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Faith takes to Hong Kong's streets on Mission Sunday



Chinese and English-speaking communities from the cathedral distributing leaflets in Central.



Filipino community from St. Joseph's Church singing in Queensway, Admiralty.

HONG KONG (SE): Hymns from a travelling bus, gifts of seeds, carnivals and a musical drama brought the Gospel beyond church walls as parishes across Hong Kong marked World Mission Sunday with outreach activities throughout October.

Deaneries and parish communities organised street encounters, performances and carnivals, inviting passersby to discover the Catholic faith and meet the people behind their neighbourhood churches.

Established by Pope Pius XI in 1926, World Mission Sunday marked its centenary this year. The annual observance brings Catholics together in prayer and support for the Church's missionary work.

In Hong Kong, diocesan-wide celebrations alternate with deanery initiatives, complemented by parish programmes.

At St. Jude's Church in North Point, Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha Chi-shing, commissioned nearly 60 volunteers during a Mass before their street outreach.

He reminded them that evangelisation means working alongside God. He encouraged volunteers to approach people without prejudice and to respond to rejection with courtesy, respect and love.

Across the Hong Kong Island East Deanery, parishes joined a coordinated street evangelisation campaign on October 18. Wearing matching purple-red tops and distributing common information leaflets, volunteers ranging from young children to older parishioners introduced their local Catholic communities to the public.

They were supported by representatives of the Diocesan Commission for Integral Human Development, the Hong Kong Catholic Commission for Labour Affairs, Caritas-Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Central Council of Catholic Laity.

Among the items prepared for distribution were 2,500 seed kits containing soil and seeds. The gifts symbolised the sowing of faith and the Church's respect for life. Parishes also offered tissue packs and 2027 calendar cards.

Sowing seeds through personal encounters

The joint initiative was proposed by the dean, Father Andrew Kim Yong Jae, KMS, drawing on the experience of street evangelisation at Saint Margaret Mary's Church in Happy Valley.

Joining parishioners on Great George Street in Causeway Bay, Father Kim found that older residents particularly appreciated the seed kits. Some asked for additional kits for their grandchildren, giving families an opportunity to watch the plants grow together.

He said the calendar cards also provided a simple way to begin conversations, introduce parish activities and share the message that "God is love."

Father Kim acknowledged that rejection is a natural part of street outreach. Learning to accept it, he said, can strengthen volunteers' faith and deepen their understanding of what it means to share the Gospel.

Such encounters offer people unfamiliar with Catholicism an accessible introduction to the Church and help build trust through a welcoming presence. He said the deanery would continue exploring other approaches, including community carnivals and sports events.

Father Timothy Wan Kwok-kwong, parish priest of St. Jude's, noted that public concern about scams could make people cautious about speaking to strangers.

Nevertheless, several residents interested in learning about the faith shared their contact details with volunteers. He believed the Church's established reputation had helped put them at ease.

In Central, Father Dominic Chan Chi-ming commissioned volunteers from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, emphasising conviction, active participation, unity and prayer as foundations for evangelisation.

The cathedral prepared tissue packs bearing its emblem, website address and QR codes linking to its social media channels.

Joseph Chan, president of the cathedral's parish council, said volunteers near Tai Kwun encountered many tourists who were less likely to seek a connection with a local parish. Even so, the team regarded each conversation as an opportunity to sow a seed.

Other locations, including Theatre Lane near the Central MTR station, attracted a more receptive response. By the end of the two-hour afternoon outreach, volunteers at the cathedral's five stations had distributed all their supplies.

Hymns on the move

A bus chartered with the support of a parishioner added a musical dimension to the outreach, travelling from Sai Wan Ho to the Central ferry piers.

Chinese-speaking choir members from St. Jude's Church and Holy Cross Church sang hymns as the bus passed through Wan Chai. An English-speaking choir from Saint Joseph's Church then continued the singing through Central and the Mid-Levels.

Sister Vera Wan of the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit, who organised the route, said she was touched to see people waving and taking photographs as the bus passed.

One particularly joyful encounter took place on Connaught Road Central, where Father Joseph Tan Leitao and parishioners from St. Joseph's Church greeted the bus from their outreach stations.

As the Filipino choir from St. Joseph's sang on the upper deck, Filipino passersby began dancing. Chinese-speaking choir members joined their fellow singers upstairs, and the two groups sang together in English in an expression of communion.

Giving young people a mission

In Kowloon, the Southwest Kowloon Deanery presented a musical drama, "Big Brother Jesus, Best to Follow You," at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Shek Kip Mei.

The performance concluded a six-month outreach programme involving eight parishes and participating schools. It attracted about 300 people, including students, family members and other guests.

Thomas Chung, president of the parish council at Mary Help of Christians Church in Ma Tau Wai, was the principal organiser and playwright.

Continued on page 2



Continued from page 1

His four-act script followed two troubled young people whose encounter with a retired teacher opened a path towards faith. The production combined Scripture, projected images and choral music.

Chung praised the two young lead actors and the participating choirs from Cheung Sha Wan Catholic Secondary School, Newman Catholic College and St. Mary's Canossian College. He described the Saint Mary's singers as having "voices of angels."

The programme concluded with recognition of volunteers, reflections on community service and the distribution of ice cream vouchers.

Chung said giving young people opportunities to experience joy and achievement helps nurture belonging while strengthening relationships among schools, parishes and the wider community.

Hammond Wong, a parish council member at St. Francis of Assisi Church, said the initiative also recognised young volunteers themselves as people to be evangelised.

Entrusting them with a concrete mission, he explained, allowed them to encounter faith through service and creativity. In his experience, this approach could engage young people more deeply than conventional camp activities while extending the Church's witness to their families.



Top: Students from St. Mary's Canossian College performing in a musical at St. Francis of Assisi Church on October 18. Above: Interactive game booth on hope at the deanery carnival in Kennedy Town.



The choir from St. Jude's getting ready to singing on bus.

Waterfront carnival

On October 25, the Hong Kong Island South-West and Islands Deanery held a festival at Belcher Bay Promenade in Kennedy Town with an opening ceremony officiated by Bishop Ha. The inaugural joint event featured 15 interactive game booths set up by five parishes and Caritas Hong Kong. Stage performances included martial arts, Chinese opera songs, and the performance of the kindergarten students, the Filipino community as well as other choirs. The day ended with a blessing of Bishop Ha in which he encouraged all to become messengers of hope.

Celebrations across the diocese

Other deaneries organised community events throughout the month.

The East Kowloon Deanery held its interactive "Walking with the Lord" carnival at Tseung Kwan O Catholic Primary School on the same day.

Earlier, on October 10, the New Territories Southwest Deanery organised the "Covenant of Hope Carnival" at St. Francis Xavier's School in Tsuen Wan.

Alongside these regional gatherings, parish cultural and musical programmes offered further opportunities to share the Gospel through personal encounters.

Chancery Notice

APPOINTMENTS AND TRANSFERS

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

1. *Effective 1 November 2026*

Rev. Joseph JIA Dei-li, SVD, ceases to be Assistant Parish Priest in Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Tai Po, New Territories; he will be given a new assignment by his own Superior.

2. *Effective 15 November 2026*

Three future permanent deacons, to be ordained on 14 November 2026, are to assist in the pastoral services of the following parishes:

Rev. Deacon Peter HO Chun-yi: Visitation Parish, Lantau Isalnd North, Tung Chung & Discovery Bay, New Territories;
Rev. Deacon Julian Gary NG Man-chung: Rosary Parish, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon;

Rev. Deacon Gerald Anthony WAI Chung-sau: Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

3. *Effective 1 December 2026*

Rev. Deacon Thomas LAM Chiu-wan ceases to assist in the pastoral services of Rosary Parish, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon; he will take a study leave until 30 November 2027.

4. *Effective 15 December 2026*

Rev. Adi Purnama SUSANTI, SCJ, ceases to be Assistant Parish Priest in Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Pokfulam, Hong Kong; he will be given a new assignment by his own Superior.

5. *Effective 1 January 2027*

Rev. Isaac NOH, KMS, ceases to be Parish Priest of St. Benedict Parish, Sha Tin Wai, New Territories; after his vacation he is to be appointed Parish Priest of St. Patrick's Parish, Wang Tau Hom, Kowloon, effective 15 April 2027.

Rev. Joseph NG Shu-shing ceases to be Spiritual Director of Holy Spirit Seminary, and is to be appointed Parish Priest of the above-mentioned St. Benedict Parish.

Given at the Chancery Office,
26 October 2026.

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Rev. Lawrence LEE
Chancellor

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Bishop Ha blesses the upgraded facilities at Tai O chapel

HONG KONG (SE): Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha Chi-shing blessed newly renovated ground-floor facilities at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chapel in Tai O, Lantau, on October 18, enhancing its capacity to welcome parishioners, pilgrims and groups seeking a place for prayer and retreat.

The improvements include modernised shower facilities, a refurbished kitchen and renovated toilets. According to the chapel, the upgraded amenities will support overnight stays for groups of 20 to 30 people taking part in retreats, gatherings and other activities.

Claretian Father Jojo Peter Ancheril said the previous toilets dated back about 70 years. The renovation, he explained, was needed to better accommodate elderly parishioners and visitors.

"The new facilities are a sign of our hospitality and care, helping all who come to our parish feel welcome, comfortable, and valued," he said.

