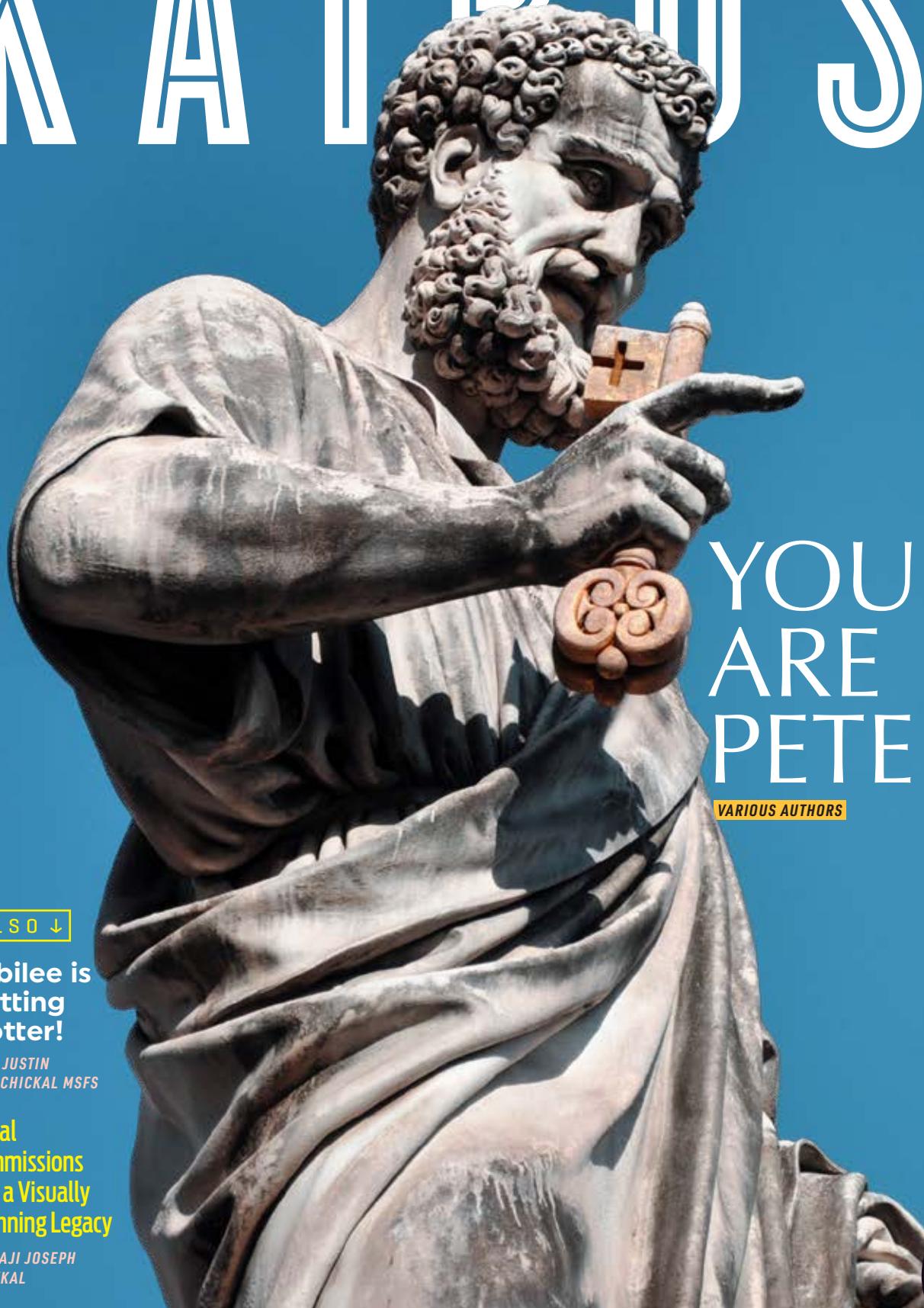


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Jesus Youth





MARY, MY MOTHER



Mother, help our faith! Open our ears to hear God's word and to recognise His voice and call. Awaken in us a desire to follow in His footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive His promise. Help us to be touched by His love, that we may touch Him in faith. Help us to entrust ourselves fully to Him and to believe in His love, especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith is called to mature. Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One. Remind us that those who believe are never alone. Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that He may be light for our path. And may this light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day which is Christ Himself, your Son, our Lord!

EDITOR'S ROOM

DR CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL

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WHAT WE NEED IS A CHURCH WHERE EACH PERSON - YOUNG OR OLD, LAYPERSON OR CLERGY - FEELS CALLED TO SPREAD THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST IN THEIR OWN WAY.

Pope Leo XIV – Legacy and Hopes

Though it has been nearly 40 years, the memories are still fresh in my mind. It was 1986, Pope John Paul II's visit to India. One of the major venues in Kerala for his public appearance was Kottayam. It was there that Sister Alphonsa was declared 'Blessed'. Later, in 2008, she was canonised a saint.

At that time, I was a graduate student. Though I later had the opportunity to see popes even in the Vatican, my first experience of seeing the Pope in person was unforgettable. I still remember travelling from my village to Kottayam, the district headquarters, with an enthusiastic group of people. The huge crowd, the loud chants, the Eucharistic celebration – all of it remains vivid in my mind. Even now, whenever I see news or photos of the Pope visiting another country, those memories come rushing back. I believe this must be the experience of many ordinary people around the world who got to witness such a special moment.

Now, after the remarkable leadership of Pope Francis, the Church has a new shepherd – Pope Leo XIV. Pope Francis has left behind a beautiful legacy. He was known for his simplicity, his deep concern for humanity, his Christ-like approach to world issues, and his efforts to make the Church more synodal – that is, more listening and inclusive. He helped shape a Church that focuses more on people than just rules.

The early words and gestures of Pope Leo XIV are also very encouraging. Coming from a missionary background, he has already spoken about the urgent need for the Church to become more missionary in nature. This is a hopeful sign for the future.

The future of the Church depends on every member, not just priests and religious, taking up the call to be missionaries. Without this, the Church risks becoming inactive and unable to respond to today's challenges. What we need is a Church where each person – young or old, layperson or clergy – feels called to spread the message of Christ in their own way.

It is uplifting to see that all over the world, more lay people and even families are taking part in long-term or lifelong mission work. This shows that a revival is already happening among the faithful.

Let us hope and pray that under the leadership of Pope Leo XIV, every member of the Church becomes a missionary in spirit and action.



Also LOOK OUTFOR

10 Jesus' Table Fellowship

28 Strengthen Your Brethren...

38 Jubilee is Getting Hotter!

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.
Matthew 16:18

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LOOK

ISSUE 88

INSIDE

REGULARS

- 6** Ask Fr Bitaju
- 7** Pope Talk
- 8** Jesus Youth
- 40** Chandeliers
- 42** Our Daily Bread
- 44** Newswatch
- 46** Timeout
- 47** Lukas and Ray



**ENGAGE**

10 Jesus' Table Fellowship | **FR ANTHONY LAWRENCE**

EXPERIENCE

12 Gratia Plena | **ANIL ISRAEL**

IN FOCUS

16 The Holy Father: Symbol of our Unity and Harmony | **H.E. BISHOP SEBASTIAN ADAYANTHATH**
20 From Rome to Home and Beyond | **FR JIJO JOSE MANJACKAL MSFS**
28 Strengthen Your Brethren | **JOSEPH ANTHRAPER**
30 Did You Know This About the Papacy? | **ALEENA JOY AND JOANNA JOY**
32 Servant Leadership | **RAIFIEL CYRIL**

JUBILEE PAGES

38 Jubilee is Getting Hotter! | **FR JUSTIN PANACHICKAL MSFS**

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ASK

FR. BITAJU



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Can non-Christians enter a Catholic church and participate in Holy Mass?

The Church teaches that the Eucharist is a sacrament that is primarily for those who are in full communion with the Catholic Church. This means typically, only baptised Catholics who are in a state of grace (not in serious sin) are allowed to receive Holy Communion during Holy Mass. At the same time, the Church does not exclude non-Christians from entering or being present at Holy Mass. Let us try to understand some of the key teachings of the Church in this regard.

Understanding the Eucharist: The Holy Mass is regarded as the source and summit of Christian life (CCC 1324). It is the celebration of the Eucharist, where Catholics believe in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the consecrated elements of bread and wine. The *Catechism* emphasises that the Eucharist is a sign of unity among believers (CCC 1396).

Conditions for Reception: The Church teaches that the Eucharist is to be received by those who are in communion with the Church. 'The Church, in the course of her history, has been obliged to declare that those who are not in communion with the Catholic Church cannot be admitted to the Eucharist' (CCC 1400). This reflects the understanding that participation in the Eucharist signifies a shared faith and belief in the teachings of the Church.

Invitation to Non-Christians:

While non-Christians are generally not permitted to receive the Eucharist, they are welcome to attend Mass and participate in the liturgy in other ways. 'The faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation' according to CCC 1414. This obligation extends to all who are part of the Catholic community, but it does not exclude non-Christians from being present at the Mass.

Respect and Dialogue: The Church encourages respect and dialogue with non-Christians. While they may not participate in the Eucharist, their presence at Mass can be an opportunity for evangelisation and witness to the Catholic faith. The Church emphasises the importance of interreligious dialogue and understanding (CCC 843-848), recognising the value of engaging with those of different faiths.

