reveal about who we are? Will we be a community characterised by responsibility and compassion, or one that's quick to blame and deny? As people who care for God's creation, let's work toward building a different future, caring for our surroundings. This isn't just about caring for the environment. It's a vital part of the gospel's message. *jose, CMF.*

SUNDAY EXAMINER

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Address all correspondence to the editor of the Sunday Examiner.

ENGLISH LESSONS

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Catholic digital missionaries and influencers gather in Rome for first ever jubilee

ROME (SE): Hundreds of Catholic digital missionaries and influencers from around the world gathered in Rome on July 28 and 29 for the first-ever Jubilee for Digital Missionaries and Influencers. The event, organised by the Dicastery for Evangelisation in collaboration with the Dicastery for Communication, was held as part of the wider Jubilee of Youth and aimed at deepening communion, fostering mission, and sharing hope through digital platforms.

Held at the Auditorium Conciliazione, the two-day celebration brought together men and women who evangelise in the digital sphere, offering them an opportunity to reflect, pray, and celebrate as one Church without borders.

In his opening remarks, Paolo Ruffini, Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication, welcomed participants and invited them to enter into a spirit of listening and genuine encounter. He reportedly noted the joy of meeting in person, while also emphasising that true connection does not stem from the Internet itself, but from something that transcends digital networks—namely, God.

Ruffini described the Church as a network of people rather than algorithms, one that has existed long before the Internet, formed not by content or code but by persons—diverse and imperfect—united by baptism and faith.

He urged digital evangelists to reject self-promotion and superficial communication, and to root their online mission in humility and prayer.

Quoting the late Pope Francis, he invited participants to consider challenging but essential questions: how to sow hope in times of despair, how to heal division, and whether their communication remains grounded in spiritual depth or has drifted toward marketing language. He encouraged attendees to resist being swept away by the tides of digital culture and instead to “cast the net on the other side.”

Pietro Cardinal Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, also addressed the gathering. He appealed to participants to remain “connected to hope,” especially in an era marked by misinformation, division, and social isolation. He said that digital missionaries are called to offer something distinct—the light of Christ.

Cardinal Parolin was reported to have reminded participants that they are more than content creators or platform builders;



A series of talks and workshops were held at the Auditorium Conciliazione in Rome on July 28, 2025, during the Jubilee of Digital Missionaries and Catholic Influencers.

Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez

He urged digital evangelists to reject self-promotion and superficial communication, and to root their online mission in humility and prayer

they are witnesses and bridge-builders. He emphasised that Christian presence online should be defined by truth, charity, and humility, and that even a short post, if shared in faith and love, can become “a spark of grace.”

He encouraged digital missionaries to remain firmly rooted in prayer, Scripture, and the sacraments.

The programme also included reflections from Jesuit priests, Father David McCallum and Father Antonio Spadaro, who explored how the Church might respond to a digital culture shaped by algorithms and rapid communication, using the enduring wisdom of the gospel.

Workshops addressed the practical challenges and opportunities of digital evangelisation, while moments of prayer, Eucharistic adoration, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation helped build a sense of communion beyond the screen. Óscar Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga and José Cardinal Cobo Cano were

among those who led spiritual activities, and the Taizé Community animated a prayer vigil.

On July 29, participants were

scheduled to walk in pilgrimage to St. Peter's Basilica, pass through the Holy Door, and attend a Eucharistic celebra-

tion presided over by Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle. Later in the day, during a visit to the Vatican Gardens, they were expected to consecrate their mission to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was referred to by Ruffini as “God's first influencer.” This act symbolised the desire to root their digital work in humility, discernment, and love.

The Jubilee concluded with a festival of music and personal testimonies in Piazza Risorgimento. The closing celebration aimed to express the joy of diversity, unity, and mission — of sharing hope with a world in search of meaning.

Throughout the event, *Vatican News* provided live, multilingual coverage, supported by the Vatican Vox app and Vatican Radio, enabling those unable to attend in person to take part virtually.

Ruffini reminded those gathered that they were not alone, but part of a single people. He added that the ultimate mission of Catholic digital influencers is not merely to connect the world, but to make it truly human and truly Christian.

US to withdraw again from UNESCO and UN development goals

WASHINGTON (OSV NEWS): The Trump administration said on July 22 that it would withdraw the United States from the United Nations' cultural agency UNESCO effective 3 December 2026.

Mary Ellen O'Connell, a professor at Notre Dame Law School who specialises in international law and conflict resolution, expressed concern about the decision.

“Leaving UNESCO will deal another blow to the reputation of the United States as a world leader in what matters—peace, human rights, health, the environment, and now culture,” she said.

“The organisation works to protect the international community's cherished, fragile cultural heritage in all of its forms,” O'Connell explained. “How can we be against that? Cultural heritage represents humanity's greatest expressions of creativity and appreciation.”

Among the agency's most well-known work is the UNESCO World Heritage Sites programme, which recognises significant historic and cultural landmarks for protection and preservation, including Catholic sites and

cathedrals, including Vatican City and Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

Tammy Bruce, the State Department's spokesperson, said in a July 22 statement, “Continued involvement in UNESCO is not in the national interest of the United States,” alleging the agency “works to advance divisive social and cultural causes and maintains an outsized focus on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, a globalist, ideological agenda for international development at odds with our America First foreign policy.”

Pope Francis in a 2015 speech at the United Nations in New York called the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “an important sign of hope.”

“UNESCO's decision to admit the ‘State of Palestine’ as a Member State is highly problematic, contrary to US policy, and contributed to the proliferation of anti-Israel rhetoric within the organisation,” Bruce said. “Continued US participation in international organisations will focus on advancing American interests with clarity and conviction.”

The Holy Land's Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and its

pilgrimage route are among the sites in Palestine recognised by the agency. Israel, which formally departed UNESCO in 2019, is a non-member, but there are nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Israel, according to its website.

Asked about the Trump administration's objection to UNESCO's recognition of Palestine, O'Connell said, the US “is abandoning this essential work for no gain.”

She said, “Palestine will not be forced to leave the organisation, but the US will lose all the positive influence it could have as a member.”

She added, “Instead of taking this damaging step for no purpose, US foreign policy officials could be using their time to end the starvation of Palestinian children,” she said.

In a July 22 statement, Audrey Azoulay, director-general of UNESCO, said, “I deeply regret President Donald Trump's decision to once again withdraw the United States of America from UNESCO.”

Azoulay said, “However regrettable, this announcement was anticipated, and UNESCO has prepared for it.”



Demonstrators hold up a banner outside the US Supreme Court in Washington on June 27.