Father Ancheril also highlighted the chapel's growing appeal to local Catholics and tourists visiting Tai O.

Following the blessing, Bishop Ha presided over a Mass marking World Mission Sunday and anticipating the October 24 feast of St. Anthony Mary Claret, founder of the Claretian Missionaries. St. Claret established the congregation in Vic, Spain, on 16 July 1849, together with five other priests.

Concelebrating with the bishop were Father Ancheril and fellow Claretians Father Ezakias Anthonyswamy, the parish priest; Father Alberto Santiago Rossa; and Father Josekutty Mathew. Deacon Johnny Wong assisted at the liturgy.



Bishop Ha with Mass celebrants, religious sisters and parishioners in Tai O. Photo supplied

Nineteen Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres, together with members of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels and the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate joined members of the local Chinese- and English-speaking communities for the celebration.

In his homily, Bishop Ha reflected on the Gospel account in which Jesus responds to a question intended to trap him over the payment of taxes to Caesar.

Drawing a comparison with everyday life, the bishop observed that people today carry smartphones in their pockets rather than the ancient coin presented to Jesus. Christians, he said, must nevertheless remember that they bear God's image and are called to reflect his presence through their lives.

He encouraged the faithful to remain steadfast witnesses to faith and love in an increasingly secularised world.

The celebration also offered an opportunity to recall St. Claret's commitment to spreading the Gospel through preaching and publishing.

The 19th-century Spanish missionary established the Religious Library publishing house in 1848 to make religious books, booklets and leaflets widely accessible. He founded the Claretian congregation the following year and was subsequently appointed archbishop of Santiago de Cuba.

His ministry in Cuba combined pastoral renewal with practical concern for people's welfare. He opposed slavery, promoted education, established a farm school for poor children and supported initiatives intended to improve the lives of disadvantaged communities.



A ribbon cutting ceremony officiated by Bishop Ha outside the upgraded facilities on the ground-floor. Photo supplied

Reflections from the cardinal



By Stephen Cardinal Chow, S.J.

Why do we need ethics in education?

From October 5 to 10, 2026, Father Arturo De La Torre, M.G., the Chaplain of St Francis University (SFU) and the inaugural director of the university's new Centre for Applied Ethics, visited the United States with me. The Centre was set up as an intellectual platform for the pursuit of ethics.

We visited Boston College (BC) in Massachusetts and Santa Clara University (SCU) in California. These two institutions are known for their research and studies in ethics among the universities in the US. Particularly the "Markkula Center" at SCU, where ethicists work across an array of disciplines, including space ethics. Yes, space of the universe. The main areas of ethics that Father Arturo was enquiring initially were bioethics, medical ethics, social ethics, ethics of AI, business ethics, campus ethics, service learning, and ethics integrated into the general curriculum.

These two universities were most gracious and generous to our requests. They set up meetings for us to have in-depth conversations with different ethicists, either in groups or individually. We found these meetings most fruitful in exploring the development of our Centre at SFU, as well as how we can be partners in collaboration in the near future. Our Centre will then be able to provide a distinctive dimension in the education at SFU. It is our desire that our graduates will be serving as professionals or practitioners with ethical consciousness and conviction wherever they are.

Why should ethics be a significant component of our education? Would not a day-long workshop or a weekend seminar be sufficient to provide the necessary concepts? Ethics education requires time for inquiry and space for integration with different disciplines. For example, when inquiring about the ethics of AI, we must also consider social, economic, and environmental factors. Hence, besides focusing on 'particular ethics,' we need to work on 'general ethics' that weaves through the entire general curriculum.

Why do we need to treat ethics seriously in our education? It is because we are not merely educating but forming the present and the future through our students. Our young people are not only the future but also the present, for they very much affect our immediate lives, evolving culture and communal consciousness. All these may have considerable impact on us, like it or not. Sadly though, in our competitive world, including the education sector, ethical formation—both intellectual and practical—is not at the top of our priorities, but quite the contrary. Ethics is the philosophy of morality. Therefore, moral education is not the same as ethics education.

We only need to look at the news reports and our environment. How many major construction accidents, failures, and cases of corruption have there been in 2025 and this year so far? Six, and maybe more. What about the tragic fires that engulfed most of Wang Fuk Court, claiming 168 lives and 79 victims with injuries of varying severity? Families destroyed and a community dismantled. All these point towards some levels of systemic failures in administration and accountability, as well as corrupt practices in the construction industry. And it is quite possible that these maladies did not start only two years ago.

While we are waiting for the culprits to bear their share of responsibility, what is more important and urgent is to reform our collective consciousness, the culture of governance, management and practices within the administration and the industry. Yet, let us not point our fingers only at the culprits. We ourselves have our roles to play because we also contribute to the formation and the sustaining of the unethical culture and practices, but in different degrees.

The temptation is to think that once we get rid of the problems that contribute to the ailment, then health will be restored, like locking up all the criminals. That is not the whole truth. Many illnesses are due to our inner system, living habits, and the external environment, including the culture we live in. When we fail to address these, the same or more serious ailments will strike back when we are least prepared. We cannot just push for punitive measures against the culprits only, but not working on societal reflections, leading to the needed conversions with proper ethical consciousness and practices.

Turning to artificial intelligence, Pope Leo XIV's encyclical '*Magnifica Humanitas*' highlights concerns about the destruction that unregulated AI could cause — concerns later echoed by leaders in AI technology. Venture capitalists and those who stand to lose out are warning against slowing down or regulating the development of AI. Are we going to do nothing meaningful about it while wishing the threats would go away on their own? AI ethics is also urgently needed in our education and in the technology industry.

I would say ethics in general is imminently important in our basic and tertiary education.

+ Cardinal Stephen Chow, S.J.

Pope Leo XIV cleared by doctors for South America trip after surgery

(OSV NEWS): Two weeks after Pope Leo XIV's surgery for lung cancer, his doctor confirmed he can fly to South America according to the previously released schedule, with Uruguay, Argentina and Peru planned as stops for his November 6-17 trip, the longest trip of the pontificate so far.

"Based on his current clinical status, as well as the instrumental and laboratory tests performed, there are no contraindications that would prevent him from undertaking his upcoming apostolic journey to Latin America as planned," Dr. Luigi Carbone, the papal doctor, said in a statement released by the Holy See Press Office on October 26.

The statement said that Pope Leo "is following medical recommendations with great care and diligence, and with a deep determination to continue serving the Church," the statement read, confirming that the apostolic trip to South America "will proceed according to the program previously published."

It said, "The Holy Father looks forward with great joy and enthusiasm to this journey," highlighting that the trip—to the continent where Pope Leo served as a missionary and where he was a bishop—will offer "opportunities to strengthen the bonds of communion with the local Churches, encourage the faithful in their mission, and bring a message of faith, hope, and peace."

According to the statement, Pope Leo said, "I am looking forward to returning to the continent where I've experienced so many moments of my life. May this journey be an occasion for us to open our hearts to one another, strengthen our communion as brothers and sisters, and renew our commitment to proclaiming the Gospel with joy."

Advance team lands in Peru for final preparatory visit

Monsignor Guillermo Inca Pereda, coordinator of Pope Leo 's visit to Peru, confirmed to Peruvian TV station TVPE Noticias that the news about the pope's surgery never interrupted preparations for the trip and that the third advance team mission from the Vatican arrived in Peru on October 26.



Pope Leo gives the thumbs up as he arrives in his popemobile in St. Peter's Square on October 21.
Photo: OSV News/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media

The media speculated that parts of the schedule could be altered, especially the high-altitude trip to Cusco, which is located 11,1500 feet above sea level, and it is recommended that even healthy people need to adjust before planning intense activities.

> *"Nothing is ruled out. Everything remains as the Holy Father envisioned it. He always wanted to go to Cusco because it holds an important significance*

However, the monsignor confirmed that Cusco—on the papal itinerary for November 15—was not excluded from the papal visit to Peru.

"Nothing is ruled out. Everything remains as the Holy Father envisioned it. He always wanted to go to Cusco because it holds an important significance: the encounter with the popular faith and religiosity of the region," he told the Peruvian television channel. "He wants to be there. That's why I believe Cusco will always be on his list," he said.

However, Peruvian organisers remain extra cautious regarding the trip, and for his November 11-16 encounter with the nation, "he will have a specialised ambulance, as befits a head of state, which will accompany the delegation at all times," Monsignor Guillermo said.

"In the case of Santa Cruz, the possibility of having an ambulance helicopter is being considered in case of any eventuality. In addition to his own doctor, there will be a Peruvian doctor prepared to attend to any situation," the prelate said of another high altitude town in the Andes Mountains, which the pope plans to visit November 14.

Doctors report post-surgery progress

Papal medical team confirmed in the October 26 statement that the pope's "recovery continues to progress," and that since returning to the Vatican on October 17, "the Holy Father has gradually resumed his activities, adjusting his daily schedule in consultation with his doctors to prioritise his recovery while continuing to fulfill the responsibilities of his ministry."

It said, "Dr. Luigi Carbone confirms that the Holy Father's recovery after the surgery continues, and the latest medical examinations attest to his good health and favourable clinical condition."

Longest and most demanding trip to date

Pope Leo XIV will travel more than 30,577 kilometres on 14 flights during the November trip to Peru, Argentina and Uruguay, according to the full schedule the Vatican released on September 21, which the Vatican did not indicate would change in the October 26 statement.