In summary, non-Christians are welcome to attend Holy Mass, but they are not permitted to participate in the reception of the Eucharist, as this sacrament is reserved for those in communion with the Catholic Church. This teaching is rooted in the understanding of the Eucharist as a sign of unity and the necessity of shared faith.



YOUCAT 284

WHY ARE THE BEATITUDES SO IMPORTANT?

Those who yearn for the kingdom of God look to Jesus' list of priorities: the Beatitudes. [CCC 1716-1717, 1725-1726]

From Abraham on, God made promises to his people. Jesus takes them up, extends their application to heaven, and makes them the programme for his own life: the Son of God becomes poor so as to share our poverty; he rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep [Romans 12:15]; he employs no violence but rather turns the other cheek [Matthew 5:39]; he has mercy, makes peace, and thereby shows us the sure way to heaven.



Prayer Intentions July

For Formation in Discernment

Let us pray that we might again learn how to discern, to know how to choose paths of life, and reject everything that leads us away from Christ and the Gospel.

Peace is possible by acknowledging, understanding, and surmounting disagreements. Authentic peace takes shape from the ground up when the differences and conflicts that entail are not set aside but acknowledged, understood, and surmounted.

It was on the eve of His passion that Jesus spoke of the need for unity, 'that all may be one... so that the world may believe.' My wish for each of us, then, is that we can say with St Augustine: 'My entire hope is exclusively in your very great mercy. Grant what you command, and command what you will.'

Science must serve humanity, never its master. There is an authentically human approach to science and researchers follow interdisciplinary dialogue to pursue truth grounded authentically in human and respectful of the integrity and dignity of the human person.

By receiving the Lord's peace and accepting His call, which includes being open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, all the followers of Jesus can immerse themselves in the radical newness of Christian faith and life.

The courage to love reminds us, above all, of the need to make every effort to live out the commandment of love, the call to unity, and the mandate to serve others.

The lack of hope is sometimes due to the fact that we fix on a certain rigid and closed way of seeing things. It is the experience that happens when situations, people, sometimes even those we have trusted, take everything from us and leave us in the middle of the road. The most important part of the entire event is listening to God's voice, which makes everything else possible.

It is beautiful that, when we consider our calling, the responsibilities and people entrusted to us, the commitments we take on, and our service in the Church, each one of us can confidently say: although I am fragile, the Lord is not ashamed of my humanity; on the contrary, He comes to dwell within me.

JESUS YOUTH



Dr Edward Edezhath, one of the pioneers of Jesus Youth, gives us a glimpse of the growth of the movement.

Sign of being a Pilgrim People

→ I was in my second year of college when my new responsibility came: travelling, connecting with young people, and building a network. My professors and colleagues knew my itinerant style well and were quite sympathetic. This pattern has continued ever since.

I had an active community, and my travels felt like I was being sent out from it. Their encouragement and prayer support always backed me up. Of course, this life on the move helped me develop many new skills. Later, when I began my teaching career and wanted to pursue a PhD, people who knew me well said I'd never be able to complete such serious work with all my constant travels. I remember reading a lot on trains. In the end, some of those critics never completed their work, but surprisingly, I was able to, within a reasonable time.

Interestingly, from the start of this movement, most JY leaders, though excellent community builders, have also been people on the move. They become leaders and evangelists by joyfully travelling, connecting with people, and refusing to be confined by their own cultures or comfort zones. Readiness to go out, eagerness to engage with new and unfamiliar realities, and the enthusiasm to seize

unexpected opportunities are essential qualities of a good Jesus Youth.

A CHRISTIAN IS A PILGRIM

Today, people frequently discuss the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle and advocate 'being on the move' to promote physical health. However, this concept also extends to our inner lives. If you cease to explore new ideas, refuse to learn from the Bible in new ways, lose interest in making new friends, and stop encountering diverse cultures, something within you begins to wither. You cannot dwell on the past; you must embrace the present and look forward to the future.

The Bible is filled with stories of travel. Abraham left his homeland; Israel wandered in the desert. Moses led a people on the move, while Peter and Paul travelled across various lands. Even Jesus journeyed constantly, never remaining in one place. Time and again, God's command is simple: 'Go.' The Church, too, calls herself a pilgrim people.

Pilgrimage is an ancient expression of this truth. In Scripture and across cultures, journeys to holy places or encounters with holy people are essential to spiritual life. In Jesus' own life, we read of regular pilgrimages – not only to the Temple but also to

people: families, the poor, and those in need. His mission was mobile.

In my prayer community, pilgrimages together have been the most memorable. At one point, we realised that a community hesitant to venture out is not truly Christian. We began pilgrimages of different sorts: some of us started weekly visits to slums, others got involved in various outreach initiatives. This rhythm of going and returning made our community life incredibly vibrant.

BUT WHAT IF I CAN'T TRAVEL?

You can still connect. We learn from Little Thérèse, who, though she never travelled far, became the patron saint of missionary travellers. Some go to distant lands, some engage with people of unfamiliar languages and cultures, and others journey through prayerful intercession – but all disciples are called to go!

JESUS YOUTHS HAVE A RICH CULTURE OF VENTURING OUT

The Second Vatican Council envisioned various ways of bringing Christ to the wider world. Addressing laypeople, it stated: 'A vast field for the apostolate has opened up on the national and international levels, where the laity especially assist with their Christian



wisdom.'

It urged us to evangelise the world by continuing whatever we do, but with a difference. 'Travelers, whether their interest is international affairs, business, or leisure, should remember that they are itinerant heralds of Christ wherever they go and should act accordingly' (Vatican II, *The Apostolate of the Laity*, 14).

Last year, I was in Chhattisgarh, India for a leaders' training. On my way there, I visited a city and met various leaders and groups. After the training, they organised several visits to communities, homes, priests, and others. It became such an enriching time! These were occasional trips for me, but for most Jesus Youth leaders, this is their regular lifestyle.

This illustrates how the Kingdom of God spreads and how leaders and communities are formed. Some leaders travel great distances to meet with groups or train new leaders. However, for Jesus Youth, mission trips are not always programme-focused. I was once sent from my college to teach a semester at a European university. Most of my weekends and free time were spent on cross-country travels to meet groups and leaders. Many active Jesus Youth coordinate business trips with local missionary efforts in their

destination cities.

Migration has been a key channel through which the movement spread. How else could JY grow from a small location in India to most continents and all major countries? Then there is educational travel. 'Those active in our Teens' Ministry have now gone to study in an Eastern European country. They have already built up Jesus Youth communities there,' a leader from the Middle East recently told me.

HOW DO WE GO ABOUT IT?

Kingdom-building rarely begins with meticulous plans. More often, it starts with a heart ready to respond to the opportunities that come our way. These days, travel and connection are everyday experiences – but the challenge is to transform these into pilgrimages, marked not just by movement, but by mission. As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, we are called to be 'itinerant heralds of Christ wherever we go.'

To truly live as pilgrims, we need a distinct style and approach.

1. Embrace a pilgrim mindset: Let go of comfort and attachments. Avoid stagnation and be ready to move.
2. Seize the opportunity: The call may come with a professional assignment, an invitation, or even a

mishap or crisis.

3. Set out with eagerness: Expect little, go in teams, and remain open to the Spirit's promptings.

4. Travel light: Simplicity and poverty of spirit are essential for joyful, unburdened journeying.

5. Act along the way: Don't just travel; stay in a place, love, and build community.

6. Keep moving: When it is time, hand over the work and move on.

7. Stay connected: A successful and lasting mission initiative is grounded in the relational network and broader plans of the Church and one's community.

JESUS SAYS, 'GO!'

So, let us build a lifestyle of pilgrimage that takes us into our neighbourhoods, unfamiliar cultures, and distant places. Should we not always be on the move, listening, discerning, and responding to God's call? ■

.....

One of the pioneers of the Jesus Youth movement, an international preacher and author, **Dr Edward Edezhath** is a retired professor from St Albert's College, Ernakulam. He is presently a researcher at Amoris Christi in Florida, USA.

ENGAGE

JESUS' TABLE FELLOWSHIP

Why did Jesus eat with the sinners and harlots? What lesson can we learn from that? **Fr Anthony Lawrence** tells us.



Jesus' table fellowship undoubtedly challenges us to rethink our conventional understanding of God, a God whom Jesus reveals to us!

Jesus' table fellowship was His most unique characteristic and is something which distinguished Him from all His contemporaries and the prophets who preceded Him. It was the most provocative act of Jesus for the Pharisees and Jewish leaders. Because, in the Jewish world, sharing table with others signified the end-time community of Israel. It came to symbolise the final shape and destiny of Israel itself. It was true in the case of Jesus as well. The meals that Jesus had with sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes were symbols and an anticipation of the final banquet in God's reign. Understandably, it was an explosive issue and the most scandalous thing for the Jews of Jesus' time. For as Joachim Jeremias says, sharing a table means sharing life and fellowship with God. How annoying would it be for them! Sinners and harlots sharing fellowship before God? Absolutely inconceivable for them! How dare Jesus? It immediately provokes reaction against Jesus. 'Why does he eat with sinners and tax collectors?'