Photo: OSV News /Nathan Howard, Reuters

US federal court upholds block on Trump's attempt to block birthright citizenship

WASHINGTON (OSV NEWS): On July 23, the Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit a federal appeals court on dealt another blow to the execute order of US president, Donald Trump, to end the practice of birthright citizenship as part of a class-action lawsuit.

The court issued a 2-1 ruling upholding a District Court's previous temporary nationwide injunction.

"We conclude that the Executive Order is invalid because it contradicts the plain language of the Fourteenth Amendment's grant of citizenship to 'all persons born in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof,'" the ruling said.

The Supreme Court had previously limited the ability of federal judges to issue nationwide injunctions in June, but the court indicated such challenges could continue as class-action suits. The ruling may bring the issue back to the Supreme Court as the Trump administration seeks enforcement of its order.

At the time, the Supreme Court did not directly rule on the constitutionality of Trump's executive order itself. Justice Amy Coney Barrett wrote for the majority that "when a court concludes that the Executive Branch has acted unlawfully, the answer is not for the court to exceed its power, too."

If Trump's order, which is part of his administration's broader effort to implement his hard-line immigration policies, were

enforced, it would end birthright citizenship for children born in the US to parents without legal status or to temporary visa holders.

The order is among the Trump administration's immigration actions that have been met with criticism from the US bishops.

'We conclude that the Executive Order is invalid because it contradicts the plain language of the Fourteenth Amendment's grant of citizenship 'to all persons born in the United States...'

Others have criticised the order as well, calling it unconstitutional. They point to the 14th Amendment, which states, "All persons born or naturalised in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

Despite the argument against birthright citizenship that Trump made when he signed the order in January and one he has repeated since—that the US is "the only country in the world that does this"—the United States is one of at least 30 countries, including Canada and Mexico, in which the principle of *jus soli*, or "right of soil," applies.

This legal principle grants citizenship at birth without restrictions, regardless of the citizenship status of the parents. Most of those countries are located in the Americas, and scholars trace the origins of the practice to colonial times. It also has origins in English common law.

Thai Church calls for justice not militarism amid border violence

BANGKOK (LICAS NEWS): Archbishop Francis Xavier Vira Arpondarattana of Bangkok, Thailand, warned against the exploitation of nationalist sentiment and called for peace rooted in justice and human dignity as armed clashes continued along the Thailand-Cambodia border.

"The tensions at the border are a source of deep concern. As a Church, we are called to resist divisive ideologies and to build bridges of fraternity," said Archbishop Arpondarattana, who is also president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand, in an interview published by Italian Catholic news agency *Agencia Sir* on July 26.

The archbishop emphasised that the Thai Catholic Church views the current military escalation "with profound concern, interpreting it through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching, which prioritises human dignity, peace, and justice."

Thailand and Cambodia agreed to an unconditional ceasefire on July 28, the *BBC* reported, after fighting broke out on July 24 in the disputed Ta Muen Thom area, resulting in at least 33 deaths and the displacement of over 130,000 people.

Thai authorities declared martial law in eight districts as tensions over long-standing territorial disputes, including those related to the Preah Vihear temple, threaten to escalate further.

While acknowledging the historical complexities behind the conflict, the archbishop cautioned against using border disputes as tools of political distraction.

"We observe how these tensions may be manipulated to stoke nationalist sentiments, distract public attention from domestic issues, and serve the interests of specific political actors," he said.

Archbishop Arpondarattana said manipulation "hinders genuine efforts towards peaceful resolution and sustainable development, placing short-term political opportunism above the lasting well-being of the population."

The archbishop said, "Ordinary people, especially those living in border areas, are the first victims. They suffer displacement, loss of livelihoods, and constant threats of violence."

In response to the crisis, Catholic communities in the affected border areas have mobilised to deliver emergency relief, focusing



Archbishop Arpondarattana of Bangkok.

Photo: Facebook page of Catholic Church of Tbong Khmum Province

on displaced individuals and vulnerable families.

Their efforts include the distribution of shelter, food, medicine, and other essential supplies as part of the Church's immediate humanitarian priorities.

The Church's humanitarian response is being coordinated by the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees [COERR], a social service arm of the bishops' conference.

Priests, religious, and lay volunteers are "actively visiting affected communities, offering spiritual support, listening to their experiences, and bringing a presence of solidarity and hope amidst suffering."

The faithful across Thailand have been holding special Masses, prayer vigils, and rosaries to seek an end to hostilities and lasting peace, according to the archbishop.

Archbishop Arpondarattana reiterated the Church's firm stance against violence, especially against civilians, adding that "non-combatants—including women, children, and the elderly—must always be protected."

Despite current limitations in long-term planning, he said the Church is "ready to adapt its response and develop more structured and lasting programmes" if the situation deteriorates.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand also maintains strong fraternal relations with the Catholic Church in Cambodia.

"We are in regular contact with our counterparts, sharing information, concerns, and supporting each other in our respective pastoral missions," the archbishop said. "A tangible sign of this solidarity is the presence of four Thai missionaries serving in various dioceses in Cambodia."

Addressing the international community and the global Church, he issued a "fervent appeal for peace," stressing that peace "is not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of justice, respect for human dignity, and reconciliation."

He called on world leaders and faith communities alike to promote peace "through concrete actions," including "allocating resources to humanitarian aid for those affected by the conflict, promoting economic cooperation that benefits all, and investing in initiatives that build bridges of understanding and solidarity among nations and peoples."

Archbishop Arpondarattana said, "True security and prosperity are not founded on military strength, but on shared development, mutual respect, and a commitment to the common good."

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Philippine climate groups slam state of the nation address as a 'missed opportunity'

MANILA (LICAS NEWS): Environmental and climate justice groups criticised the fourth State of the Nation Address [SONA] of Philippine president, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., on July 28, calling it a "missed opportunity" that failed to confront the country's worsening climate and energy crises.

Father Edwin Gariguez, lead convenor of Protect Verde Island Passage, said, "It's disappointing to hear President Marcos peddling natural gas as a clean energy source."

The priest said fisherfolk, especially in areas of gas expansion in the country, "suffer from the destructive impacts of massive natural gas development on their livelihoods and the marine ecosystem."

Father Gariguez added that the plight of small fishing enterprises "was treated as a mere footnote," reduced to "a passing mention of fiberglass boat turn-overs" while urgent issues such as the Supreme Court ruling on municipal waters, "which fishing families bewail," were ignored.

He also criticised the absence of "any meaningful reflection on the first major environmental crisis of his administration, the 2023 oil spill in Mindoro."