Over 12 days, the pope will celebrate nine public Masses, visit seven cathedrals and preside over two stadium prayer vigils. The trip culminates with a return to Chiclayo, Peru, where he served as bishop from 2015 to 2023.

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EDITORIAL

SUNDAY EXAMINER

1 NOVEMBER 2026

The Communion of Saints in aid of the Holy Souls in Purgatory

THIS SUNDAY, AS we step into November, Catholics around the world are reminded it's the Month of the Holy Souls—a time for remembering those who have gone before us. November 1 is also All Saints' Day, a tradition stretching back to 835 AD, when Pope Gregory IV set aside this date to honour all the saints in heaven. The day is less about lofty theology and more about a sense of connection—between those of us still on our journey and those who've already made it to the finish line. Remembering the saints isn't about putting them on a pedestal, but about admitting we could use some inspiration and community, especially in a world that sometimes feels disconnected.

Even today, the Church is still reflecting on what makes a saint. At a recent Vatican conference organised by the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints and themed, "Holiness in History", Pope Leo XIV pointed out that the the path toward canonisation demands rigorous investigation and the integration of critical methodology, with the objective of "bringing to light the exemplary lives, spirituality, and reputation for holiness of the candidates for beatification and canonisation."

The pope said, "The People of God seek models in order to live faithfully in the present moment," reminding us that saints weren't perfect, but they responded to the needs of their time. He reiterated that the presence and witness of the saints has changed the course of history, underscoring that they possessed the wisdom to heed the cries of their eras. They integrate faith with history and devote themselves fully to the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

The "Holy Souls" are, according to Catholic belief, those who have died but still need prayers to reach heaven. Purgatory is thought of as a time of spiritual cleansing, not punishment, and prayers from the living are meant to help these souls on their way. It's a reminder that we're all connected—across life and death. It is our duty to assist these holy souls that they may be swiftly released from purgatory and ascend to heaven and abide eternally in the presence of God.

On All Souls' Day [November], Catholics gather to remember and pray for those who have died. In Hong Kong, this means Mass at the Catholic Cemetery and time for reflection. Through prayer, sacrifice, repentance, and penance, the Church implores the purification of the souls of the deceased. In practicing mutual love and assistance, we fulfill the supreme precept of God: the commandment of charity

The Church teaches that certain acts, like confession, receiving Communion, and prayer, can help the Holy Souls, but above all, it's about kindness and staying connected with those who have gone before us.

May the souls of all the faithful departed enjoy eternal bliss and, through the mercy of God, be delivered from the pains of purgatory. Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. *SE*

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Address all correspondence to the editor of the Sunday Examiner.

Outcry as church attack in Jordan leaves nine dead and 40 injured

AMMAN, JORDAN (OSV NEWS): Church bells rang out at noon across Jordan on October 24, honouring victims of a massacre in the kingdom's south that killed nine and wounded 40 others during a funeral service the previous day.

Mourners had gathered at St. George's Orthodox Church in Hammoud, a small Christian hamlet in southern Karak, when three gunmen reportedly fired for five minutes before fleeing. One attendee said up to 200 mourners were present in and around the church, noting that most victims were between 50 and 70 years old.

Another parishioner told *CNN* that she and others hid behind the altar for safety, fearing they would not survive.

The Pontifical Mission Societies is active in Hammoud, and the Christian community provides support and humanitarian care to local parishes.

Jordanians of all backgrounds are reeling, and the attack has caused consternation among Christians in neighbouring countries.

Jordan's King Abdullah II condemned the massacre, vowing the "harshest retaliation" against the attackers. The monarch rushed to the area to visit the wounded in local hospitals and to console those whose relatives were lost.

"Every Jordanian life is precious, and we will strike with an iron fist against those who dare to threaten our nation," Abdullah said on the social media platform X [formerly Twitter]. "Whoever imagines that the bullets of treachery can divide the ranks of Jordanians will fail in his endeavour before our steadfastness and unity."

Jordan's government has called the "unprecedented act" a "terrorist attack" against the entire nation.

"Any attack against a Jordanian, regardless of religion or belief, is an attack on Jordanian society as a whole," said Mohammad Momani, the official government spokesman, who said the gunmen were driven by extremist ideology.



Bloodstains on the steps of St. George's Greek Orthodox Church, in the village of Karak, Jordan, on October 24.
Photo: OSV News/Alaa Al Sukhni, Reuters

Momani stressed that Christians are deeply rooted in Jordan's history and national identity, contributing to its past, present and future.

Jordanian prime minister, Jaafar Hassan, vowed to bring the perpetrators to justice and underscored the strictest legal action against anyone who incites discord or seeks to promote extremism within the community, according to The Jordan Times.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, sent a message from its patriarchs and head of churches expressing "deep sorrow and utter dismay" for the "heinous and inhuman" terrorist attack firing "indiscriminately on innocent worshippers."

"This terrorist attack against defenceless civilians is a grave offence against God and against humanity. To strike mourners at prayer, in a house of God, during the burial of their dead, violates every sacred and human value," the condolence message said.

"It is an attack on the entire Christian community of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and on the exemplary fabric of Jordanian society, in which Muslims and Christians have lived together in unity and fraternity for generations," it added.

It also extended heartfelt condolences to the victims' families and to His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Orthodox Bishopric of Jordan and to the whole Patriarchate.

"We are encouraged by the unequivocal words of His Majesty King Abdullah II and by the Jordanian people's firm rejection of this act. Such acts cannot and will not succeed in undermining the unity of the people of Jordan," the patriarchate message said.

Archbishop Giovanni Pietro Dal Toso, apostolic nuncio to Jordan, denounced the attack and visited the injured and their families in hospitals on October 24 with Bishop William Shomali of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, "to convey the closeness, solidarity, and condolences of the Holy Father," Jordan's official Petra news agency reported.

During his Angelus address on October 25, Pope Leo XIV sent prayers "to all those who were injured or lost their lives last Friday in the terrorist attack on worshippers at the Orthodox Church of St. George in Hamoud, Jordan." He expressed his "closeness to the community and the entire country, which is known for its peaceful coexistence and respect between different religions."

Father Rif'at Bader, director of Amman's Catholic Centre for Studies and Media, invited Christians and Muslims to a candlelight vigil and prayer on October 24 at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church.

"Let us offer our prayers for our cherished homeland, for the repose of the souls of the martyrs, and for the swift recovery of the wounded and injured," he urged.

Lebanon's president, Joseph Aoun, the Arab world's only Christian head of state, called the church shooting a "heinous terrorist attack." It "reaffirms once again that terrorism has no religion and no homeland, and its aim is to strike at coexistence and spread strife," according to his statement.

Karak experienced a series of attacks in 2016 targeting police, including at the town's historic "crusader castle," popular with tourists. Ten people were killed, including seven officers, and dozens of others were wounded. Jordanian security forces killed the gunmen after a long standoff.

Vatican's doctrine office publishes *Venite ad Me* on intergenerational transmission of the faith

VATICAN (OSV NEWS): On October 22, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith released *Venite ad Me* [Come to Me], addressing the challenge of passing on the Christian faith during a time of "epochal change" marked by a "crisis in its intergenerational transmission.

Signed by prefect, Víctor Manuel Cardinal Fernández, the document responds to a request first made by the late Pope Francis and was approved for publication by Pope Leo XIV after an August 21 audience.

Venite ad Me was written in response to a request first made by the late Pope Francis toward the end of his life and was approved for publication by Pope Leo XIV during an August 21 audience with Cardinal Fernandez and Monsignor Armando Matteo, the secretary for the dicastery's doctrinal section.

Spanning over 25,000 words in eight chapters, the document addresses the crisis in faith transmission amid cultural shifts, family breakdown, and digital technology, emphasizing the need to communicate the "kerygma," the core proclamation of Christ's salvation.

It also engages with themes from Pope Leo's first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas,* on artificial intelligence.

The text urges the Church to focus on evangelising adults and catechising youth, noting that in many regions, fewer parents are introducing their children to the Gospel.

It highlights the importance of liturgy, beauty, and personal witness. Personal testimonies include stories of transformation from addiction and encounters with faith through social media.

Described as "a set of considerations" rather than doctrinal note, the document aims to stimulate reflection and pastoral commitment regarding faith transmission.

"The text examines a variety of points of view without, however, claiming to settle the matter, which remains open to further analysis and development. This means that these considerations are not marked, as are other documents of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, by terminological precision and systematic treatment, but instead allow a more discursive style, as is especially evident in the section on personal testimonies mentioned above," the text states in its introduction.

Many bishops' conferences contributed, offering testimonies for the final chapter.

Venite ad Me identifies the family as the primary place for transmitting faith, but acknowledges this process has been interrupted in many parts of the world.

The liturgy is highlighted as formative, with a call for pastors to emphasise the richness of Catholic tradition.

Liturgy is described as living tradition, shaping Christians capable of bearing witness to salvation and connecting them to the Church's history.

The document encourages special attention to music as a missionary tool, using beauty to attract people to the faith, especially where words fall short.

It discusses the importance of homilies, volunteer work, and the need to expand leadership roles for women in the Church, noting ongoing study of the topic.

Venite ad Me will serve as a starting point for the International Theological Commission, which will study cultural forms of faith transmission over the next five years. Pope Leo recently appointed 24 new members to the commission.