We are well aware that even in our everyday life, the meal forms a central part of any programme – cultural feasts, joyful celebration or for that matter, even funerals. When we are invited for such occasions, if we don't participate in the meal served in the host's home, it can mean something very serious, even create deep wounds, ultimately leading to a rupture in the relationship. Such being the case of ordinary meals, it goes without saying the significance of religious meals.

Jesus' message was very clear. By sharing a table with those sinners of Galilee, He offered them God's friendship, acceptance and forgiveness. Such meals turned out to be occasions where the sinners rejoiced, drank wine and sang with Jesus, praising God. Because they felt accepted by God. Their life was no longer the same.

Does Jesus seem to justify sin and prostitution? Does He dilute the seriousness of sin against God? Or does He encourage sin and corruption? Absolutely not! All He does is break the

vicious circle of discrimination meted out against God's people in that society; thereby, opening up a new space for a friendly encounter with God, as Jose A Pagola puts it. The so-called 'unrighteous' begin to sense that God is good news for them. God is not a threat. He is not a frightening judge who waits for them in anger but a loving friend who comes to them offering His friendship and forgiveness. The acceptance and friendship that Jesus offers them gives them strength and courage to recognise their own unworthiness and sinfulness. It brings them closer to God. No longer do they need to hide from anyone or from themselves as well. They don't have to be afraid of anyone. They also begin to regain a sense of their own dignity as God's children. Life will never be the same for them.

On no account does it amount to watering down the gravity of our sinfulness. St John of the Cross says that when we feel guilty about ourselves, God's grace is actually flooding our souls. It is a clear sign that His grace is strongly at work in us. Our Mother Church professes that not only does the sacrament of reconciliation lead to the sacrament of Eucharist, but vice versa also.

The message, however, is simple, my dear friends! When we feel good about ourselves and think that we are good in the eyes of others, life is dependable. But this is a disaster we are heading for because we don't feel the need for anything in our lives, even for God. But when our conscience declares us guilty and unworthy, we lose that security. And it is in such moments, we deeply feel the need for God's mercy and compassion. We cling on to His compassionate love for us! In the former case, it is a religion which does not have a place for everyone, as is shown in the case of the Pharisee who went to the temple to pray and went home unjustified, and in the case of the elder brother of the parable of the prodigal son. In the latter case, we have a religion which has a place for everyone. That is the religion Jesus came to show. As Edward Schillebeeckx says in his famous book, *Christ, the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 'As a reality religion can only be understood in the context of

the incarnation of God the Son.' God is for everyone. He belongs to those who need Him. He offers His mercy both for the righteous and unrighteous. Only those who reject it feel excluded from His banquet. His table is open for everyone.

Whenever we gather for the Eucharist, this is exactly what happens. God invites each one of us to His table, irrespective who we are! We are the most honoured guests in His house, He wants to feed us and bless us in our weakness and in our strength. Whether we have remained faithful or have been lost, whether we have kept His laws or broken them, whether we have money or not, He welcomes us to His table stretching out His loving hands. The prophet Isaiah says it well: *All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, buy grain and eat; Come, buy grain without money, wine and milk without cost! ... Only listen to me, and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare.* (Isaiah 55:1-2). For His mercy and love are gratuitous and unconditional.

So, to come back to our original question, when we happen to notice someone, probably a worst sinner to our knowledge and in the eyes of the world, going forward to participate in Holy Communion and if we think bad about him and speak ill of him, such is the attitude of one who kicks him into the gutter, when he is already down. Let us be certain that he becomes acceptable to God and we lose our place in God's table. Such is what Jesus has shown us. What is our understanding of God? Do we need to examine it? If so, let us not delay!

EXPERIENCE

GRATIA PLENA



Anil Israel testifies to how the Lord has continued to guide and bless his family through thick and thin.



God has his own way of drawing us to Himself. *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them* (John 6:44). Growing up with a Catholic upbringing in a Salesian school, praying the family Rosary every evening at home and not missing any Sunday morning Mass, instilled in me a false sense of being among those who are well-to- do and do not need a spiritual physician. Deep within I knew I was trying to manage life on my own, letting God linger on the periphery, only rushing to Him when I found myself helpless at rock-bottom moments of life.

God in His mercy blessed me with my wife Sunitha, who introduced me to some core elements of Christian living like personal prayer, Divine Mercy chaplet, frequent recitation of the Holy Rosary. As many things in life appeared to be falling in place and the sailing appeared to be smooth, little did I realise that it was in the storms that He carried me in His loving arms.

In the first year of married life, God made us go through two miscarriages. This drew us closer to Him. This was His way of moulding me, to rely more on Him. He was making it more evident that we are nowhere in control, and we ought to consider returning control back to Him for He knows best. We decided to attend a week-long couples retreat between Christmas and New Year. This retreat gave us a conviction that we are called to be a holy family, to help our spouse to be holy and to raise godly children. I got a deeper clarity on the purpose of suffering God permits in our lives. We realised that holy vocations come from holy families. Holy family living became our prime focus.

We had planned to visit the Eternal City and were forced to call it off when the second miscarriage occurred. The

following year, Jesus Youth International organised a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi, adjoining with the Gathering of the Movements on Pentecost eve, at St Peter's Square. God arranged it in a way that we needn't plan our Rome trip on our own, but we only had to join as participants and enjoy the pilgrimage organised by someone else. I was learning to give in. We would have missed several things had we planned it on our own. Being on top of the cupola of St Peter's Basilica, made us realise how magnificent it is at the top, though it appears quite small from afar.

When our eldest daughter Trina was born the following year, Sunitha had breastfeeding issues, and we had almost given in to bottle feeding her. Fortunately, our landlady, who happened to be a children's nurse, guided us and encouraged us not to despair. God's timely intervention was a great blessing.

When Theo was born, I had completed five years on deputation. We were given to understand that the law of the land, not permitting deputation beyond five years, we ought to return to India. During this moment of dilemma, we were confused as to what was God's will for us. Should we return to familiar terrain or opt to continue in the unfamiliar terrain of a different culture and language. In the meantime, we were blessed to participate in the animators training on the way back from Sydney WYD.

Looking at the blessings God showered on us, gave us an inclination that the Lord wanted us to continue in this part of the world. We prayed and got a scripture verse, *Don't be afraid, you are worth more than many sparrows* (Luke 12:7). Indeed, if God could take care of a tiny sparrow, then surely, He can take much great care of His children. That morning, at my workplace, where I was supporting



Looking at the blessings God showered on us, gave us an inclination that the Lord wanted us to continue in this part of the world. We prayed and got a scripture verse, *Don't be afraid, you are worth more than many sparrows* (Luke 12:7). Indeed, if God could take care of a tiny sparrow, then surely, He can take much great care of His children.

another department, the department head and his boss approached me and agreed to invite me officially to the new department after I shortly returned to India. They were in the process of migrating their projects from the old tool world to the new tool world and I happened to be one who could support their team with the new tool, which I learned in the previous department. I returned to this new department and after six months secured an internal transfer, where I continue till today. In fact, I was blessed with this job while on campus and have not yet been required to create a CV to apply for a job elsewhere. Truly, God is superabundantly gracious.

When Cleon was born, I was not keeping well. Fortunately, many friends called and brought in lots of food which lasted for days. God takes care of his children. Even during house shifting or assembling furniture, God always sent angels who extended helping hands.

When we opted for a house of our own, a large portion of the income went towards paying for it. At times expenses tended to overshoot income. But His Divine Providence never runs dry. We were awestruck to see a currency note left under the wiper of our car or in an envelope in our letter box. Once, someone even approached our home with food from the Missionaries of Charity.

Being in Europe, one has the advantage that WYD returns often. We missed Madrid and Krakow. When WYD returned to Lisbon, we were strongly convinced that this was something we as a family must not miss. Our children were in their teens. If we missed it this time then by the time WYD returned to Europe again, our children would have grown. So we registered and took the early bird offer. We still didn't know how we would afford the travel and the Youth Arise Intl. and the Jesus Youth Intl. Gathering prior to WYD. Incidentally, I received some amount as Corona-bonus and we immediately booked our travel. Shortly before the event started, the Lord arranged the pending amount too.

At Lisbon, we were more than taken away by our host-family who opted to accommodate our family of seven, though they were initially allocated another small family. They readily came upfront and said that only they could accommodate a seemingly large family like us. When we reached their home, it was almost midnight. What surprised us was that the whole family had waited for us to arrive and then we all had a grand dinner that holy night. This is something we will never forget. The very same summer vacation, the Lord arranged our whole family to visit our hometown too, where we had a blessed time with our loved ones. I am now convinced that *with God all things are possible* (Matthew 19:23). He can make multiple mega projects possible in a short time.

When our youngest daughter Ziva was born, we knew our seven-seater would have to be replaced with a larger car. We opted for a nine-seater. The Lord miraculously arranged it in such a way that some amount was made available from different sources which made it possible for us to avail the nine-seater, without having to incur additional liabilities. This is something I could never have imagined. He continues to teach us to trust Him to help us. Truly life is *full of grace – Gratia plena*. ■

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IN FOCUS

THE HOLY FATHER

SYMBOL OF OUR UNITY AND HARMONY



H.E. Bishop Sebastian Adayantrath writes about the relevance of the papacy for the world beyond the Church.