The SONA centred on accomplishments and initiatives, but was notably filled with stern warnings, particularly on government infrastructure projects like flood control, indirectly highlighting his administration's shortcomings, according to the *Inquirer*.

Marcos Jr. did acknowledge the flooding caused by recent storms saying, "I clearly saw that many flood control projects were failures and collapsed, and some were just imaginary."

He called out those responsible—without naming names, saying, "Have some shame for the households that were swept away or submerged by the floods. Have some shame, especially for our children who will inherit the debts you made, while you just pocketed the money."

In pastoral letter, Pablo Virgilio Cardinal David, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, blasted corruption and called for concrete action, according to *CBCP News*.

"We are told it's climate change, yes, climate change is real, and it is devastating," he wrote. "But let us be clear: the real disaster here is corruption. The very funds meant to protect our people have been siphoned off by systems that enrich the few and endanger the many. We must name this for



Members of the Coast Guard Station Manila patrol flooded streets. Recent storms showed up the failings of flood control infrastructure. Photo: Facebook page of Coast Guard Station Manila

what it is: a sin against the poor, a betrayal of public trust, a mockery of justice."

John Leo Algo, deputy executive director of Living Laudato Si' Philippines, said the speech reflected "business-as-usual."

Algo said, "It seems he is more intent about maintaining his public image and subtly throwing jabs at his political opponents than directly addressing the grim picture that seems so obvious to everyone else."

He noted that Marcos Jr. appeared to engage in political greenwashing, pointing out that he omitted references to his administration's earlier promotion of nuclear and gas projects, focusing only on renewable energy.

Gerry Arances, convenor of the Power for People Coalition, noted that Marcos "hit the mark" in admitting high electricity costs and unreliable service but warned that "acknowledgement is pointless if the root cause of power woes—reliance on costly and unsustainable energy from fossil fuels—stays the status quo."

Arances stressed that including coal and gas in the 200 power plants targeted by Marcos Jr. for the remainder of his term would not solve the country's energy problems. He urged the government to remove barriers to the rapid development of renewable energy and ensure that such initiatives deliver direct benefits to consumers and communities.

The Philippine Movement for Climate Justice said that Marcos Jr. "placed his bets on the same failed strategy: inviting big businesses to lead the development."

It warned that this "model, reliant on private investment and dirty projects... has kept millions in the dark and driven up electricity prices."

Jaybee Garganera, national coordinator of Alyansa Tigil Mina, criticised Marcos' silence on mining. "We totally reject [Marcos Jr.] and his SONA because there is hardly any mention of planned programmes and policies concerning the environ-

ment, and destructive mining," he said.

Krishna Ariola, energy and climate programme head of the Centre for Energy, Ecology and Development, said, "President Marcos framing worsening disasters as 'new normal' sounds like an admission of the administration's lack of will to properly address the impacts brought about by the climate crisis."

The Institute for Climate and

Sustainable Cities also called for "greater urgency" in climate action. Executive director, Angelo Kairos dela Cruz, said, "These pronouncements signal that we are on the right track."

He added, "However, we underscore the need for more urgency in integrating climate action and more tangible solutions in the country's long-term development strategies."

Dela Cruz emphasised that scientific evidence shows climate impacts will continue to worsen, stressing the need to protect communities and equip them with tools and strategies to adapt.

Only prior to the SONA, Caritas Philippines pressed the Philippine president to take real action saying, Filipinos continue to suffer the impact of climate-related disasters while government action remains inadequate.

"In 2024, the president declared the climate crisis a national priority. But one year later, very little has changed. In fact, actions have often contradicted these promises."

It cited continued mining and reclamation activities, forest degradation, and the displacement of Indigenous communities. "Massive reclamation projects continue. Large-scale mining permits are still being issued. Our forests continue to vanish alarmingly," it said.

Young people from Northern Arabia at the Jubilee of Youth

AWALI (FIDES): "We are ready to join other young people from different parts of the world on this pilgrimage, full of hope in the mission of sharing Christ's love, especially with our peers. We have hope, because we know that God loves us," Father Rodel Aclan, head of the Youth Ministry of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia [AVONA], said on July 28.

Twenty-two young pilgrims, accompanied by Father Aclan and three other priests, had arrived in Rome for the July 28-August 3 Jubilee of Youth.

Bishop Aldo Berardi, the apostolic vicar of Northern Arabia, would join the delegation "during the most significant moments," Father Aclan added. "This is a moment of grace for the Church, and especially for young people, who represent the hope for a better future. It is an opportunity to share experiences with peers from different countries, to gain awareness of one's own cul-

ture and Catholic practices, and to inspire one another on the journey of faith," he emphasised.

"This celebration sends a clear message to all young Catholics and to young people throughout the world: they are important and have not been forgotten. They, too, are protagonists of the faith and of the society in which they live," he said.

Following the commencement of the Jubilee Year in December 2024 and the unveiling of the planned events for the year, Bishop Berardi assigned Father Aclan as the youth director of the vicariate, with the responsibility of preparing young people for this occasion.

Explaining how AVONA's youth ministry carries out its work, Father Aclan said: "We could divide it into two large groups. On the one hand, adolescents, sons and daughters of migrant workers from the vicariate, who attend local schools. On the other, young professionals of

various nationalities who work in the countries under our jurisdiction: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia."

He said, "Our youth ministry faces numerous challenges, one of which is the ability to meet in person and in large numbers. Space for meetings and activities is limited," adding, "Teenagers or students rely on their parents for transportation to church, so their participation in youth activities and training depends on their parents' availability. Young professionals often have to prioritise work or careers, especially because they are new to the country, resulting in very limited time for youth ministry activities."

Father Aclan said, "We trust that youth ministry will continue to grow and accompany the young people of the Vicariate. The participation of youth from this part of the world will truly inspire them to encourage and bring others of their age closer to our Mother Church."



Faithful gather at St. Joseph's Church, Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay, to celebrate the Jubilee for Families and the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly on July 26. Photo: Facebook/RVA Myanmar

Parish in Mandalay celebrates Jubilee for Families

MYANMAR (RVA NEWS): Celebrating the Jubilee for Families in conjunction with the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly on July 26, Archbishop Marco Tin Win of Mandalay presided over a solemn Mass at St. Joseph's Church, in Chanayethazan Township, in Mandalay, Myanmar.

"We must not lose hope in life despite the many challenges we face," said Archbishop Tin Win in his homily. "We must continue to pray for and support our grandparents and the elderly."