General hotlines for Filipino migrant workers in Hong Kong

Philippine Consulate : 2823 8501
Consulate Hotline (after office hours) : 9155 4023
Hong Kong Immigration Department : 2824 6111
Hong Kong Labour Department : 2157 9537
Legal Aid Department : 2537 7677
Hong Kong Police (report hotline) : 2527 7177
Telephone number inquiries : 1081

Philippine bishop honoured for environmental, human rights advocacy

MANILA (LICAS NEWS): Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos, the Philippines, was among three individual awardees recognised during the 9th Gawad Bayani ng Kalikasan [Environmental Heroes Award] at the Benito Sy Pow Auditorium at the University of the Philippines Diliman on October 24.

Former ACT Teachers Party-list representative, France Castro, and Dr. Ana Marie Rilloraza-Leung were also honoured in the individual category.

The biennial Gawad Bayani ng Kalikasan [GBK] honours Filipino individuals and organisations involved in defending the environment, communities, and people's rights. The event was co-organised by the Centre for Environmental Concerns-Philippines and IBON Foundation.



Bishop Alminaza speaks after receiving the Gawad Bayani ng Kalikasan award on behalf of late community journalist RJ Ledesma at the University of the Philippines Diliman on October 24. Photo: LiCAS News/ Mark Saludes

Bishop Alminaza, who heads Caritas Philippines, renewed his call for communities affected by development projects to have a voice in decisions that shape their lives and environment.

The bishop said he accepted the recognition in solidarity with environmental defenders and communities who continue their work despite the risks they face.

"Receiving the GBK award was a touching recognition that I accepted in solidarity with all environmental defenders and communities who continue the work, often at great cost," he said.

Bishop Alminaza said environmental advocates are sometimes criticised for speaking about ecological destruction and questioning development driven by greed.

"As environmental defenders, we are sometimes called doomsdayers or killjoys because we speak about the destruction of the Earth and ask hard questions about greed and development. However, it is my experience that environmental defenders are full of courage, compassion, and hope," The bishop said.

"We defend the Earth because we love life. We know that we are connected to one another and to the land, water, and other living beings that sustain us," he added.

Bishop Alminaza said he found it difficult to relate to being called a "Bayani" [hero] and preferred to be known as a "Tagapangalaga ng Kalikasan" [caretaker of creation].

He said his awareness of environmental degradation was shaped in part by growing up in San Jose, Sipalay, on Negros Island, a town shaped in part by copper mining.

The bishop also pointed to recent encounters with indigenous communities in Western Visayas, including the indigenous Ati community in Boracay and others facing displacement as large hotels and businesses advance in the name of development.

"Their situation asks us: Can we call something progress if the people whose homes, land, and lives are affected have little say in what happens to them?" he said.

Bishop Alminaza also cited an initial convening involving communities from six countries connected by the Mekong River.

"Their stories remind us that the river's health and people's lives are bound together. Those who depend on the Mekong must have a voice in decisions about its future," he said.

The said farmers, Indigenous Peoples, fisherfolk, women, young people, and communities affected by harmful projects were among those present at the Gawad Bayani ng Kalikasan gathering.

"The Gawad Bayani ng Kalikasan awards helped emphasise that we need more chairs and tables where people can speak and be heard," Bishop Alminaza said.

The bishop linked that approach to "Hayuma" [repairing the nets], a Visayan term he uses to describe the work of restoring what has been damaged.

"We mend what is broken together. When people are being harmed, we stand with them, defend their rights, and help stop the harm. Then, we continue the work of mending together—protecting life and the environment, and restoring what displacement and exploitation have torn apart," he said.

The organisational awardees were the Jalaur River for the People's Movement, Alyansa ng Novo Vizcayano para sa Kalikasan, and Barikada ng Mamamayan ng Sibuyan.

Late community journalist RJ Ledesma was named the most distinguished awardee as he was honoured for his reporting on the struggles of peasants and indigenous communities against large-scale infrastructure projects, land grabbing, and fossil fuel projects.

Bishop Alminaza and Altermidya Network chairperson, Raymund Villanueva, received the award on Ledesma's behalf.

The bishop celebrated RJ Ledesma's life and legacy. He called Ledesma both a "Bagani" [hero] and "Hakson" [to embrace], noting that 'Hakson' was also the name of Ledesma's youth-led environmental group fighting land grabbing and ecological harm on Negros Island.

He praised Ledesma's journalism for spotlighting the struggles of the poor and the environment, and for inspiring solidarity and compassion. Ledesma, killed in Toboso, Negros Occidental, was remembered as a champion for ecological and agrarian justice, whose legacy continues to unite and inspire others.

Catholic communicators in Vietnam champion truth and ethics in digital media

XUAN LOC (LICAS NEWS): Catholic communicators from 27 dioceses in Vietnam called for greater attention to truth, human dignity, and ethical responsibility in digital media during the 2026 Social Communications Pastoral Gathering held October 20–22 at Xuan Loc Bishop's House in southern Vietnam.



Catholic communicators gathered at Xuan Loc Bishop's House from October 20 to 22 to promote truth, human dignity, and ethical responsibility in digital media. Photo: LiCAS News

The three-day gathering brought together 122 participants, including Bishop Dominic Nguyen Tuan Anh, chairperson of the Committee for Social Communications of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Vietnam [CBCV], clergy, religious, seminarians, and laypeople, to discuss the Church's communication mission amid the rapid development of artificial intelligence [AI] and digital technology.

During the opening Mass, Bishop John Do Van Ngan of the Diocese of Xuan Loc, which hosted the event, said that Catholic communication must go beyond transmitting information and measuring success through online engagement.

"Under the light of the Gospel, communication is not merely about transmitting information or measuring success through the number of interactions and likes, but about encounter, understanding, and self-giving in love according to the example of Jesus Christ," Bishop Do said.

Auxiliary Bishop Louis Nguyen Tuan Anh reflected on the Holy Spirit's coming upon the disciples, transforming their fear into a mission of peace and witness. He said Pentecost showed how differences could become bridges of communion, contrasting this with the division associated with the Tower of Babel.

Bishop Peter Nguyen Van Kham of Mỹ Tho delivered a presentation on Pope Leo XIV's *Magnifica Humanitas*, examining the Church's communication mission in a rapidly changing technological environment.

Participants also attended specialised sessions on safeguarding human dignity amid technological advances and discussed challenges facing Catholic communicators, including fake news, divisive online content, and the misuse of AI.

Using the method of Conversation in the Spirit, delegates met in small groups to share experiences, listen to one another, and identify practical responses to emerging challenges.

The discussions emphasised that digital tools cannot replace personal witness, faith, or an upright conscience. Instead, technology must serve the human person and remain guided by ethical standards, truth, and love.

Sister Theresa Nguyen Thi Thanh Huyen reflected, "I hope that with my humble experiences and especially after this gathering, there will be many initiatives, methods, and specific plans for proclaiming the Good News through the communications mission."

Father Anthony Ha Xuan Loc shared that the gathering "strengthened his commitment to the Church's communication mission," and he hopes to put what he learned into practice.

The event concluded with a call from Bishop Nguyen for dioceses and religious congregations to invest in personnel formation and actively support the Church's future pastoral initiatives.



A farmer with harvested crops. Photo: Aldana Mae Balduman, via Pexels.com

Lack of El Niño response puts farmers, food security at risk, Philippine Church group warns

MANILA (LICAS NEWS): The Church People-Workers Solidarity [CWS] warned that the Philippine government's lack of a comprehensive response to an impending super El Niño could endanger farmers' livelihoods and the country's food supply.

The warning was issued on October 21, National Peasant Day, and called for stronger support for farmers, protection of agricultural land, and genuine agrarian reform.

"And now, in the face of an impending super El Niño, the absence of a comprehensive government response jeopardizes not only our farmers' livelihoods but also our national food supplies," CWS said.

The group said farmers, farmworkers and Indigenous communities continue to face land insecurity, poverty, debt and inadequate public support despite their role in sustaining the country's food supply.

"For decades, Philippine agriculture has not received the sustained, comprehensive support it needs," it said.

The group cited high production costs, limited irrigation and post-harvest facilities, inadequate access to machinery and credit, climate-related losses and weak bargaining power in the market.

CWS also raised concern over the country's dependence on imported rice and said import policy, including the effects of the Rice Tariffication Law, should be assessed alongside domestic production, farmer incomes and consumer prices.

The group said some vegetable farmers have been forced to leave crops unharvested or discard produce during periods of oversupply because farmgate prices did not cover the costs of harvesting, packing and transport.

It cited reports from Benguet, in northern Luzon, where prices had fallen to only a few pesos per kilo, pointing to what it described as the need for better storage, transport, market access, and fairer bargaining conditions.

Clean energy is necessary, but its development must respect land rights

CWS also pointed to landlessness and insecure tenure as continuing threats to farming communities.

Citing Philippine Statistics Authority data, CWS said the total area of agricultural farms fell from 9.97 million hectares in 1991 to 6.31 million hectares in 2022, a decline of 36.7 per cent.

The group also cited PSA figures showing poverty incidence in 2023 at 27 per cent among farmers and 32.4 per cent among Indigenous Peoples.

"When small farmers are trapped in debt and cannot earn a decent livelihood, they may be pressured to lease or sell their land," CWS said, adding that development "must not deepen this vulnerability."