Introduction

The Catholic Church remains a mystical reality in our world today. Around 130 crore Catholics, 600 bishops in various dioceses, 5.3 lakh priests serving the people of God and 6 lakh serving among some of the most vulnerable people in the world. The Holy Father is our head, our uniting factor and the one who builds harmony. The command for his leadership comes from Jesus and we share the legacy of Saint Peter who was appointed by Jesus as the first Pope. As we complete 2000 years of Christianity, it is good to reflect on the role of the Holy Father in our faith life, moral life and social life.

Remembering the Holy Father in Masses and Prayers

The Holy Father lives in Rome, but he is remembered all over the world every day, in fact, 24 hours a day. He is remembered at all the Masses, whether it is the Latin Church or *Sui iuris* churches. He is remembered in the canonical prayer of the Church and in all the non-sacramentals. His name is repeated every day on every continent, in every diocese and in every parish. His name is close to our hearts. We pray that he may have good health, be protected from all evil forces and may have the anointing of the Spirit to guide the Church as Jesus wants it to be guided. At least 500,000 times each day, his name is repeated, affirming one faith, one Church, and one baptism.

Catholics always consider it their responsibility to pray for the Holy Father and his intentions. As the head of the

Church, he is the father of the family and he invites his people or the whole world to pray with him so that the poor may have bread, the sick may have healing, the hungry may have something to eat, those in prison find peace, those who have no homes be welcomed somewhere. Our primary responsibility is to be united with our head and raise our hearts in prayer. In a world where communication reaches everywhere, the Holy Father stands as a voice calling out to everyone to pray with him.

Unifying Force

The late Holy Father, Pope Francis, was well known not only among Christians but also among Muslims and Hindus in India. When they meet me, they often say, 'You are so lucky to have a leader like him. He speaks not only about spiritual matters concerning the soul of each person, he talks about social life, moral life and even the struggles of daily life.' They often say this man talks sense, he is highly inspired. The Holy Father is seen as a uniting force, bringing everyone together. He not only cares about the sheep of his fold, but he also reaches out to people of other faiths for dialogue and community building. This is an awesome reality.

At his funeral, tributes poured out from various parts of the world: he was hailed as a champion of the poor and the marginalised; the Holy Father who took the Church beyond the boundaries of the Vatican, radical reformer, proponent of universal fraternity and ecology, channel of God's mercy, embodiment of joy and

hope, and so on. He touched human hearts in beautiful ways and asked the whole world to stand united in order to face challenges together.

Moral Voice of the World

Our world is riddled with moral issues: justice for everyone, protection of the unborn, care and dignity for the elderly, migrants being accommodated, peace between religions, etc. The Holy Father is looked upon as a moral voice who makes interventions for human society, asking society to stand up for human dignity.

In recent times, this role has become extremely critical with global pursuit of material goods and spiritual realities. People care less about their inner life. The Holy Father invites everyone to return to their roots. The prayer of Saint Augustine is very relevant here: 'Our souls are created for you, O Lord and they are restless until they rest in you.' The Holy Father makes the call to return to the source of our lives, and as a result, we will have a world where moral principles are kept intact, where everyone will look for the common good rather than personal whims and fancies. He invites everyone not to look for immediate gratification but for delayed gratification. Nature talks about delayed gratification.

Spreading the Language of Understanding

The leader of a community is the guardian of unity. He or she must thirst for unity and work for it day and night. For this, the leader must not fear conflict but rather accept it and strive to be an instrument of reconciliation; the leader must be in contact with all the different elements in the community, and particularly with those who are in pain or who are distant with the community. The Holy Father

does it in a most beautiful way. He comes out in the open and asks pardon for the sins committed by his co-workers. He does it in front of the whole world, thereby making a strong statement: one should not be afraid to ask pardon for the sins committed by us or by our predecessors. The world stood in silence

THE HOLY FATHER IS SEEN AS A UNITING FORCE, BRINGING EVERYONE TOGETHER. HE NOT ONLY CARES ABOUT THE SHEEP OF HIS FOLD, BUT HE ALSO REACHES OUT TO PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS FOR DIALOGUE AND COMMUNITY BUILDING. THIS IS AN AWESOME REALITY.

as he did this, and many could not believe what he did. So he proves himself to be a bridge builder.

Social Prophet

We live in a world of exclusion, idolatry of money, an economic system that rules rather than serves, and the inequality that spawns violence. The world has become a



battleground for profit and prestige. The Holy Father invites the world to return to the gospel, where God is our Father and we are His children. Everyone has a right to at least the necessities of life. We cannot build without forgetting this basic principle. Catholic social teaching is a gold mine where the Holy Father talks about caring for the human person, caring



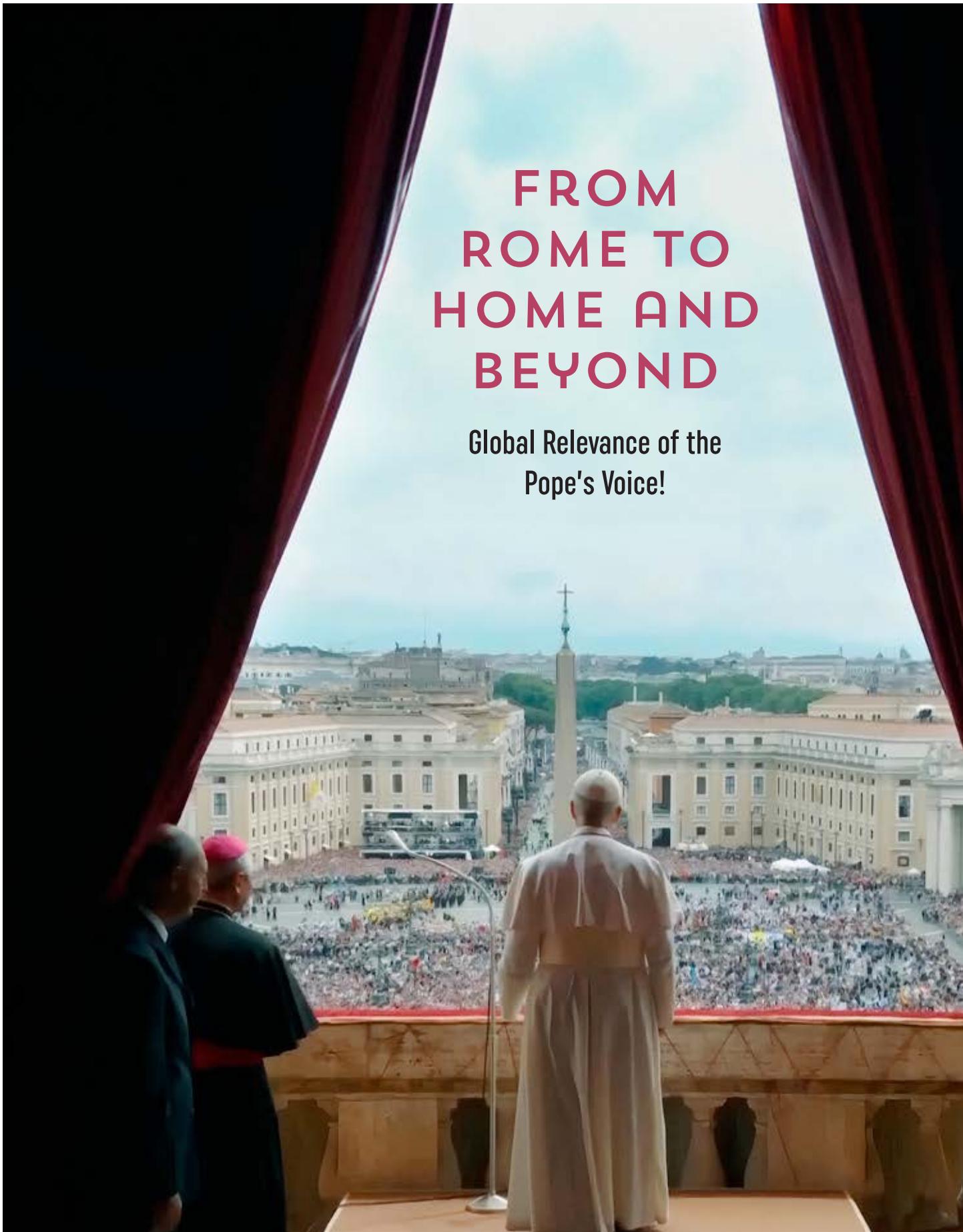
for the earth and caring for the common good. He asks everyone to walk with the Hope that God is the centre of the universe and He is in charge of us. Even though disappointment hits our way, we should keep on walking like the people of the Exodus, for we are a pilgrim people.

Many people confuse authority and the power of efficiency, as if the first role of people with responsibility is to make decisions, command effectively, and so exercise power. However, their role, first, is to be a person to whom others can turn for help and advice, to provide security, to affirm, to support, to encourage and to

guide. The Holy Father does it beautifully not only for the Church but for the entire world.

The role of the Holy Father has changed drastically in our modern times. He is no longer seen as a spiritual leader looking after the well-being of the souls entrusted to him; rather, he is seen as a world leader who plays a critical role in building peace, justice, human dignity and the common good. It is very visible that the people of other faiths are also willing to accept his leadership. Often, there is a cry from the other communities to intervene when there is a genocide,

cruelty meted out to women and children, when human dignity is stripped from people. Let us pray that the Holy Father carries out this role most meaningfully to make our world the kingdom of God. ■



FROM ROME TO HOME AND BEYOND

Global Relevance of the
Pope's Voice!