He reminded the faithful of the example of Ss. Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, calling on everyone to show respect, care, and gratitude to the elderly. "We need to be thankful for their love, support, and sacrifices," the archbishop said. "Who we are today is because of what they have given us."

Despite generational gaps, Archbishop Tin Win encouraged young people to listen to the wisdom of their elders, who serve as sources of moral and spiritual guidance.

The celebration was organised by the Archdiocesan Commission for the Laity and Families.

Ahead of the Mass, Father Paul Thek Khine gave a talk on the role and importance of families in society.

"If you reap what you sow, what will you sow and reap?" he asked. "Parents must raise their children with care, or they may reap consequences they never intended."

'If you're walking slowly because you're with your elderly parents, don't be upset. Remember, they were the ones who taught you to walk...'

Father Thek Khine emphasised that children observe the attitudes of their parents and grandparents—especially their faith and gratitude. "If parents are devout and polite, there is a higher chance the children will follow the same path. But if there is no godliness in the home, it becomes difficult to pass it on," he explained.

Reflecting on the reality many parents face in old age, the priest told the young people, "We must always be grateful. No one should disrespect their parents or grandparents. Care for them with love."

He offered a moving reminder to the youth: "If you're walking slowly because you're with your elderly parents, don't be upset. Remember, they were the ones who taught you to walk, clapping their hands in joy as you took your first steps."

Father Augustine Tim Maung Tun also addressed the gathering, emphasising the dignity of family life and intergenerational unity.

Testimony shared at Marian Eucharistic Youth Day at Covadonga Shrine by Almudena Martínez-Bordiú, ACI Prensa/ EWTN | Adapted for the Sunday Examiner (Hong Kong)

COVADONGA, SPAIN (SE): Originally from China, 32-year-old Shushu never expected that her desire to study Spanish language and culture would lead to a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ.

Now a Catholic, a wife, and a mother, Shushu shared her moving testimony before thousands of young people gathered at the Marian Eucharistic Youth Day [JEMJ] on July 4 at the shrine of Our Lady of Covadonga in northern Spain—a place she described as "the heart of Spain and a very important place in its history."

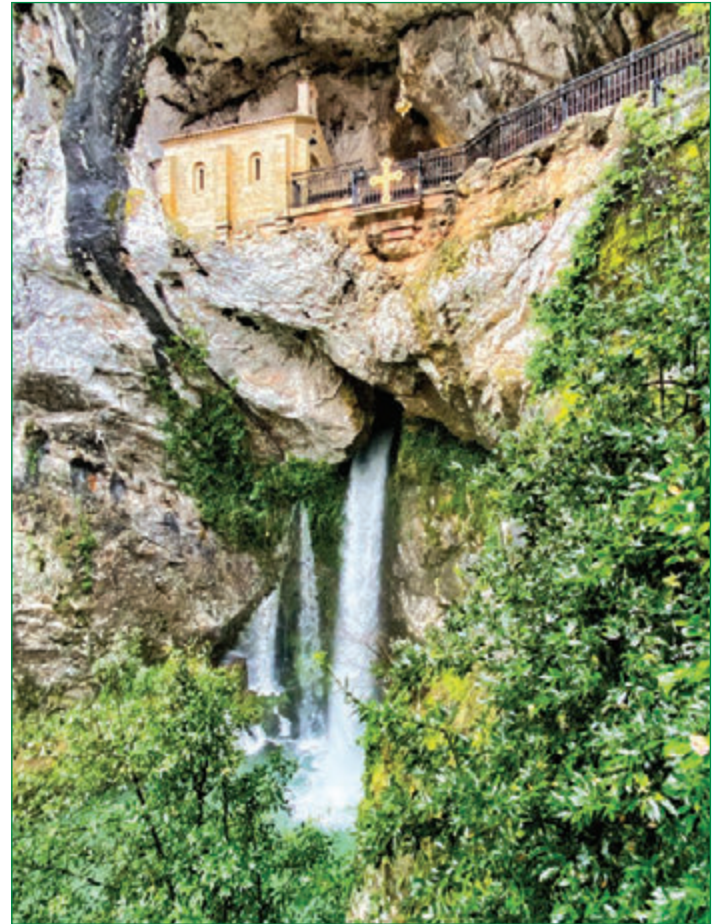
Her story begins in 2016, when at the age of 23, she arrived in Spain to pursue her academic interest in the history of the Spanish language. But what awaited her was not merely linguistic discovery, but a spiritual awakening that would transform her life.

On her first Halloween in Spain, she attended a party in Alcalá de Henares, drawn by curiosity. But the atmosphere—filled with zombie costumes and eerie music—left her disturbed and deeply unsettled. Seeking solace, she wandered through the city until she stumbled upon the Cathedral of Saints Justus and Pastor.

Inside, she was drawn by the sound of peaceful, almost heavenly music that stood in sharp contrast to the night's earlier chaos. There, she encountered an image of the Crucified Christ that left her speechless.

"There was a very large cross, and I saw Jesus there, and it had a great impact on me," Shushu recounted in an interview with ACI Prensa, CNA's Spanish-language news partner. "By supernatural intuition, I thought: that must be God on the cross. It couldn't be anyone else."

Raised in a staunchly atheistic environment in China, where neither family nor school spoke of God, this encounter was completely foreign to her—and yet profoundly real.



The Chapel of Our Lady of Covadonga.

Photo: Cardoso, Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 4.0

She approached a confessional, not fully understanding what the Sacrament of Reconciliation was. The priest listened to her in silence, then opened the screen and looked at her, she said, "like a father." That moment sparked a trust she had never known and would lead her to discover a new "family" in Spain—through the Servants of the Home of the Mother.

"I had never seen a nun in my life," she said with a smile, recalling how she was struck by their joy and radiant peace. "I'd never seen someone so happy, so young. I decided to convert after meeting the nuns."

One of the sisters eventually took her hand and asked, "Do you want to be baptised?" When she asked what that meant, the sister replied, "It means to be a daughter of God, like us."

Though the concept was unfamiliar and even confusing at first, something awakened in her heart. "I wanted to be baptized too," she said, "to be a daughter of God."

She eventually received the Sacrament of Baptism in the very same cathedral where she had first encountered the Crucified Christ. It was also where she later married her husband, Josemi.

Today, the couple has a son named Emmanuel. Shushu speaks of Spain as her "spiritual homeland"—the place where her new life began.

In her testimony at Covadonga, she acknowledged that the road to faith was not easy, especially coming from an atheistic background. But with the loving guidance of the religious sisters who accompanied her journey, she found peace and purpose in Christ.

"We have no merit; it's all because the Lord guides us. His mercy is immense," she said.