The group warned that productive farmland and ancestral lands could come under pressure from real estate, industrial, and other commercial projects.

It also raised concerns over plantation and energy projects in Negros, as well as proposed large-scale solar developments in Nueva Ecija and other parts of Central Luzon.

In Capas, Tarlac, CWS cited concerns raised by Aeta communities over the proposed Pax Silica hub in New Clark City, including its possible effects on homes, livelihoods, and ancestral-domain claims.

"Clean energy is necessary, but its development must respect land rights, protect food-producing areas, and include the communities most affected in decisions from the outset," CWS said.

The group said projects affecting Indigenous communities should proceed only with respect for their rights, meaningful consultation and free, prior and informed consent where required.

CWS said it was not opposed to development, technological advancement, modern infrastructure or clean energy, but argued that projects should create lasting public value and protect local livelihoods.

It called on the government to advance agrarian reform, improve farm-to-market systems, protect productive agricultural land, uphold Indigenous Peoples' rights and pursue industrial and energy development that protects food security and community rights.

"The Church's prophetic mission calls us to stand with farmers and Indigenous communities in their pursuit of land, life, and justice," CWS said.

Pope Leo XIV invites young people to register for WYD Seoul 2027



Photo: Committee for Communications, Archdiocese of Seoul

SEOUL (SE): "Today, as registration opens for next year's World Youth Day, I warmly invite each of you to Seoul," Pope Leo XIV said in a video message, released by the Holy See Press Office, as registration for World Youth Day [WYD] Seoul 2027 opened on October 22, the Committee for Communications of the Archdiocese of Seoul, South Korea, announced in a press release.

"This is not merely an invitation to see a new city. It is a call to set out on a pilgrimage of faith, friendship, and hope," Pope Leo said.

The 41st edition of WYD is scheduled to take place in Seoul from 3 to 8 August 2027. Prospective participants can register via *register.wyd-reg.org*, accessible through the official website *www.wydseoul.org*. Registration forms are available in six official languages: Korean, English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Italian.

The opening of registration coincided with the liturgical memorial of Pope St. John Paul II, who first met with young people in Rome in 1984 before establishing World Youth Day the following year.

In his message, Pope Leo recalled the words St. John Paul II "continuously proclaimed to all peoples: 'Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ.'" He added: "These words also apply to each one of you."

The pope encouraged young people to come as they are: "On this pilgrimage, bring all that you are and all that you carry in your hearts, including your dreams, desires, and hopes, as well as your wounds and struggles," he said. "The Lord is waiting for you in this place of encounter and communion."

He concluded: "I look forward to seeing you in Seoul!"

The pope's video message is available on the official WYD Seoul 2027 website: *https://wydseoul.org/introduction/moment*. The official text of the message is available in the Holy See Press Office Bulletin.

The bishops of the Archdiocese of Seoul responded with a video message of their own, featuring Archbishop Peter Soon-taick Chung, president of the WYD Seoul 2027 Local Organising Committee, registering alongside young people. In their video, the bishops called on pilgrims in Korea and internationally to participate in the event.

How to register

Pilgrims are required to register in groups. Bishops' conferences, dioceses, parishes, religious congregations, and other Catholic associations and communities are each able to register their young people as a group. Individuals and small groups are encouraged to join existing groups, such as those organised by their parish or diocese.

Registration is a two-phase process. In the first phase, the group leader creates an account and submits basic details, including country, leader information, and the estimated number of pilgrims. This step signals the group's intention to participate, but no payment is needed yet.

In the second phase, after account activation, the leader provides the details of each group member, arrival and departure dates, and catechesis preferences. The leader then selects a pilgrim package and completes the payment. Registration is complete once all the information is entered and the payment has been made.

There are 11 pilgrim packages, costing US$70–340. All include Seoul public transport, insurance, and a pilgrim kit. Packages differ by length of stay and options for accommodation and meals. Groups choose the option that fits their needs.

Minors need written parental consent and must be accompanied by an adult. Those needing a visa or with disabilities should provide relevant details during registration.

Registration now opens for pilgrims and volunteers. Bishops can register in early November, while applications for the Youth Festival and Vocations Fair open later that month. Media registration begins May 2027.

See the FAQ at *www.wydseoul.org* or email *inquiries@wydseoul.org* for questions.

The power of the Internet for the good and the bad

Father Shay Cullen,
www.preda.org

On June 22, something shocking shattered the peace at San Jose National High School in Tacloban City, Leyte. At around 9:13am that day, two young boys, aged 14 and 15, opened fire on campus. The horrifying attack claimed the lives of three students and left 20 others injured. The teenage shooters were believed to have been influenced by violent content on the Internet.

Social media platforms are not public services. They are moneymaking machines owned by moguls whose sole desire and purpose in life, it seems, is to make billions of dollars and further enrich themselves, never mind the consequences.

Internet service providers [ISPs] use engagement-driven algorithms designed to lure young audiences and get them addicted to watching harmful content.

Algorithms are computer instructions like "digital robots" that gather information about you and know your likes and dislikes, your habits, and what you search online. Then they track you and know what and how long you watch a video. It combines your viewing data with personal information—age, device type, location—to predict what you want to see next, or not.

They will send you unwanted, sensational and extreme content showing violence, pornography, child abuse, and even violent extremism, like what those two Tacloban boys imitated.

ISPs have done little to block such evil and damaging content despite Philippine law demanding them to do so.

An estimated 500,000 Filipino children—or about one in 100 in the country—were trafficked to produce new child sexual exploitation material or subjected to livestreamed abuse in a single year.

Assessments from the United Nations Children's Fund say that up to two million Internet-using children aged 12 to 17 have experienced some form of online sexual abuse or exploitation.


Image by Pete Linforth from Pixabay

Offshore sex offenders pay as little as US$15 to US$25 a session. According to the Philippine Anti-Money Laundering Council, transactions originating from the United States trigger the largest volume of suspicious financial reports related to the online sexual abuse or exploitation of children.

The Philippine law is strict but largely ignored. Republic Act 11930, or the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials Act, instructs telecommunications companies to install state-of-the-art blocking software, but they don't. Corrupt officials take bribes to ignore the violations of the law.

These intrusions into the life of users can cause severe psychological harm in children, including rising rates of anxiety, depression and sleep deprivation. They can also drive young people to violent actions.

Banning young people from social media is like stopping a bird from flying. Furthermore, there are fundamental rights to be respected, like of free speech and freedom of expression, which good, positive and educational platforms provide and give access to educational material.

Besides, smart young people nowadays can use virtual private networks, which shield them from detection when using the Internet to access certain websites.

Such a ban would prevent young people from accessing help sites. It would also entice children to visit restricted sites and become all the more vulnerable and subject to online sexual abuse, grooming and blackmail.

It is the providers and enablers of the dangerous online material that must be curbed more. Restrictions to keep children from accessing certain sites are welcome; they can help save them from abuse. More importantly, those sites should be identified and blocked.

Restricted use

Another recent Internet-related issue arose when the US military and the White House allegedly ordered restrictions on the Starshield satellite Internet system—the military variant of Starlink—used by Ukraine. As a result, Ukrainian drones were unable to attack Russian oil refineries.

US president, Donald Trump, who claims to be a friend of Russian president, Vladimir Putin, made a deal to buy Russian diesel. Diesel is currently in short supply in the US, hindering the efforts of Trump's Republican Party to maintain control of Congress in the November 3 midterm elections this year.

> ***Banning young people from social media is like stopping a bird from flying***

The Internet restrictions pressured Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy to halt attacks on Russian oil refineries. Oil sales are the source of Russia's wealth and help to fund Putin's war on Ukraine.

It prevented Ukrainian drones from reaching their targets, while Russian drones and missiles continued to rain down on Ukraine's cities and power stations. Zelenskyy has spoken out against the deal, stating that it empowered the Russian economy and, by extension, enabled Putin to continue his attacks. In effect, Zelenskyy argued that Trump was assisting Russia in its assault on Ukraine.

The Internet restrictions also placed Ukrainians in greater danger, as there were no warnings of incoming Russian attacks. The satellite restrictions severely compromised Ukraine's defence systems.

Without proper connectivity, Ukrainian forces were unable to receive early air raid warnings or effectively intercept a subsequent barrage of over 850 Russian drones. As a result, more people died in the bombardments.

The US explicitly threatened to stop exchanging critical military intelligence if Ukraine refused to halt its drone attacks on Russian refineries. Following Ukraine's resumption of strikes against a Rosneft refinery in Ryazan, Trump labelled the actions a "disgrace" and publicly declared that Ukraine needs a new president.

Zelenskyy said in an interview that the moves mean "Ukraine is losing a strong partner in the US" and that Trump is being pushed onto the wrong side of history. European allies have also expressed intense frustration and anger, viewing the US actions as a major stab in the back to the Western coalition.

Be aware of 'digital loneliness' and 'misguided meritocracy' Pope Leo tells educators

VATICAN (OSV NEWS): Pope Leo XIV met with participants in the International Congress for Pastoral Care in Schools and Universities taking place at the Vatican on October 22-23.

Pope Leo urged educators to recognise the challenges facing young people today, saying many struggle with "digital loneliness," broken families and feeling "paralysed by the fear of making mistakes" when performance-driven culture turns ruthless.

Organised by the Dicastery for Culture and Education, the congress featured speakers from Haiti, Colombia, Chile, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Spain, Lebanon and Zimbabwe. Discussions focused on cultivating interiority, technology, and educating for peace.