The Pope's voice is one that is not only heeded by Christians, but by the world at large. Fr Jijo Jose Manjackal MSFS tells us why.

On that historic evening of 8th May 2025, as white smoke unfurled into the twilight above St Peter's Square, the world held its breath. The bells pealed joyfully, the Eternal City and the entire world was all set to receive the Successor of the Prince of the Apostles – *Successor Principis Apostolorum*. Thousands had gathered before the iconic dome of Christendom's heart at the Vatican, and millions were connected online. They knew a new chapter in the Church – and in the human story – was about to commence.

‘*Habemus Papam!*’ the Cardinal proclaimed. From *Loggia delle Benedizioni*, the famed central balcony of St Peter's Basilica, emerged Pope Leo XIV, the Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church. Standing before the world – with prayer on his lips and a holy trembling in his heart – dressed in white and the traditional papal red *mozetta*, the Pope reminded the world of his being the *Servus Servorum Dei* (Servant of the Servants of God).

His first words weren't grand or dramatic. With a gentle fatherly smile, he simply raised his hand, bowed his head slightly, and emphatically declared to a world weary from war, division and despair: ‘*La Pace sia con tutti voi* – Peace be with you all!'

It was more than a greeting. It was the reminder of the promise of the Risen Christ. And in that moment, the world, truly, leaned in to listen.

The world lives with daily wars. Artificial intelligence seems to be accelerating faster than our ethical understanding can catch up. Little ones tend to ‘lose faith’ before they've even been taught how to believe. Families are fragmented and public trust is

waning. People are asking, consciously or unconsciously: Whom can we still trust?

Into this fragile, fractured world, the Pope's voice resonates, reminding the words of the Risen Saviour, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you* (John 14:27).

A Moral Voice in a Distracted World

The Pope does not command armies or control global markets. Yet when he speaks, people listen – from heads of state to street vendors, from parish priests to teenage sceptics scrolling on their phones. Why? Because while the world shifts beneath our feet, the Pope represents something unmoved: moral clarity rooted in truth. It is not a rigid ideology, but about God, who became flesh (John 1:14) – Jesus Christ – and the dignity of every human being, made in His image. He speaks on behalf of those who have no voice: the poor, the displaced, the unborn, the young, the elderly, the forgotten. He reminds us of values that transcend every culture and time: dignity, mercy, truth and solidarity.

The Great Pope St John Paul II once told the youth in Manila, ‘The future is in your hearts and in your hands. God is entrusting to you the task... to make the world more human.’ Pope Benedict XVI reminded us, ‘Truth is not determined by a majority vote.’ And Pope Francis added, ‘Reality is greater than ideas.’ Each in his own way offered moral bearings. And now, Pope Leo XIV continues that legacy – not by competing over the world's chaos, but by his willingness to listen, to offer empathy and to voice out the Church's uncompromising stance on Truth.

Pope Leo XIV: A Quiet Strength for Troubled Times

Robert Francis Prevost, the first Pope



from the United States, was once a missionary in Peru, quietly walking dirty streets to meet the poor. As someone who has, in the words of Pope Francis 'smelt the sheep,' Pope Leo XIV has already shown himself to be *the good shepherd [who] lays down his life for the sheep* (John 10:11). It is this 'powerful' trait that characterises the 'spiritual leader of 1.4 billion Catholics' to be a persuasive moral voice of the world.

What Families Need: Not a Manager, But a Father

Young families today are overwhelmed with spiralling bills, raising kids in a pornographic digital culture, navigating questions AI cannot answer and watching faith slip through generations. They really need a shepherd. Pope Leo XIV offers just that: steadiness. He is not flashy, but is willing to listen. The simplicity of Pope Leo XIV does stand out – he listens, with a father's heart. People who have heard, met and experienced him say, 'In his presence, I feel I have been seen. I feel he talks to me. I feel he understands me!' That line – *I feel I have been seen* – could well become the quiet anthem of his papacy. *Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you* (Jeremiah 1:5).

Why does the World Still Listen to the Pope?

The answer lies not only in his title, but in the unique way he embodies what our world longs for: conscience, compassion and clarity. His influence is moral, not material. That is why the Pope is

considered 'a messenger of hope, humility and humanity' and 'a transcendent voice for peace, human dignity and social justice' (words of António Guterres, the UN secretary-general, at the death of Pope Francis).

For all people – Christians and non-Christians alike – the Pope's voice carries much influence. He speaks of peace in times of war, hope when facing technologies we can't confine, moral grounding when relativism makes truth feel fluid, healing when Church scandals have left wounds, restoring harmony in the face of liturgical polarisation, unity amid ecumenical confusion, courage when medical frontiers question what it means to be human and trust when pandemics like Covid-19 expose our collective fragility.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen said, 'A voice that speaks the truth is not always a voice that is popular, but it is always a voice that is needed.' It's not that the world agrees with the Pope on everything. But the world recognises something in him it can't easily dismiss: authenticity and awakening of the conscience. St John Henry Newman captured this dynamic when he wrote: 'Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.' (Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, 1875; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1778)

Leadership That Listens

In the Vatican, it's already known that Pope Leo XIV is not in a rush to make decisions. He is spending time in meetings, in silence, in prayer. Rev

Anthony Pizzo (Provincial, Midwest US Province of the Augustinian Order), who has known Pope Leo XIV since 1974, says, 'This is going to be his modus operandi... When you first come into leadership, listen well, get to know your constituency... to make a well-informed decision.'

This is radical, in an age of instant leadership. His contemplative pace is of discernment. The new Pope does not want to change the world hastily or to propose quick-fix solutions. He's trying to understand it. In an age obsessed with performance, he chooses presence. As *Gaudium et Spes* (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) puts it: 'The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age... are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.' Leo XIV doesn't stand above the world; he kneels beside it.

A Shepherd in an 'Age of Shepherdlessness'

In the Book of Ezekiel, God promises, *I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.* (Ezekiel 34:11). When Pope Leo XIV said 'Peace be with you,' it wasn't just a greeting. It was a reassurance of the Shepherd, that amidst the noise of war, the fragility of faith, the challenges of modern technologies and the confusions of the world, someone still speaks, not to impress, but to bless. Indeed, his voice is not his own – it echoes centuries of faith, sacrifice and the heartbeat of the Saviour, who breathed peace from the Wood of the Cross.

The world will always have diverse opinions. But when the Pope – the Vicar of Christ – speaks, there's a hush; because, deep down, humanity longs for a voice that is not selling, sensationalising or shouting – but is speaking with 'the Heart of the Holy Father!' ■

Fr Jijo Jose Manjakkal is a Missionary of St Francis de Sales (MSFS). Ordained in 2012, he is currently pursuing his Licentiate in Sacred Scriptures from Biblical, Rome. He was appointed as a Missionary of Mercy by Pope Francis in 2016.



SMOKE, MIRRORS, AND THE VATICAN: PAPACY ON SCREEN

GEORGE PAUL TAKES AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT TWO RECENT FILMS ON THE PAPACY.

There was a time when the flickering images on the television or the grand narratives unfolding in a darkened cinema felt like reliable windows onto the world. Growing up in the 1980s and 90s, many of us turned to movies and television not just for entertainment, but for education. Miniseries like *Roots* or *Shogun* offered sweeping historical perspectives. Films like *Gandhi* or *Schindler's List* brought pivotal moments and figures to life with a perceived authenticity that shaped understanding for millions. Documentaries from respected broadcasters seemed to offer objective insights into current affairs and the natural world. While artistic license was always present, there was often a baseline assumption, that these productions generally aimed for factual accuracy, or at least respected the historical or biographical subjects they portrayed.

Fast forward to today, and the media landscape feels vastly different. The lines between fact, fiction, interpretation, and outright agenda seem increasingly blurred. This is particularly true when Hollywood turns its gaze towards subjects of faith, history, and complex institutions like the Catholic Church. While filmmaking techniques have become more sophisticated and visually stunning, the commitment to truthful representation, especially concerning beliefs and practices held sacred by millions, cannot always be taken for granted. Therefore, approaching such films requires a more discerning eye, an awareness of potential biases, and a commitment to seeking truth beyond the screen. This critical engagement is especially vital when films tackle the heart of the Church, the papacy itself.

In recent years, it seems Hollywood has developed a particular curiosity about the inner workings of the Vatican and the lives of the men who wear the Ring of the Fisherman. From television series exploring fictional papal reigns to biographical dramas and suspense thrillers set within Vatican walls, the papacy has become a recurring subject on screen. Why this sudden interest? Maybe it's the inherent human drama found in positions of immense spiritual authority and historical weight. Or perhaps filmmakers see the figures of recent popes, like the contrasting personalities often highlighted between Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, as compelling characters ripe for cinematic exploration.

Whatever the reasons, this trend presents both opportunities and challenges for Catholic viewers. While well-made films can spark interest and conversation, they can also, intentionally or not, spread misinformation or promote perspectives at odds with Church teaching. Two prominent examples of this recent papal focus are the thriller *Conclave*, imagining the secret process of electing a new pope, and *The Two Popes*, dramatising the relationship between Pope Benedict XVI and his successor. Both films garnered significant attention and critical acclaim in the secular world, featuring impressive casts and high production values. But how accurately do they portray the realities of the papacy,

the conclave, and the specific figures involved? Let's take a closer look, starting with their cinematic merits before diving into the more critical questions of truth and representation.