Originally written by Almudena Martínez-Bordiú, Rome correspondent for ACI Prensa and EWTN. Translated and adapted by CNA. Adapted for the Sunday Examiner [Hong Kong]

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Notice Board

How would you react if you feel defeated?



Cristita J. Asumbrado:

It is natural to feel negative emotions like sadness and disappointment when encountering defeat. However, with my faith in God, I perceive these feelings as challenges that inspire me to work harder. Acknowledging and accepting my emotions is crucial, and I seek support from family and friends when needed. Practicing self-compassion and reflecting on the reasons behind my defeat enables me to learn from the experience. I then set new, achievable goals to regain a sense of progress and motivation. I firmly believe that defeat is not permanent, and with the help of our almighty God, I can overcome any challenge.



Kerry Genicka Carmelo:

It is completely normal to feel sad and disappointed when we face defeat in competitions. While I experience similar emotions, I strive not to dwell on them. In a world where resilience is essential, maintaining faith in God is crucial, as I know he has our best interests at heart. I view defeat as a redirection from God rather than an ending.



Valerie Christine Castillo: When I feel defeated, I first acknowledge the emotion instead of ignoring it. Taking a moment to process the disappointment and understand its origins is important. After gathering my thoughts, I reflect on what went wrong and the lessons I can learn from the experience. Rather than staying stuck in the feeling, I focus on actionable next steps—such as adjusting my approach, seeking support, or taking a break for perspective. The ultimate goal is to transform a setback into a stepping stone for future success.

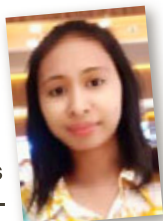


Amy Llabres: In the past, feeling defeated left me hopeless, fixating on my failures. However, rediscovering my faith shifted my perspective. Instead of solely dwelling on my defeats, I recognized the times God lifted me up. Each setback became an opportunity to witness God's faithfulness, reinforcing that no fall is final in the hands of a loving God. I now focus less on the pain



of the stumble and more on the assurance that God will always invite me to rise again.

Timmy Rillera: Feeling defeated can lead to self-doubt, making it seem like success is out of reach. This fear often stems from not wanting to face disappointment again. To counteract this, I recall my favorite Bible verse, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." This reminds me that it doesn't matter how many times I fail, as long as I have the Lord's strength to stand up again. Taking small steps forward while maintaining faith in God is essential.



Maricel Lanarang Tovera:

I acknowledge God's constant presence and seek His strength through prayer. Acceptance of both victories and defeats is vital, as is support from family and friends. I strive to maintain a positive mindset, viewing failure as a valuable learning experience.



Apostleship of Prayer group gathered after a Mass on June 29 marking the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus celebrated by Father Jun Jacobe. Photo: supplied

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus



In our hectic lives, taking a moment to honour the Sacred Heart of Jesus brings peace and fosters a deeper connection to what truly matters: an eternal, faithful, and divine love.

The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is not just a single feast day; it is an invitation to cultivate a daily communion with the heart of Jesus Christ. This occasion serves as a profound reminder of God's boundless love for humanity, revealed through his Son, Jesus.

Engaging in simple practices such as praying the Holy Hour, participating in the Novena, reciting the Litany of the Most Sacred Heart, making a Morning Offering, or dedicating your family to the Sacred Heart can transform your home into a sanctuary of God's grace. These devotional acts inspire us to reflect the qualities of Jesus' Heart—patience, humility, forgiveness, and deep love.

The image of the Sacred Heart, encircled by thorns, aflame with love, and pierced, invites believers to contemplate the suffering Christ endured for humanity's sake. On this solemn occasion, Catholics are encouraged to deepen their relationship with Christ, seek his mercy, and embody his compassionate heart in their daily interactions.

— Helen L. Pablo

Foundation of my perseverance

My faith serves as the bedrock of my perseverance in profound ways. Firstly, it instills an unwavering sense of hope that transcends immediate difficulties. Understanding that there is a divine plan and purpose at work, along with the reassurance that ultimate good will prevail, empowers me to navigate moments of doubt and despair.

Secondly, the teachings of Christ, along with the examples set by biblical figures, remind me that suffering is often an integral part of the journey, but it is never the end. Their stories of endurance inspire me to confront my own challenges with courage and resilience. They exemplify the truth that trials can strengthen our character and deepen our faith.

Thirdly, prayer and reliance on God's strength serve as my constant anchors in life. When my own strength begins to wane, I find solace in the belief that a higher power can provide the resilience I need to keep moving forward. This spiritual connection reassures me that I am never alone in my struggles.

Finally, the community of fellow believers offers invaluable support and encouragement. Sharing burdens and drawing strength from those who share my faith creates a network of solidarity, preventing feelings of isolation during difficult times. This collective perseverance uplifts me and reinforces the idea that we are all interconnected in our journeys of faith.

Ultimately, my Christian faith is a powerful source of strength that propels me through life's adversities, reminding me of hope, anchoring me in prayer, and surrounding me with a community of love. It is this foundation that allows me to face each day with renewed resolve.

— Mellet Bugay



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YOUR DAILY MASS GUIDE

AUGUST 3 – EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME.

Mass of the day (green), *Gloria, Creed*, preface of the Sunday. Readings: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23; Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11; Luke 12:13-21.

AUGUST 4 – ST. JOHN VIANNEY.

Mass of the memorial (white). Readings: Number 11:4b-15; Matthew 14:13-21.

AUGUST 5 – TUESDAY: EIGHTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME.

Mass of the day (green). Readings: Number 12:1-13; Matthew 14:22-36.

AUGUST 6 – TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD

Mass of the feast, *Gloria, Preface of the feast* (white). Readings: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14; Luke 9:28b-36.

AUGUST 7 – THURSDAY: EIGHTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME.

Mass of the day (green). Readings: Numbers 20:1-13; Matthew 16:13-23.

AUGUST 8 – ST. DOMINIC.

Mass of the memorial (white). Readings: Deuteronomy 4:32-40; Matthew 16:24-28.

AUGUST 9 – SATURDAY: EIGHTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME.

Mass of the day (green). Readings: Deuteronomy 6:4-13; Matthew 17:14-20.



Apostleship of Prayer Themes for August 2025

For mutual coexistence

Let us pray that societies where coexistence seems more difficult might not succumb to the temptation of confrontation for ethnic, political, religious, or ideological reasons.