Addressing participants on October 22, the pope said many students may feel "anonymous" as they "walk the halls of our schools and universities."

He asked, "How many students also face existential hardship: broken families, digital loneliness, feelings of inadequacy or fear in the face of a future that seems uncertain?"

He added that "quite a few young people today are virtually paralysed by the fear of making mistakes, of not measuring up, of being misunderstood, or of failing to meet expectations."

Pope Leo said, "We live in a performance-driven culture that constantly compares and ranks people, sometimes ruthlessly. A misguided meritocracy ultimately fails to respect people. This is why many end up giving up before they even try."

In light of these challenges, the pope said Catholic schools and universities must be "first and foremost a home," where students feel known, welcomed and valued.

The pope noted that a welcoming environment is one in which someone "looks you in the eye, remembers your name, notices your absence, and rejoices at your return."

He pointed out, "Beneath the armour that so many teenagers build around themselves to avoid suffering lies the desire to love and be loved."

The pope stressed, "Pastoral ministry in schools and universities will be all the more fruitful the more it focuses on educating the heart— educating the heart in compassion, gratitude, and the ability to be moved by the suffering of others; educating it in praise and the longing for God."

Pope Leo recommended service to the poor and volunteer work as experiences "where the heart learns to expand," urging student ministers to help form young people "to become pioneers of a new way of living in the world."

Pope Leo emphasised that pastoral ministry in educational settings should nurture thoughtful growth, teach discernment, and support persistent truth-seeking. He said that in a welcoming environment, students can freely seek understanding, highlighting that schools and universities exist to pursue truth together.

He noted that courage comes from trust—someone believing in you before you believe in yourself—and explained that Jesus empowered his disciples through his trust in them, not their courage.

"Dear brothers and sisters, false teachers and deceptive messages promise to provide quick answers to young people's questions," Pope Leo said.

He said, "You, however, have chosen to do something greater: to walk with them along the way, until they discover the gifts that God has already placed within them."



YOUR DAILY MASS GUIDE

NOVEMBER 1 – ALL SAINTS DAY. Mass of the Solemnity, *Gloria, Creed*, preface of the Solemnity (green). Readings:
Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14;
1 John 3:1-3;
Matthew 5:1-12a.

NOVEMBER 2 – ALL SOULS DAY. Mass of the day (green).
Readings:
Wisdom 3:1-9;
John 6:37-40.

NOVEMBER 3 – TUESDAY: THIRTY-FIRST WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME. Mass of the day (green).
Readings:
Philippians 2:5-11;
Luke 14:15-24.

NOVEMBER 4 – ST. CHARLES BORROMEO.
Mass of the memorial (white).
Readings: Philippians 2:12-18;
Luke 14:25-33.

NOVEMBER 5 – THURSDAY: THIRTY-FIRST WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME. Mass of the day (green).
Readings:
Philippians 3:3-8a;
Luke 15:1-10.

NOVEMBER 6 – FRIDAY: THIRTY-FIRST WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME. Mass of the day (green).
Readings:
Philippians 3:17 — 4:1;
Luke 16:1-8.

NOVEMBER 7 – SATURDAY: THIRTY-FIRST WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME. Mass of the day (green).
Readings:
Philippians 4:10-19;
Luke 16:9-15.



Apostleship of Prayer

Themes for November 2026

For the proper use of wealth

Let us pray for the proper use of wealth, that not succumbing to the temptation of selfishness, it may always be put at the service the common good and solidarity of those who have less.

Solemnity of all saints

Readings: Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12a

The joy no one can take away

Today we honour the saints: the famous ones in stained-glass windows, and the countless unknown ones who loved God quietly, perhaps in our own families. Jesus shows us what they had in common in the Beatitudes.

Father Fernando Armellini scj notes that Matthew places this teaching "on the mountain." In the Bible, the mountain is less a place on the map than "any place or time when we dispose ourselves to meet the Lord and to accept his word." Jesus leaves the plain, where life is ranked by health, success and a "flush bank account," and climbs to where God's very different scale of values is proclaimed.

On the first Beatitude, Armellini is striking: "the poor, according to the Gospel, are not those who have nothing, but those who do not keep anything for themselves." And its promise is not only for the next life: "From the moment we choose to become and remain poor, we enter the 'kingdom of heaven' and belong to the family of saints."

William Barclay agrees that this blessedness begins now. It is "something into which he has entered" already, a joy "completely untouchable and unassailable," because it comes from living in the presence of Jesus.

This is the secret of the saints. They were not perfect people who never fell. They were people who kept turning to God with open hands, sharing what they had received. Holiness is not reserved for a few heroes; it is the ordinary vocation of every baptised Christian.

To reflect on: What am I keeping for myself that God is asking me to share?

Prayer: Lord, you call each of us to holiness. Through the prayers of all your saints, give us poor and generous hearts, and the joy that no one can take from us. Amen.



● **Father Josekutty Mathew** CMF

Ang kagalakang hindi maiaalis ng sinuman

Ngayong araw, pinararangalan natin ang mga santo: ang mga sikat na nakalarawan sa mga bintanang bubog (stained-glass windows), at ang di-mabilang na mga hindi kilalang nagmahal sa Diyos sa tahimik na paraan, marahil maging sa ating sariling pamilya. Ipinapakita sa atin ni Hesus ang kanilang pagkakatulad sa mga Mapapalad (Beatitudes).

Inihahayag ni P. Fernando Armellini scj na inilagay ni Mateo ang turo na ito "sa bundok." Sa Bibliya, ang bundok ay hindi lamang isang lugar sa mapa kundi "anumang lugar o panahon kung kailan natin inihahanda ang ating sarili upang makatagpo ang Panginoon at tanggapin ang Kanyang salita." Iniwan ni Hesus ang kapatagan, kung saan ang buhay ay sinusukat sa kalusugan, tagumpay, at "masaganang deposito sa bangko," at umakyat sa lugar kung saan ipinapahayag ang napakaibang pamantayan ng Diyos.

Sa unang Mapapalad, kapansin-pansin ang sinabi ni Armellini: "ang mga dukha, ayon sa Ebanghelyo, ay hindi ang mga walang anumang pag-aari, kundi ang mga taong walang itinatabi para sa kanilang sarili." At ang pangako nito ay hindi lamang para sa kabilang buhay: "Mula sa sandaling piliin nating maging at manatiling dukha, pumapasok tayo sa 'kaharian ng langit' at nabibilang sa pamilya ng mga santo."

Sumasang-ayon si William Barclay na ang pagpapalang ito ay nagsisimula na ngayon. Ito ay "isang bagay na pinalooban na niya," isang kagalakang "hindi kailanman magagalaw at maiintimidahan," dahil ito ay nagmumula sa pamumuhay sa piling ni Hesus.

Ito ang lihim ng mga santo. Hindi sila mga perpektong taong hindi kailanman nagkamali. Sila ay mga taong patuloy na lumalapit sa Diyos nang may bukas na mga kamay, na ibinabahagi ang anumang kanilang natanggap. Ang kabanalan ay hindi nakalaan lamang para sa iilang bayani; ito ay ang karaniwang bokasyon ng bawat bininyagang Kristiyano.

Para pagnilayan: Ano ang itinatabi ko para sa aking sarili na hinihiling ng Diyos na ibahagi ko?

Panalangin: Panginoon, tinatawag Mo ang bawat isa sa amin sa kabanalan. Sa pamamagitan ng mga panalangin ng lahat ng Iyong mga santo, pagkalooban Mo kami ng mga pusong dukha at bukas-palad, at ng kagalakang walang sinumang makakakuha sa amin. Amen.



● **Claretian Publicaitons**

The many faces of evil



In *Life of Christ*, Blessed Fulton J. Sheen wrote: "Very few people believe in the devil these days, which suits the devil very well. He is always helping to circulate the news of his own death." While many modern Christians avoid the topic, Church teaching and Sacred Scripture remain clear about the reality of Satan.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that behind the fall of man "lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God" (No. 391). Citing the Fourth Lateran Council, the Catechism clarifies that the devil and other demons "were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing." As a creature of pure spirit, Satan possesses great power, yet he remains finite and cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Permitted by divine providence, his destructive acts cause spiritual and physical injuries out of hatred for God (No. 395).

The essential mark of the devil's rebellion is pride. As the Second Vatican Council noted in *Gaudium et Spes*, man abused his liberty at the urging of the Evil One, seeking to attain his goal apart from God (No. 13). Seduced by the devil, man wanted to "be like God," but "without God, before God, and not in accordance with God" (CCC, No. 398).

Scripture presents Satan through various guises and evolving understanding. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *satan* often describes an action—obstructing, opposing, or accusing—rather than a specific entity. In Job, "the satan" acts as an adversary testing human integrity under God's permission (Job 2:2), while Zechariah depicts him accusing the high priest (Zec 3:1–2).

By the time of Christ, Satan was understood as a distinct spiritual creature standing in open opposition to God. Apocryphal and New Testament writings recall the cosmic fall of rebellious angels (2 Pt 2:4; 1 Jn 3:8). Isaiah 14:12 allegorically describes the fall of Lucifer, the "morning star," while Revelation details the heavenly war where St. Michael and his angels cast down the "huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan" (Rv 12:7–9).