Before delving into the specific concerns these films raise for Catholic viewers, it is fair to acknowledge their strengths as cinematic productions. Both *Conclave* and *The Two Popes* boast high production values, visually engaging cinematography, and direction that effectively builds atmosphere – whether it be the suspenseful intrigue of a papal election or the intimate (though largely fictionalised) conversations between two pontiffs. Furthermore, both films feature powerhouse performances from highly respected actors. In *Conclave*, talents like Ralph Fiennes, Stanley Tucci, John Lithgow, and Sergio Castellitto bring gravity and screen presence to their roles, even when the script presents them with caricatured or problematic material. Similarly, *The Two Popes* is anchored by the widely acclaimed performances of Anthony Hopkins as Pope Benedict XVI and Jonathan Pryce as the future Pope Francis. Their portrayal of the dynamic between the two men, regardless of historical accuracy, is undeniably compelling from a purely dramatic standpoint.

These artistic achievements – the skilled acting, the impressive visuals, the professional polish – are often what draw audiences in and earn secular accolades. However, for viewers seeking not just entertainment but also a measure of truth, especially concerning matters of faith, these surface merits cannot be the final word. A film can be beautifully made and powerfully acted, yet still misrepresent its subject matter in significant ways. It is to these deeper issues of accuracy and faithfulness that we must now turn.

CONCLAVE

The film *Conclave* presents itself as a tense political thriller set against the backdrop of perhaps the most secret and sacred election in the world. Following the sudden death of a fictional, progressive pope, the College of Cardinals gathers in the Vatican. Cardinal Lawrence (Ralph Fiennes), the Dean, must oversee

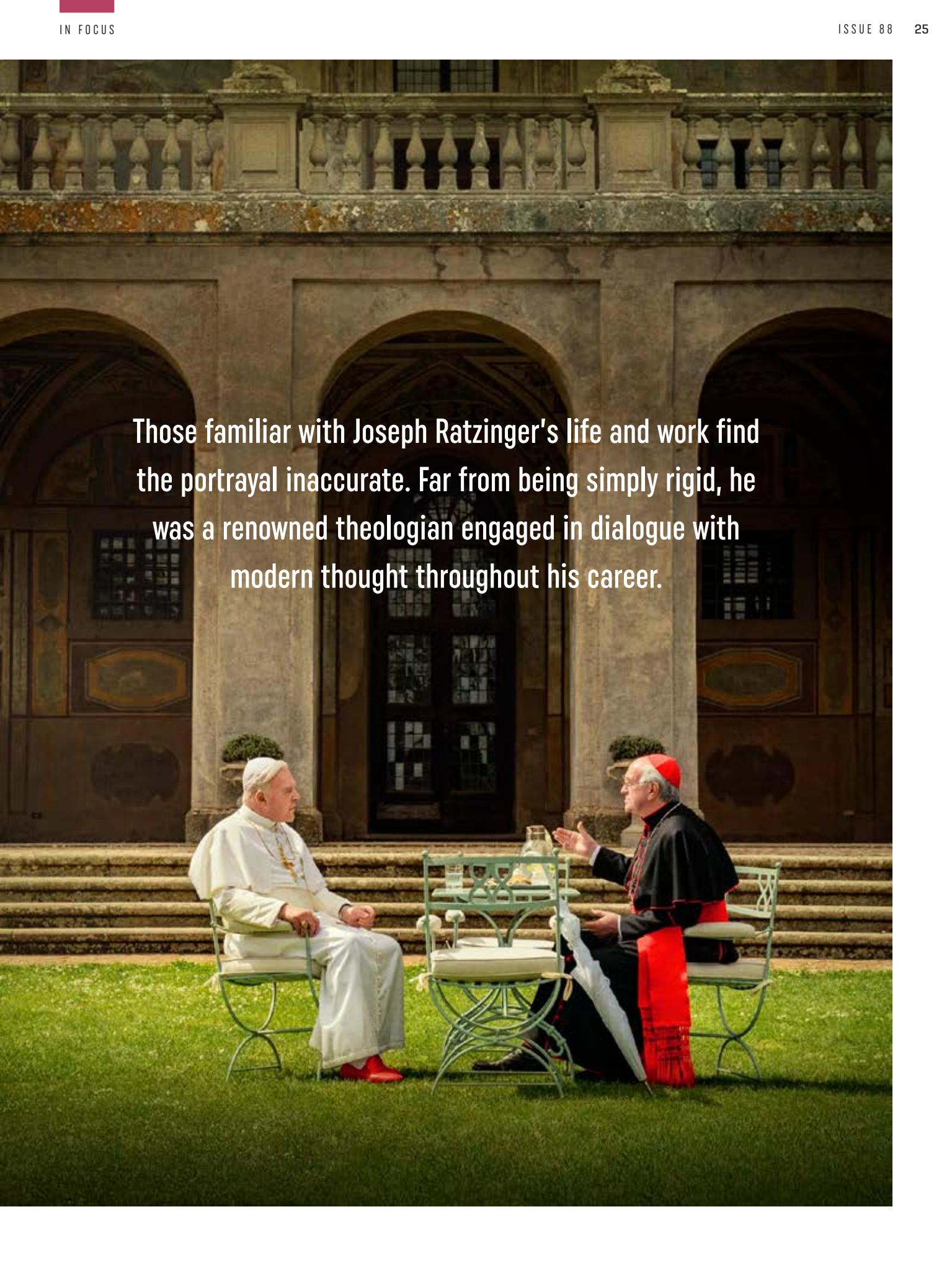
the process. Key players emerge: the liberal Italian Cardinal Bellini (Stanley Tucci), the conservative traditionalist Cardinal Tedesco (Sergio Castellitto), the African Cardinal Adeyemi (Lucian Msamati), and the scheming Canadian Cardinal Tremblay (John Lithgow). Into this mix arrives a mysterious figure, Cardinal Benitez (Carlos Diehz) from Kabul, whose appointment was kept secret (*in pectore*) by the late Pope. As alliances shift and secrets are revealed, Benitez unexpectedly becomes the frontrunner and is eventually elected, taking the name Innocent XIV, only for a final, shocking revelation about his identity to emerge.

While the film succeeds in creating suspense and features strong performances, its portrayal of the conclave process and the nature of the papacy diverges significantly from Catholic reality, often bordering on what Catholic reviewers have called 'anti-Catholic propaganda' (*Catholic World Report*) or simply 'badly written, poorly researched' fiction (*Angelus News*).

Misrepresenting the Sacred Process:

The most glaring issue is the film's reduction of the conclave to a purely political power struggle. It depicts cardinals driven by ambition, engaging in character assassination, and making deals based on factional loyalties. While human elements are undoubtedly present in any gathering, the film largely ignores the profound spiritual dimension that defines a real conclave. The process outlined in Pope St John Paul II's Apostolic Constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis* emphasises intense prayer, isolation from worldly influence, and the solemn invocation of the Holy Spirit's guidance. Each cardinal elector takes a powerful oath before casting their vote: 'I call as my witness Christ the Lord, who will be my judge, that my vote is given to the one whom I believe should be elected according to God.' This sacred duty, this accountability before Christ Himself, is lost in the film's focus on secular intrigue.

Furthermore, the film makes basic procedural errors that undermine its credibility. The central plot point involving Cardinal Benitez's *in pectore* appointment being valid after the pope's death is incorrect. As *Catholic Review*



Those familiar with Joseph Ratzinger's life and work find the portrayal inaccurate. Far from being simply rigid, he was a renowned theologian engaged in dialogue with modern thought throughout his career.

points out, canon law dictates such secret appointments are null and void if not publicly revealed by the pope during his lifetime. This isn't just a minor detail; it's a fundamental misunderstanding (or deliberate alteration) of the rules governing papal appointments.

Attacking Tradition and Certainty: *Conclave* consistently portrays Catholic tradition as an obstacle. Characters mock traditional prayers, advocate for abandoning the Church's liturgical heritage, and push for radical changes in moral teaching. One of the most telling moments, highlighted by multiple Catholic critics, is Cardinal Lawrence's homily where he suggests that 'certainty' is the ultimate sin, the enemy of tolerance and faith. This presents a profound misunderstanding of Catholic belief. While faith involves mystery and trust, it is also grounded in revealed truths and the certainty of God's love and promises. For Catholics, faith and reason, certainty and mystery, are not enemies but partners. The film's rhetoric, as Sean Fitzpatrick notes in *Catholic World Report*, seems designed to promote a vision where doctrine simply changes with the times, summed up by Benitez's line: 'the Church is not tradition, not the past, "the Church is what we do next."

Problematic Plot Twists: The film relies on sensationalist plot twists, including the final revelation that the newly elected Pope Innocent XIV (Benitez) is intersex. Catholic reviewers have described this as 'offensively exploitative' (*Catholic Review*), 'gratuitous' (*Angelus News*), and a 'wildest liberal fantasy' (*Catholic World Report*). Beyond the sensationalism, the justification offered – 'I am what God made me' – is critiqued as a theological oversimplification, ignoring the complexities of creation, fallen nature, and redemption in favour of advancing a modern ideological agenda regarding identity.