Eighteenth Sunday of the Year

True riches

Today's Gospel invites us to take a hard, honest look at the things we value most. Often, our relationships and lives are shaped—sometimes even torn apart—by the way we handle material possessions, especially when inheritance is involved. Many of us have seen how even the closest families begin to fracture once parents pass away and it's time to “divide” what's left behind. Love gives way to entitlement, and “what's mine” begins to matter more than “who's mine.”

This painful reality was already present in Jesus' time. In today's Gospel (Luke 12:13-21), Jesus is interrupted by a man who asks him to settle a family dispute over inheritance. Rather than taking sides, Jesus refuses to be an arbitrator and instead uses the opportunity to reveal a deeper truth. He warns: “Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of posses-

sions.”

Jesus shifts the conversation from material justice to spiritual clarity. The issue isn't the inheritance, but the greed hidden beneath it—the desire to secure life through possessions. He tells a parable of a rich farmer who enjoyed an abundant harvest. The man's problem wasn't dishonesty or injustice. It was that he kept everything for himself. His focus was on building bigger barns and securing his future. His fatal mistake? He forgot he was mortal. “You fool,” God says to him, “this night your life will be demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?”

This parable isn't about condemning wealth. It's about challenging how we view it. The farmer's downfall was not that he had much, but that he lived only for

himself. He became blind to the people around him and deaf to God's call. His possessions became his idol—blocking his view of others and even of himself. He thought he was living well, but in truth, he had stopped living altogether.

We're not so different. We admire the hard-working person who plans ahead, accumulates wealth, and then retires in comfort. But Jesus warns us that success measured by possessions is not success at all. The only lasting wealth is love—what we give, not what we store. As St. Paul says, “We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it” (1 Tim 6:7).

Jesus urges us to become “rich in what matters to God.” What matters to God? Compassion, justice, mercy, generosity, and faithfulness. These are the treasures that last—

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23;
Readings: Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11;
Luke 12:13-21

eternal inheritances we can share without fear of losing anything. They multiply, not diminish, when given away.

The Gospel ends with a choice. We can live like the farmer, hoarding for ourselves and calling it “life.” Or we can open our hands, share our blessings, and discover a joy that death cannot touch. In the end, what we own fades. But what we give lives on—in others, in love, and in God. Let us live for the kind of inheritance that keeps us close to God.



● Father Josekutty
Mathew CMF



Mag-ingat kayo sa lahat ng uri ng kasakiman; sapagkat ang buhay ng tao ay wala sa dami ng kanyang kayamanan.”

Ano nga ba ang pinakamahalaga sa ating buhay? Pamilya ba o pera? Mga bagay ba o kapwa tao? Kayamanan ba o kalusugan? Minsan nakakalimutan natin ang mas mahalaga sa ating buhay. At iyon ay ang Diyos, ang ating pamilya at kapwa tao. Maganda ang payo ni Hesus sa atin, “Mag-ingat kayo sa lahat ng uri ng kasakiman; sapagkat ang buhay ng tao ay wala sa dami ng kanyang

kayamanan.”

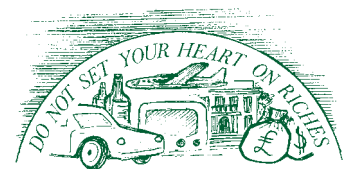
Hindi sa pera o yaman o kagamitan o maging kagandahan nakasalalay ang ating buhay. Ang lahat ng ito'y lumilipat at naglalaho o nauubos. May pera ka nga pero wala ka namang pamilya o kaibigan, ano ang magiging halaga nito? Kaya tama sa Hesus, “huwag tayong maging sakim” at matuto tayong magbahagi sa ibang tao. May nakita ka na bang namatay na ang pera nya o kabuhayan o kagamitan eh isinama sa kabaong o

Ebanghelyo ni Lukas

libingan? Wala, di ba? Kaya mahalaga na matuto tayong magbahagi at tumulong sa kapwa. Ok lang magtipid o mag ipon para sa pamilya.

Pero sabi ni Hesus, huwag tayong maging sakim o maka sarili. Lahat ay mula sa Diyos, regalo at biyaya nya hindi para lang sa ating sarili, kundi para ibahagi natin sa ating kapwa. At kung dumating ang oras o araw na tayo ay tawagin na nya, masasabi ba natin sa harap nya na nagbahagi tayo at hindi tayo naging

sakim? O tayo ay naging mabuti at magbigay sa ating kapwa? Tulungan nawa tayo ni Hesus na maging bukas palad sa ating kapwa.



● Father Arnold Abelardo CMF

In addition to local church dedications, the universal Church commemorates four Roman basilicas: St. John Lateran (Nov. 9), Sts. Peter and Paul (Nov. 18), and St. Mary Major (Aug. 5).

The Basilica of St. Mary Major, the largest Church dedicated to Mary in Rome, contains ancient mosaics and important relics, including a wooden fragment from Christ's nativity and the remains of several popes.

St. Mary Major's origins trace back to the fourth century, initiated by Pope Liberius. Although the initial church lasted only about a century, construction of the current basilica began in the fifth century, with much of it still intact today. The optional memorial on Aug. 5 not only highlights Mary's significance in the Church but also recalls the title “Our Lady of the Snows.”

According to legend, a wealthy couple without heirs wanted to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary. After praying for guidance, they reportedly saw a vision of Mary, and snow fell on the scorching summer day on Rome's Esquiline Hill. They interpreted this as a divine sign to build a church at the snow-covered site. Despite the legend lacking historical evidence before the year 1000, devotion to Mary as Our Lady of the Snows has persisted, as it symbolizes hope and divine intervention during desperate times.

In the United States, devotion to Our Lady of the Snows is primarily nurtured at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois, founded by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Founded by St. Eugene De Mazenod in 1816, the Oblates have a long history of serving in challenging environments, seeking Mary's aid amid adversity.

The Belleville shrine's origins date back to the 1940s, inspired by German Oblate Father Paul Schulte, known as “The Flying Priest,”

Our Lady of the Snows: An unlikely patron in August



snowstorm to rescue a brother Oblate priest, crediting Our Lady of the Snows with his safe return. He vowed to spread her devotion and began to fulfill that promise after being placed in Belleville during World War II.

Father Schulte commissioned a portrait of Our Lady of the Snows, showing Mary and the child Jesus under the Northern Lights, flanked by a missionary and an aircraft. Established in 1943, a perpetual novena in her honor gained popularity, leading to the shrine's construction in 1958. Today, the shrine, one of the largest outdoor shrines in the U.S., attracts around 350,000 visitors annually, serving as a center for prayer, conversion, and healing.