In the Gospels, Jesus speaks directly about the devil, identifying him as the "ruler of this world" (Jn 12:31), a murderer, a liar, and the father of lies (Jn 8:44). Jesus' public ministry began with resisting Satan's temptations in the wilderness (Mt 4:1–11) and continued through exorcisms that demonstrated his authority over the "prince of demons."

Jesus warned that his followers would face spiritual warfare. He assured Peter that the powers of hell would not prevail against the Church (Mt 16:18), even as Satan demanded to sift the apostles like wheat (Lk 22:31). Judas succumbed to Satan's influence in betraying Christ (Jn 13:2, 27), whereas Peter repented after his denial.

For believers, dcripture emphasizes that while Satan tempts, he lacks the power to force compliance. As St. James writes: "Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas 4:7).

Satan's ultimate fate is already sealed. Jesus affirmed that the devil and his angels are destined for the "eternal fire" (Mt 25:41). At the end of temporal history, after a final period of testing, Satan will be "thrown into the pool of fire and sulphur... tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rv 20:10), marking the total victory of God's kingdom.

● **By Carl E. Olson,** *OSV News*
Abridged by SE

Notice Board

Community

First computer class for the displaced concluded with joy



Participants of the adult computer class with their certificates. Photo supplied

The Refugee Services Group of Society of St. Vincent de Paul Hong Kong Council (SSVP-HK) launched in May a structured, 14-session "Adult Computer Class" to empower adult asylum seekers and refugees with practical computer knowledge, covering both hardware and software skills through hands-on learning. The successful programme concluded with a graduation ceremony on October 3, where nine participants were awarded certificates of completion and presented with refurbished notebook computers as souvenirs.

The celebration was attended by participants' families, group members, and the members of the Pastoral Care for Displaced People (PCDP), including Sister Victoria Victorino, Father Natalius Suryanto, Sister Sandra Covini, and Sister Corazon Demetillo.

During the ceremony, graduates shared personal reflections on how the class impacted their lives. One participant expressed heartfelt gratitude for SSVP-HK's ongoing support for her family and children, becoming emotional as she described how learning to use a computer fulfilled an opportunity she never thought possible. Another graduate shared that her newly acquired skills now enable her to teach digital skills to her own children, while a third participant proudly noted that the experience boosted her confidence to demonstrate her technical abilities to others.

The course was made possible through dedicated volunteers, including university computer department staff who developed the curriculum in just two days, alongside SSVP-HK members who served as tutors and helpers. To meet ongoing demand, SSVP-HK plans to organise another computer class around January or February 2027 in collaboration with PCDP. The next cohort aims to expand enrollment to 15 to 20 participants from across PCDP teams, with organisers currently securing a larger venue and additional teaching staff to support the larger group. *SE*

Look at the heart behind the screen

Working in Hong Kong, social media is truly a blessing because it lets me stay close to my family back home. I can check on my children, hear about their day, and feel like I'm still part of their lives. But honestly, it also brings some stress. Without seeing facial expressions or hearing their real voice, a simple text can easily be misunderstood as cold or angry. And whenever I see that my message was read but no one replies right away, my heart starts racing. I instantly worry that they are upset with me.



To make things better, we have started doing video calls when possible so we can see each other's smiles and avoid misunderstandings. We also tell each other our daily schedules so I won't panic if they take time to answer. Most importantly, I try to remind myself to trust them and stay calm instead of always thinking the worst.

— Gloria Ruiz

What do you reckon?

Remembering the living and the departed loved ones



To honor our departed, I offer Mass intentions, pray daily, practice almsgiving, and light a candle to keep their memory alive and remind my family to visit their graves. Even after 16 years as an OFW, physical distance is a constant challenge. Thankfully, digital communication lets us bridge the gap. Through video calls, I teach my son to pray the Rosary for the departed.

— Jeneveb N. Arabia



To prepare for All Saints' Day, I pray a nine-day Novena for my departed loved ones, completing it on November 1. I notify my family whose names I've included and remind them to light candles. Back home, we prepare special meals featuring our passed loved ones' favourite dishes, making us feel as though they are still sitting at the table with us.

— Shiryl Ardiente



Working in Hong Kong does not diminish my bond with my family. I maintain our spiritual connection through phone calls, shared prayers, and strong faith in God. I offer constant prayers for my departed loved ones, carrying their unconditional love, lessons, and values in my heart every day.

— Arlene Peñaflor



Visiting the cemetery on November 1 is a sacred Filipino tradition. Since All Saints' Day is not a public holiday in Hong Kong, I watch from afar as my family visits our loved ones' graves. Though it brings sadness, I lift up their souls in prayer from a distance and ask the Saints to intercede for us.

— Virginia Rillera



Every morning before work, I pray the Rosary, the St. Gertrude Prayer, and the Divine Mercy Chaplet to protect my family and ask God's mercy for the living and the dead. For All Saints' Day, I light a candle to meditate and feel their enduring presence.

— Virginia M. Tayo



Technology allows me to guide my son's spiritual growth by teaching him the Rosary and reminding him to attend Mass. I care for my departed loved ones by offering Mass intentions, daily prayers, personal sacrifices, and almsgiving for their eternal peace.

— Josephine De Leon Vertudez

It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.
— 2 Maccabees 12:46

Catholic community growing in Uzbekistan



Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, Tashkent.
Photo: St. Christofor, CC BY-SA 4.0

TASHKENT (FIDES): In Uzbekistan, a Muslim-majority nation, the Catholic community is small but quietly growing. The Church is establishing new parishes, building relationships, and providing a spiritual home for those seeking faith and belonging. "Sometimes we start a new parish with three, four or five people. That is how it begins, with a small seedling," explains Bishop Jerzy Maculewicz, apostolic administrator of Uzbekistan. "We make a beginning, and the Lord guides our steps."

In the past two years, two new parishes have been established—one dedicated to Divine Mercy and another to St. Joseph. In Angren, about 90 kilometres from Tashkent, the parish has just over 20 faithful—mostly children—demonstrating the Church's growth even in previously unreached areas.

Bishop Maculewicz, who has served in Uzbekistan for over two decades, notes that growth, though gradual, is visible. Appointed in 2005, just before the death of Pope St. John Paul II, he continues to draw inspiration from the late pontiff's legacy.

When the community chose a patron saint, St. John Paul II was proposed as there were no local martyrs to serve in that role.

When Bishop Maculewicz arrived, there were five parishes, overseen by the Conventual Franciscan friars, who were tasked with developing the Church's structures.

Under the former president, Islam Karimov, restrictions affected all faiths, with children and young people forbidden from attending places of worship. Since 2016, under current president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the country has become more open, and the Church now operates with greater peace and freedom—a change evident in the founding of new parishes.

Recent legal reforms have reduced state control and emphasised the separation of state and religion, strengthening protections for minorities, including Christians.

The Catholic Church in Uzbekistan numbers about 4,000 faithful out of a population of 39 million, served by around 10 priests and 15 religious sisters. Its sole jurisdiction is the Apostolic Administration, based in Tashkent.

Despite its small size and wide geographic spread, the Church attracts new members, including foreign students. Many Indian students—Catholic and non-Catholic—come to pray and find community. Parishes have become meeting places for friendship, spirituality, and belonging.

> ***We see that every person who draws closer to the Church has received a personal call from God***

More families are Catholic from birth, rather than individual converts. Young Catholics now marry and raise children in the faith, deepening the community's roots.

Bishop Maculewicz sees hope in this noting, "We see that every person who draws closer to the Church has received a personal call from God." Each year, candidates prepare for Baptism over 18 months, while others, already baptised in other traditions, join through a profession of faith. At the 2026 Easter Vigil, around 10 people, including children, were baptised in Tashkent.

The community is also affected by migration, as young people seek opportunities abroad, creating both challenges and new opportunities for the Church.

In this Muslim-majority society, Catholics value good relations and coexistence. There is a long-standing tradition of religious tolerance, rooted in Silk Road history, where people exchanged cultures and beliefs as well as goods. Uzbekistan's diversity—home to over 120 nationalities—encourages interfaith encounters.

Bishop Maculewicz recalls a story of neighbours of different faiths celebrating holidays together—a testament to natural tolerance. Everyday hospitality fosters dialogue; Uzbeks are generous and welcoming, often inviting strangers for tea. "For many, what matters most is knowing that the person they are speaking to believes in God," he says, "rather than knowing which religious denomination that person belongs to."

Blessings are valued regardless of faith. This openness creates opportunities for trust and Christian witness. Interfaith dialogue also extends to relations with authorities. Bishop Maculewicz sits on the State Committee for Religious Affairs with other faith leaders. "It is a place where we can exchange ideas and offer our views to the government," he explains. The government has considered their suggestions in recent legislation, which he describes as "a positive sign."

The Mission of all the baptised

"I would like to repeat the words of St. Francis Xavier: we must always maintain a missionary spirit, in every moment and in every action of our lives. Jesus sent us forth to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples. He sent all the baptised, not only priests and consecrated men and women, but laypeople as well," the bishop said.

In Uzbekistan, this takes the form of personal encounters, hospitality, and quiet witness. "As Catholics, we are present, we build relationships, we accompany those who draw closer to the faith and offer a place of prayer to those seeking a community," says Bishop Maculewicz.

"We are the salt of the earth and the leaven of the world. Even a small Catholic community can enrich a nation," the bishop said.