In essence, *Conclave* uses the dramatic setting of a papal election to tell a story that misrepresents the spiritual heart of the process, caricatures Church figures, misunderstands or twists Catholic teaching on tradition and faith, and ultimately prioritises a secular political narrative over theological or procedural accuracy. It may be a gripping thriller,

From television series exploring fictional papal reigns to biographical dramas and suspense thrillers set within Vatican walls, the papacy has become a recurring subject on screen. Why this sudden interest? Maybe it's the inherent human drama found in positions of immense spiritual authority and historical weight. Or perhaps filmmakers see the figures of recent popes, like the contrasting personalities often highlighted between Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, as compelling characters ripe for cinematic exploration.



but it offers a distorted view of how the Church chooses the Successor of Peter.

THE TWO POPES

Fernando Meirelles' *The Two Popes* focuses on the relationship between Pope Benedict XVI (Anthony Hopkins) and Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio (Jonathan Pryce), the man who would become Pope Francis. Set primarily in the period leading up to Benedict's historic resignation in 2013, the film imagines a series of conversations between the two men, contrasting their personalities, theological outlooks, and visions for the Church. Bergoglio, weary of the direction of the Church under Benedict, travels to Rome intending to ask permission to retire, but instead finds himself engaged in deep dialogue with the Pope, culminating in Benedict revealing his intention to resign and implicitly encouraging Bergoglio as his successor.

Like *Conclave*, *The Two Popes* earned praise for its lead performances and intimate portrayal of its subjects. Hopkins and Pryce deliver compelling character studies. However, like *Conclave*, the film takes significant liberties with historical fact and has been criticised by Catholic reviewers for presenting a skewed and ideologically driven picture, particularly regarding Pope Benedict XVI.

Mischaracterising Pope Benedict XVI: The most frequent criticism from Catholic sources is the film's portrayal of Pope Benedict. He is often depicted as rigid, cold, lonely, resistant to change, overly concerned with rules, and even subtly ambitious or out of touch. This contrasts sharply with the portrayal of Cardinal Bergoglio as warm, pastoral, progressive, and connected to the people. As Deacon Steven Greydanus noted for *Catholic News Agency*, the film sets up a

'schematic casting' of Benedict as the 'rigid reactionary' and Francis as the 'reforming revolutionary,' a dichotomy that serves dramatic conflict but is 'unjust to both popes.' Director Meirelles himself admitted to CNA his initial view was of a 'good pope and the bad pope,' reflecting a bias that permeates the film.

Those familiar with Joseph Ratzinger's life and work find the portrayal inaccurate. Far from being simply rigid, he was a renowned theologian engaged in dialogue with modern thought throughout his career. Accounts describe him as gentle, shy, and deeply prayerful, not the severe or preevish figure sometimes shown on screen. The film's suggestion that he was ambitious for the papacy is contradicted by his well-documented desire, expressed over many years, to retire to a life of study. Furthermore, the film's insinuation, through a fictional confession scene, that Benedict was somehow negligent regarding the Marcial Maciel abuse case is particularly egregious and false. As Cardinal Prefect, Ratzinger initiated the investigation, and as Pope, he imposed sanctions – facts ignored by the film to fit its narrative.

Oversimplifying Tradition and Reform: The film frames the dialogue between the two men as a clash between hidebound traditionalism (Benedict) and necessary progressive reform (Francis). This oversimplifies the complex reality of Catholic tradition, which is understood not as static adherence to the past, but as a living transmission of faith that undergoes authentic development. It also misrepresents the nature of reform within the Church, which is always understood in continuity with tradition, not in opposition to it. The film presents complex theological and pastoral issues through a polarised, often secular, lens of 'conservative vs. liberal,' which, as Greydanus points out, is an 'exhausted and blinkered framework' for understanding the Church.

Fictional Encounters, Real Agendas: It's crucial to remember that the extended dialogues forming the core of the film are almost entirely fictional. While based on the writings and known views of both men, the specific encounters and conversations depicted did not happen as shown. This fictional framework allows



the filmmakers to construct a narrative that aligns with a particular ideological preference – one that clearly favours the perceived agenda of Pope Francis over that of Pope Benedict. The result, as one commentary noted, is a film that feels like a tribute to Francis achieved by contrasting him with a 'straw man' version of Benedict.

While *The Two Popes* offers strong acting and moments of human connection, its portrayal of Pope Benedict XVI is widely considered by knowledgeable Catholics to be a caricature. It sacrifices historical accuracy and theological nuance for a simplified, ideologically slanted narrative that ultimately does a disservice to the complexity of both men and the Church they lead.

BEYOND THE BIG SCREEN – SEEKING AUTHENTIC TRUTH

What does all this mean for us as Catholics navigating a media-saturated world? It serves as a crucial reminder that films, even those based on real events or people, are interpretations, not objective records. They are stories told from a particular point of view, often reflecting the biases, beliefs, or commercial calculations of their creators. While they can entertain, provoke thought, and even inspire, they should rarely be treated as primary sources of information about our faith, history, or the lives of Church

leaders.

Therefore, we must approach such media with discernment. Enjoy the artistry, appreciate the performances, but always ask critical questions: What message is this film trying to convey? Does this portrayal align with what the Church actually teaches and practices? Does it seem fair to the real people involved? Where can I find reliable information to compare with what I'm seeing on screen?

Ultimately, the truth of our faith is not found in Hollywood scripts but in Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the teachings of the Magisterium, the lives of the saints, and our own encounter with Christ through prayer and the Sacraments. When films spark our curiosity about the Pope, the Vatican, or Church history, let that curiosity lead us back to authentic sources – the Catechism, writings of the popes themselves, reputable Catholic news outlets, and solid historical accounts. The reality of our faith, in all its depth, richness, and divine mystery, is far more compelling and life-giving than any fictional portrayal.

George Paul is a Communication Designer currently working with the Catholic Health Association of India. An avid student of Theology, Philosophy and History, George is still active in JY, helping youngsters connect with the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Strengthen Your Brethren...

Taking us through various aspects and imagery, Joseph Anthraper tells us what the Petrine Office signifies.



SCENE 1

A million young people in a former military airport are singing at the top of their voice to an old man seated on a wooden chair on a podium – a man who cannot even stand up without external help. The man, his face swollen yet radiant with joy and love, eyes half-open, leans on his crooked crosier, laboriously rocking his head from side to side to the tune of the music. The man is John Paul II, and the venue is Toronto, Canada which hosted the World Youth Day in 2002. Later in the day, this man would tell these very young people who loved him and whom he loved, ‘*You are young, and the Pope is old, 82 or 83 years of life is not the same as 22 or 23. But the Pope still fully identifies with your hopes and aspirations... [Remember] We are not the sum of our*

weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father’s love for us and our real capacity to become the image of his Son.’ For all those who heard the Holy Father that day, life would never be the same – each of them knew that they were in the presence of holiness, something ethereal and transcendent.

SCENE 2

Into the Papal palace of Pope Innocent IV, is invited the famous philosopher and theologian of the time, Thomas Aquinas. The Pope shows Thomas around the palace, showing its grandeur, and the vast collection of art, gold and treasures contained in it. And finally, when they had sat down, the Pope told this young Dominican, ‘*See Thomas, Peter can now not say that gold and silver have I not!*’ Without

blinking an eye, Thomas retorted, ‘*That is true, Holy Father. Neither can he say, “Get up and Walk”!*’

Admittedly, the second story is more of a legend than something that might have actually happened; yet the two contrasting stories tell us a lot about the Petrine Office. Love it or hate it, there is no getting away from the fact that the Petrine Office is arguably the most respected office in the world. In the wake of Pope Francis’ death and the ensuing conclave, it was both surprising as well as comforting to see even secular news outlets like the BBC, spending prime time TV on live feeding transmission from the Vatican. The question we then ask is – what does the Petrine Office signify in today’s world?



YOU ARE PETER...

The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, 'is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.' (*Lumen Gentium* 23, CCC 882). The papacy is unlike any other office in the world, an office instituted by Christ himself, the second person of the Trinity (Matthew 16:18-20), and the longevity of the institution in spite of the constant threat of annihilation from worldly kingdoms that have bloomed and faded in the last two millennia, as well as the treachery, and dissensions from within is a matter of marvel. The pope is called the *Supreme Pontiff*, from the Latin word *Pontifex*, which means bridge-builder. Among the many other bridges he is called to build (between

cultures, nations, other faiths and so on), the most important being the sacramental bridge between heaven and earth, between God and humanity. The papacy, in this sense, becomes the visible sign of Christ's healing, consoling, merciful, joyful presence in our hurting world. Yet, as the Second Vatican Council reiterated, the fundamental reason for the existence of the Church is to pursue the path of holiness, and the Petrine Office, above everything else is an office that has holiness as its primary foundation and aim, one that ought to point the world to the transcendent truth that the destiny of humanity is oneness in Christ, and that this path of holiness is possible in our world of today.

DO YOU LOVE ME MORE THAN THESE...?

Yet, we know for a painful fact that the distinction between the holiness of the Petrine Office and holiness of the people who have been chosen to occupy it, have sometimes been quite stark. Even a cursory glance at the chronology of popes should emphasise the truth. In fact, there was no canonised pope for more than 400 years after the Council of Trent during the tumultuous period of counter-reformation. However, one ought not be surprised by this – of course, one has to be scandalised by the abuse of power that was synonymous with some of the popes in the bygone era, but we have to also realise that the call to holiness is a call beyond the capacity of any human being – and no human being can ever be worthy to occupy the Petrine Office in all its holiness. In the plan of divine providence, it was right and proper for St Peter to be the rock on which the foundations of the Church were built rather than St John or St Paul or anyone else. Peter, who fell multiple times, embodies the humanity which can never really worthily occupy the office of the 'Vicar of Christ' – and Peter, more than anyone else was aware of that. Also, it is also a truth that there are the odd occasions when the person occupying the office needs correction, just as Paul had to correct Peter in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14).