Devotees of Our Lady of the Snows seek Mary's intercession for grace in challenging circumstances, resonating with her unwavering “yes” to God's will two thousand years ago. Those who turn to Mary not only find solace in her intercession but are also drawn closer to her son, Jesus. Mary's role since the dawn of Marian devotion has been to make Christ present in the world and inspire believers to glorify him through their lives.

Through her example, Mary shows that even in seemingly impossible situations, a path can be made. Those who honour her embrace hope, trusting that she will intercede for them, just as she has for so many throughout history.

● Michael Heinlein
OSV News

Catholic nuns detained in India on baseless allegations of conversion and trafficking

HONG KONG (SE): Two Catholic nuns from the Assisi Sisters of Mary Immaculate [ASMI] have been arrested in central India under controversial allegations of human trafficking and forced religious conversion, sparking condemnation from Church leaders and human rights advocates.

Sister Preeti Mary and Sister Vandana Francis were detained on July 25 at Durg Railway Station in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh, along with a tribal youth, Sukhman Mandavi. They were accompanying three young women aged between 19 and 22 from the Narayanpur district in the Diocese of Jagdalpur. The group was reportedly en route to Agra, in Uttar Pradesh, where the women had been offered employment at a Catholic-run hospital.

The incident escalated when a train ticket examiner [TTE] stopped the group for not possessing platform tickets. During questioning, the young women explained they were travelling with the nuns for job opportunities. However, the TTE reportedly alerted local members of the Bajrang Dal, a radical Hindu nationalist organisation, who arrived at the scene and accused the nuns of attempting religious conversion.

Despite the women stating they were already Christians and had parental consent to travel, police detained the entire group for further questioning. All three women had documentation showing they were willingly traveling for employment purposes. Nevertheless, the Railway Police Force [RPF] proceeded to file a First Information Report against the three adults under the Chhattisgarh Religious Freedom Act and the Immoral Traffic [Prevention] Act.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India [CBCI] issued a strong statement condemning the arrests and the treatment of the nuns. "The women were legal adults travelling voluntarily. This is a violation of their constitutional rights and an affront to the dignity of women religious," the statement read. "We will take up this matter on all appropriate platforms."

The sisters of two of the young women also spoke out, insisting that their siblings had consented to the journey and that their families had no objections. "Our parents are no longer alive, and I personally encouraged my sister



A screengrab from YouTube of Sister Vandana Francis and Sister Preeti Mary, who were arrested on July 25 by the Government Railway Police at Durg railway station in Chhattisgarh state, India. Photo: UCAN

'Our women religious were heckled, disrespected, and harassed. This is no way to treat women in any civil society. Such incidents tarnish the image of the nation'

to accept this opportunity," said the elder sister of one woman, speaking from the police station in Durg. "The nuns are innocent. I have worked with them in Lucknow and know the value of such employment."

The younger sister of another woman, speaking from Narayanpur, confirmed that her family had converted to Christianity five years ago and demanded the immediate release of the nuns.

Narayanpur Superintendent of Police later confirmed that the families of all three women had submitted written statements on 26 July, affirming they had sent their daughters knowingly for job opportunities. "I know these nuns from Agra. They have been doing noble work for society," he told reporters. "We are still unclear what exactly was reported or miscommunicated."

Oswald Cardinal Gracias, former president of the CBCI, also expressed his outrage, calling the incident "an aggression against women." He said, "Our women religious were heckled, disrespected, and harassed. This

is no way to treat women in any civil society. Such incidents tarnish the image of the nation."

Chhattisgarh, where the incident took place, is home to over 30 million people, with Christians comprising less than two percent of the population. In recent years, there has been a marked increase in religiously motivated harassment and violence against Christians, with churches attacked, worship services disrupted, and individuals arrested under anti-conversion laws.

The arrests have ignited political controversy, with human rights groups alleging the incident is part of a broader trend of targeting Christian missionaries and organisations under the pretext of conversion laws.

An RPF official defended the arrests, claiming that the young women had allegedly been promised jobs and were "being taken to Agra under suspicious circumstances." The official added that investigations were ongoing and that "the law will take its course." However, Church officials insist the case is yet another example of how anti-conversion sentiment is being weaponised against religious minorities. The CBCI has vowed to provide legal assistance to the nuns and to pursue justice for all those unjustly detained.

As the investigation continues, Catholic communities across India and abroad are calling for the immediate release of the nuns and an end to the harassment of Christian workers, particularly women religious who serve in remote and underserved areas.

"This is not just about two nuns," said a Church representative in Delhi. "It's about defending truth, dignity, and the freedom of religion guaranteed by our Constitution."



Evacuees line up for hot meals inside the Vincentian Foundation shelter in Quezon City.

Photo: LICAS News/Vincentian Foundation

Appeals for aid as flooding displaces thousands in the Philippines

MANILA (LICAS NEWS): Caritas Philippines appealed for aid to help families and communities affected by flooding caused by continuous rains. "Now is the time to share what we can," it said noting that thousands of families are now facing the harsh impact of monsoon rains — "displaced, distressed and in need of urgent support."

As of July 23, nearly two million people—or more than half a million families—were affected by the southwest monsoon and Typhoon Wipha [Crising], Typhoon Co May [Emong], and Tropical Storm Francisco [Dante], according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

Caritas said it is coordinating with international partners to align humanitarian efforts and mobilise additional resources. It added that contributions from partner dioceses and the public will be directed to the most affected areas to address urgent needs.

"Let's respond with compassion, generosity, and action," it added.

Local diocesan social action centres in heavily impacted areas activated emergency response efforts, distributing food packs, conducting rapid assessments and coordinating with local government units.

The agency reported that 27,682 families are currently staying in evacuation centres, while another 11,881 are receiving aid outside of them.

Central Luzon was the hardest hit, with 288,185 affected families, followed by the Ilocos Region with 43,127 and Western Visayas with 39,263.

The estimated cost of damage to agriculture stands at P182 million [US\$3.21 million], while infrastructure damage has reached P3.7 billion [US\$653 million], authorities said.

In Quezon City, the Vincentian Foundation is provided

shelter for approximately 700 individuals who have been displaced by several days of heavy monsoon rains, which have been intensified by recent storms.

"We are trying to help as many displaced persons as possible. While we can offer some assistance, many are still in need of help. We encourage everyone who is able and has the capacity to extend aid to those vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis," Father Geowen Porcincula, executive director of the foundation, said.

The foundation's Bamboo Housing Community opened its covered court and multipurpose hall on July 21 to accommodate evacuees from low-lying areas in Barangay Bagong Silangan, one of the most flood-prone communities in Quezon City.

Local authorities provided floor mats for the evacuees, while community partners stepped in to address immediate needs.