"I believe the Lord has a plan for us. It is up to us to listen to his voice, do his will and fulfil his plan for this land and its people," he said.



People protest the attack on Father Barla (inset left).
Photo: RVA News

Protests and call for arrests after attack on Indian priest

(RVA NEWS): Father Benedict Barla, assistant parish priest at St. Michael's Cathedral, Ranchi, eastern India, and principal-in-charge of R.C. Middle School in neighbouring Khunti, remained in intensive care at a hospital in on October 21, after masked men allegedly attacked him with sharp-edged weapons in his school office, Catholic Connect reported.

Father Barla sustained severe head injuries and was left unconscious after an attack at around 8:50pm on October 20, according to Father George Hemrom, secretary to the bishop of the Diocese of Khunti. Three to four masked men allegedly assaulted him near the principal's and staff offices, then stole money before fleeing.

He remained unconscious at the scene overnight.

Other priests discovered the attack the next morning and took him to Sadar Hospital in Khunti for initial treatment. Due to the seriousness of his injuries, he was referred to the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences in Ranchi and subsequently admitted to the intensive care unit of Pulse Hospital, Ranchi.

A report by The Indian Express said CCTV footage showed three masked men arriving at the school on a motorcycle at around 9:00pm. The school was reportedly closed for a festival, and the person who usually stayed with Father Barla was away attending his mother's funeral.

The circumstances have raised questions as to whether the attackers knew the priest was alone. Authorities have not yet established a motive for the assault.

The assault triggered protests on October 21, when tribal Christians and other groups gathered at Bhagat Singh Chowk in Khunti. Media reports said demonstrators blocked roads and demanded the immediate arrest of the attackers. Some protesters reportedly gave police a 24-hour ultimatum to act.

Khunti is a predominantly tribal district in Jharkhand, in eastern India, with a significant Adivasi [Indigenous] population. The incident has raised concerns among local Christians and community members, who are demanding swift police action.

Church officials and members of the local community are awaiting further information as the investigation continues. The identities of the assailants and the motive for the attack remain unknown.

Police are examining CCTV footage and other evidence to identify the suspects and clarify the circumstances of the attack. The weapon used has not been independently confirmed, and no arrests had been reported as of October 21.

Sexual Violence Victims' Helplines

In an emergency dial 999 police response within 30 minutes
Rain Lily : 2375 5322 (will also come to meet you)
Bethune House Refuge 2522 8264 — Emergency 9488 9044
Christian Action : 2739 6193
St. John's Cathedral : 2522 8264
Helpers for Domestic Workers : 2523 4020
Equal Opportunities Commission : 2511 8211
Police Hotline : 2527 7177

Southeast Asia's air pollution crisis demands regional ecological conversion

By Benedict Tang

SINGAPORE(SE): As smoke from Indonesia's forest and peatland fires has spread across Southeast Asia, Catholics in Kalimantan and Malaysia have responded with prayer and calls for sustainable farming, consumption, and cross-border cooperation.

According to Singapore's National Environment Agency, at 7:00pm on October 16, the air in three of the nation's five regions was in the "very unhealthy" range, with the 24-hour Pollutant Standards Index at 225 in the central region.

Grace Fu, minister for Sustainability and the Environment, stated that fires on land owned by seven Indonesian companies contributed to Singapore's haze. The city will require them to put out fires, stop burning, and submit action plans under the Transboundary Haze Pollution Act. The haze may persist until the inter-monsoon period, expected in late October or early November.



A firefighter tackles burning vegetation in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, on September 2026. Photo: RAKAT team

Export of smoke

In the Indonesian part of Borneo, Franciscan Father Wilbrodus Andreas, head of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission in South Kalimantan, described the fires as an "export of smoke".

He noted the damage to nature and communities—air pollution, ecosystem loss, respiratory illness, and loss of crops. "The environmental crisis is also a human and moral crisis," he said, citing Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.

He stressed that dialogue with policymakers and working with people of goodwill is "the most feasible option" to prevent and halt the fires. "To imagine humanity without the earth is impossible, while the earth without humanity is possible," he added.

He described the fires as a complex issue requiring collaboration among communities, good-willed individuals, and stakeholders. He urged ongoing prayer, dialogue, and cooperation to resolve the forest and land fires.

Friars at work

In Indonesia, the Franciscan friars "continue to promote integral ecology through education and formation, eco-pastoral formation and collaboration with local communities," including "encouraging sustainable practices that protect forests and avoid the use of slash-and-burn methods," said Friar John Wong, OFM, general definitor for Asia-Oceania.

"Our order's response includes disaster relief and practical assistance, formation and education, healthcare, advocacy, collaboration and prayer. Each has a part to play," he said.

He emphasized that environmental and community health are inseparable, citing St Francis' Canticle, which regards all of nature as gifts deserving gratitude and respect.

A wounded mother

In Central Kalimantan, Palangka Raya and many districts have been shrouded in smoke since late July, according to Frans DS Sani Lake, director of JPIC Kalimantan, an independent non-governmental organisation founded in 2010 and part of the Central Kalimantan Forest and Land Fire Response Coalition, an interfaith civil society coalition.

By mid-September, nearly 16,000 hectares—mostly peatland—had burned, much of it smouldering even after flames were extinguished, Lake said.

Village communities and Indigenous peoples near the peatlands bear the heaviest burden, inhaling thick smoke, losing farms and food sources, and often being unfairly blamed. JPIC Kalimantan advocates peatland restoration and land rights for Indigenous peoples.

Laudato Si' calls on people to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, he said. "In Kalimantan, both are heard in one laboured breath. St. Francis praised God through 'Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us,' but the burning peat is a wounded mother."

Lake argued that faith must go beyond prayer and aid. "Faith also demands ecological conversion and justice: asking who causes the damage, and who bears the consequences," he said.

He stressed, "Smoke knows no national borders. It is a sign that we truly live in one common home."

He welcomed Singapore's move to trace the companies linked to the fires. "We invite the faithful to ask companies and banks in the region where their profits come from," he said.

From charity to solidarity

In West Kalimantan, the Church has held novenas for rain, including in the Diocese of Ketapang. Capuchin Father Pionius Hendi said that they have also been handed out, and clean water distributed along with health aid. The diocese has also accompanied families whose homes burned and held seminars on disaster mitigation, according.

"All of that is important and very good," said the chairperson for Inter-Franciscans for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Indonesia. However, he argued the Church must move "beyond momentary humanitarian aid towards transformative solidarity."

Father Hendi said, "Solidarity is not simply about acting for the community, but acting with the community. They are not objects of pity, but subjects of change."

He stressed the need to look past statistics and ask: "who profits from the damage, who must bear the suffering, and why this keeps happening."

He said, "We cannot keep caring for victims without trying to stop the system that keeps creating victims. We cannot keep handing out masks without asking why our air keeps being polluted."

Smoke over Palembang

In South Sumatra, people in the provincial capital Palembang and four districts have lived with very poor air for about four months, disrupting schooling, work and worship, said Bonie Bangun, coordinator of Perkumpulan Sumsel Bersih, a civil society group in Palembang. The South Sumatra provincial health office recorded 11,021 cases of acute respiratory infection in its data for the 41st week of the year, up to October 18, he said.

The Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Palembang and the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation office of the Franciscan Sisters of Charity have assessed affected areas, urged people to take health precautions, distributed medicine and masks, and opened health services for affected residents, Bangun said.

He said Perkumpulan Sumsel Bersih and seven other civil groups established a haze response post offering "healthy houses" and collecting aid for residents and firefighters.

Bangun noted that forest and land fires represent both an environmental and a moral crisis, reflecting humanity's neglect of creation, according to Catholic teaching and *Laudato Si'*.

"Sister Air"

In Peninsular Malaysia, smoke has blanketed Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor and Negeri Sembilan and disrupted parish life, according to the Archdiocesan Creation Justice Ministry under the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. On October 9, the Ministry of Education ordered schools in areas with high air pollution readings to close.

"This haze is a stark visual and physical manifestation of our broken relationship with our common home. It shows that environmental destruction recognises no geopolitical borders; the smoke from fires in Indonesia directly threatens the health of a child in Kuala Lumpur or Singapore," the ministry said.

"St. Francis's Canticle of the Creatures praises 'Brother Wind' and 'Sister Air,' reminding us that clean air is a sacred gift meant to sustain life, not a corporate dumping ground for short-term profit," it said.

The ministry uses parish networks to educate Catholics about how consumption and unsustainable farming drive ecological suffering. It urged Catholics to press governments for stronger environmental enforcement, protection of remaining peatlands and forests, and closer cooperation between Catholic groups in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia.

In the Diocese of Penang, the haze has disrupted outdoor activities, especially for schoolchildren, the elderly and people with respiratory problems, and on some days has upset parish events, according to Jeanne J Saw, a core team member of the Penang Diocesan Creation Justice Commission, which is led by Deacon Isaac Simbun, and an Animator of Animators for the Asia-Pacific region of the global Laudato Si' Movement.

The commission prays for those affected and for those fighting the fires, teaches people about environmental degradation and climate change, and promotes responsible consumption and sustainable lifestyles, she said.

"Our solidarity and responsibility must cross borders just as the haze crosses borders," she said. "As Catholics, we are called not merely to pray for clear skies, but to help build a future in which people, the future generations and all creation can breathe and flourish together."

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