Relief supplies were also donated by the Jesuit-led Tangiang Yaman Foundation.

As of 6:00pm on July 22, the Vincentian Foundation reported receiving 10,000 pesos [US\$170] in cash donations, as well as 55,670 pesos [US\$940] worth of in-kind contributions from a total of 12 donors, which included seven individuals and five groups.

Donations to Caritas-Philippines may be sent through the following:
Account Name: CBCP Caritas Philippines Foundation Inc.
BPI: 4951-0071-16
Metrobank: 632-7-632028586
BDO: 004508034192

Donations to the Vincentians Foundation can be delivered directly to St. Vincent Seminary on Tandang Sora Avenue in Quezon City. Financial support is also accepted through the Vincentian Foundation's official channels.

A reflection and hope for Pope Leo XIV's in a time of conflict

By Father Joseba Kamiruaga Mieza, CMF

If only it were “just” another war. Because even in war, the international community has drawn moral boundaries—guidelines meant to protect the innocent, to preserve a minimum of human dignity. But we now seem to be witnessing something even more devastating: not merely the destruction of buildings or territory, but the erosion of what it means to be human.

The suffering that plays out in certain corners of our world today defies comprehension. Entire populations are being displaced, homes obliterated, and civilians—especially children—left to bear the weight of decisions they never made. And beneath it all lies a deeper, quieter tragedy: the loss of compassion.

We hear phrases that strip human beings of their dignity—language that dehumanises, excludes, and divides. Places that once held promise and life are being reduced to zones of despair, where the so-called “solutions” involve isolation, confinement, and control. Cities are razed, families fragmented, futures stolen. And yet, the global response



Pope Leo XIV greets those gathered for his first Angelus from Castel Gandolfo, Italy, on July 13. Photo: CNS/Pablo Esparza

is muted, measured more by strategic interests than by moral urgency.

There are some who speak of “peace”—but peace has, in some

cases, become a euphemism for containment. Humanitarian corridors are discussed even as they are closed. Reconstruction is mentioned even while the foun-

datations of society are being shattered. In all of this, the word “peace” risks losing its meaning, reduced to rhetoric in the face of ruin.

This is no longer a matter of one people or another. It is no longer just about political borders, religious differences, or alliances of power. What we are confronting is the collapse of our shared human responsibility. For this is no longer about the Palestinians, the Israelis, the Russians or the Ukrainians, Iran or the United States of America. We are witnessing the loss of the last shred of human dignity, the threshold beyond which human beings are no longer human.

This is the ultimate test facing the glorious West, the so-called autocracies, the Arab countries, the Europe of civilisation, of freedoms, and of progress... which is arming itself to the teeth. A threshold has been crossed—the point at which suffering is no longer seen, where empathy no longer moves us, where life is no longer sacred unless it serves a purpose.

This is the hour in which the world most needs a witness—someone who will not come in the name of a government or ideology, but in the name of humanity itself. One who dares to stand where suffering is greatest, not to judge or to take sides, but to remind us all that every human being is a brother or sister.

It may not be the secretary-

What we are confronting is the collapse of our shared human responsibility. For this is no longer about the Palestinians, the Israelis, the Russians or the Ukrainians, Iran or the United States of America. We are witnessing the loss of the last shred of human dignity, the threshold beyond which human beings are no longer human

general of the United Nations, whose voice is often caught in the machinery of diplomacy. It may not be the heads of state, who too often speak with the constraints of self-interest. Perhaps, it must be someone else—someone who carries a different kind of authority, rooted in conscience and compassion.

Could it be the pope?

Not as a political figure, but as a shepherd of souls. Not representing one religion only, but embodying a global moral voice that speaks for the voiceless. The world looks on with expectation—and perhaps with hope. Could Pope Leo XIV, like his predecessor, Pope Francis, at Lampedusa or Lesbos, step into the epicentre of suffering? Could he be the presence of Christ where despair has darkened all horizons?

He would not go for himself, nor merely for the Catholic faithful. He would go for all who have been forgotten, forsaken, and denied their dignity. He would go, simply, for *humanity*. This could be his *Fratelli Tutti*, lived anew. It could be his *Rerum Novarum*, not only as an encyclical but as a gesture. It could be the Church's voice at the threshold of the inhuman, crying out: *Enough!*

And perhaps, just perhaps, the world might listen.

Pope celebrates Apollo 11 anniversary with peek at the heavens, call to astronaut

VATICAN (CNS): Pope Leo XIV celebrated the anniversary of the first crewed moon landing by peering through a space telescope at the Vatican Observatory—located on the grounds of the papal summer villa in Castel Gandolfo—and calling the last surviving member of the Apollo 11 spaceflight mission on July 20.

US astronaut, Michael Collins, flew the command module around the moon while Neil Armstrong and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin became the first humans to land and walk on the lunar surface.

Pope Leo, who would have been 13-years-old when the lunar module, the Eagle, touched down, video-called the 95-year-old Aldrin late on July 20, “sharing with him the memory of this historic achievement—a testimony to human ingenuity,” the Vatican press office said.

They reflected together on Psalm 8, the office said, which marvels at the limitless grandeur of God, the smallness of human beings in creation and the amaz-

ing dignity and power that God has graciously bestowed upon them.

During the return flight back to Earth, Aldrin, a Presbyterian, had read two verses of Psalm 8 from the King James Bible in a radio communication with NASA's mission control, saying, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou has ordained; What is man that thou art mindful of him?”

Pope Leo and Aldrin together “reflected on the mystery of creation, its greatness and its fragility,” the press office said, releasing a photo of the pope and Aldrin with his wife, Anca Faur, taken during their video call.

Aldrin then posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, on @TheRealBuzz: “Anca and I were grateful and touched to receive the highest blessing today, from His Holiness, Pope Leo XIV on the 56th Anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing.”

The astronaut wrote, “What

an honour! We prayed for good health, long life, and prosperity for all humankind.”

The Vatican press office said Pope Leo blessed the astronaut, his family and his coworkers at the end of the call.

Pope St. Paul VI also visited the observatory the night of 20-21 July 20-1969, looking at the moon through its Schmidt telescope before he watched the actual landing and the first moon walk on television at the papal summer villa.

Messages from religious leaders—including Pope Paul—were among the artifacts collected to be flown on the lunar lander, and they remain there to this day for posterity.

He also sent a message honouring and blessing the three astronauts after they landed on the moon, calling them “conquerors of the moon, pale lamp of our nights and our dreams.” He then met Armstrong, Collins and Aldrin at the Vatican on 16 October 1969.