URBI ET ORBI

One of the most enduring images of the coronavirus pandemic was that of

an elderly Pope Francis, limping along and standing alone in an empty Vatican square on a rain-soaked evening, praying for an end to the suffering unleashed upon humanity by the pandemic. Images like this are a reminder to an increasingly atheistic, agnostic and sceptical world that hope for the world comes not from the rich and the powerful, or the deals being brokered in the White House or at the Kremlin, but hope and peace are a gift, from above coming through channels that the world sometimes, won't acknowledge or understand. The Petrine Office, most times notwithstanding the person who occupies it, has in the recent past been a constant beacon of hope and moral authority in our increasingly volatile geopolitical reality.

A CITY ON A HILL...

The Petrine office has outlasted most of the powers, kingdoms and civilisations of the past two millennia. Many of them who have occupied the chair of St Peter have been saintly, but yet more have not been so, and some have been outright thieves and brigands. Yet, in the economy of salvation, just as in the Old Testament, the Triune God is a God who draws straight through crooked lines. Even the malice and evil intended by those who have occupied the office, God has turned into good – for as St Pope John XXIII once famously said during his nightly prayer, 'It's your Church, Lord, I'm going to bed!' The papacy will always be a sign of God's mercy and care for his people, notwithstanding the worthiness of the occupant. And more often than not, the good Lord will make sure that this mercy reaches His people through the medium of sinful men open to His promptings, who even through their infirmity and in their limitations, can still say, *Maranatha* – for we have given everything to you, *Totus Tuus!*





Did You Know This About the Papacy?

Some interesting papal facts compiled by
Aleena Joy and Joanna Joy.

The papacy traces its roots to St Peter, the first Pope. The Catholic Church, and hence the papacy, is one of the most enduring institutions in the world, with a legacy spanning 2000 years. Here are some facts about the papacy.

- The official list of papal titles, in the order they are dictated by the *Annuario Pontificio* in 2024, are:
 - Bishop of Rome (*Episcopus Romanus*)
 - Vicar of Jesus Christ (*Vicarius Iesu Christi*)
 - Successor of the Prince of the Apostles (*Successor principis apostolorum*)
 - Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church (*Summus Pontifex Ecclesiae Universalis*)
 - Patriarch of the West (*Patriarcha Occidentis*)
 - Primate of Italy (*Primatus Italiae*)
 - Metropolitan Archbishop of the Roman Province (*Archiepiscopus metropolitanus provinciae Romanae*)
 - Sovereign of the Vatican City State

(*Superanus sui iuris civitatis Vaticanae*)

- Servant of the Servants of God (*Servus Servorum Dei*)

Contrary to popular belief, St Peter's Basilica is not the seat of the pope. The Archbasilica of St John Lateran, officially the Major Papal, Patriarchal and Roman Archbasilica, Metropolitan and Primatial Cathedral of the Most Holy Saviour and Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist in Lateran, known as the Lateran Basilica, is the Cathedral of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. It is the only archbasilica in the world. It is known as the mother of all churches. Founded in 324, the basilica derives its name from an ancient Roman family who owned the place where the basilica stands today. The basilica is known for its Baroque architecture and the 12 niches holding the statues of 12 apostles. The basilica is the resting place of 6 popes. It includes the scala sancta, sancta sanctorum and the baptistry.

IS THE POPE INFALLIBLE?

Yes! But conditions apply. Though papal infallibility was implicit in the early Church, it came out as a dogma during the First Vatican Council through the dogmatic constitution, *Pastor aeternus*. The formulation reads as follows: 'Faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith... we teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal Church, by the divine assistance promised him in Blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for deigning doctrine regarding faith and morals; and that, therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiffs are

irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church.'

Infallibility does not imply impeccability. Also, it does not extend to the Pope's personal behaviour, political decisions, or casual statements.

IS THE CATHEDRA PETRI STILL PRESERVED?

In the apse of St Peter's Basilica lies the enormous sculpture by Gian Lorenzo Bernini within which is preserved the Cathedra Petri (the chair or throne of St Peter). It is a wooden chair encased within Bernini's monument. Believed to be the ancient throne of St Peter, it is the reminder of the authority of the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XVI described the chair as 'a symbol of the special mission of Peter and his Successors to tend Christ's flock, keeping it united in faith and charity.'

IS THE PAPAL LINEAGE RECORDED IN ANY OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS?

Yes, in *Annuario pontificio* (Pontifical yearbook). It is the annual directory of the Holy See of the Catholic Church. The official list of popes in chronological order and all officials of the Holy See's departments can be obtained from this book. As Catholics, it is our privilege to note that the Papal lineage can be traced up to St Peter, the first Pope.

WHAT DOES THE POPE WEAR?

The pope wears white garments implying holiness. Zucchetto, the white skull cap signifies his authority, humility and consecration. The day to day outfit of the pope is the white cassock which traditionally has 33 buttons, down the front, representing the 33 years of Christ's life. It is made primarily of wool, to signify innocence, holiness and charity of the pope's role. The white fascia the pope wears above his waist represents the pope's devotion, dedication, and submission to Jesus Christ's call to serve and look after His Church. The fascia is a symbol of readiness to minister to the people of God. The pellegrina is the white shoulder cape worn above the cassock. Pallium, the white band symbolises the Pope's full episcopal authority.

Traditionally made with wool that comes from lambs blessed on the feast of St Agnes, it is woven with six crosses, three of which contain a little pin to represent Christ's wounds. The pope wears red shoes which symbolises martyrdom and passion of Christ; but some popes prefer simpler ones. The pope can wear a red stole over his shoulder which features elaborate gold designs depicting the apostles. Pope Leo wore that during the first greeting.

WHAT IS THE FISHERMAN'S RING?

Bearing an image of St Peter, the ring worn by the pope has New Testament roots and significance. As Peter is known as the Fisherman Apostle, the ring is referred to as the Ring of the Fisherman, or the Piscatory Ring, symbolising the continuous lineage from Peter, the first Pope to the present day.

This ring has been part of the symbols of the papacy since at least the 13th century. Though used symbolically now, it was used as a signet ring to seal official documents. When the pope dies, his Ring of the Fisherman, along with the Lead Seal, is marked with a chisel, thereby ensuring the seal cannot be forged. Therefore, every ring is unique and personal to each pope.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE GAMMARELLI TAILORING SHOP AND THE POPE?

The Gammarelli tailoring shop in Rome, Italy, holds a legacy of curating Roman liturgical garments, hand-made with scrupulous attention to detail, as mentioned on their website. Ever since Giovanni Antonio Gammarelli entered service with the Roman clergy in 1798, under the pontificate of Pius VI, six generations of artisans have followed in managing the shop. They reserve the honour of serving holy memories of Pope Pius XI, Pope Pius XII, Saint John XXIII, Blessed Paul VI, Venerable John Paul I, Saint John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. The family believes the cassock worn by the new pontiff, Pope Leo XIV, was one of theirs.

DID THE PAPACY EVER MOVE OUT OF ROME?

Yes, during the Avignon papacy. The Avignon papacy refers to the time period between 1309 and 1377 when the papacy was shifted from Rome to Avignon, France. The political turmoil and the pressure from the French crown forced the shift. For nearly the next 70 years, seven consecutive French popes ruled from Avignon under the influence of the French monarchy. One of the most significant developments of the Avignon Papacy was the centralisation of Church bureaucracy and the expansion of papal power. The papal chancery, responsible for drafting and issuing official documents, grew significantly during this period. The development of canon law also accelerated during this time. The Avignon Papacy came to an end in 1376 when Gregory XI heeded the calls of St Catherine of Siena and other reformers to return the papal court to Rome.

IS THERE A DRESS CODE FOR OFFICIALS VISITING THE VATICAN OR FOR PRIVATE AUDIENCES WITH THE POPE?

Yes. As per the Vatican protocol, women in private audiences and official visits are required to wear black, symbolising humility. But, there are a few who can wear white. They are the Catholic sovereigns and the spouses of the Catholic monarchs of the European royal houses of Spain, Belgium, Luxembourg and Monaco. Only seven women living today are allowed to wear white. Both men and women are required to follow modest dress codes.

Reference: Various sources including Ascension Press, Catholic News Agency, NCR.

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Servant Leadership

One among the titles of the pope is 'Servant of the Servants of God'. **Raifiel Cyril** explains this aspect and its significance for each of us.

Unlike secular media's belief about the 'power hungry' Church, most bishops do not 'desire' or 'aim towards' becoming one. Recently, when one of Pope Leo's acquaintances was being quizzed about whether 'Cardinal Robert' had wanted to be Pope, he responded that no one in their right mind would 'want' that. While the media and movies may make it sound like it's a position that is fought and campaigned for, by God's grace, this is not true of the Catholic Church today. More often than not, there is great reluctance in assuming positions of leadership.

The best leaders are probably those who aren't desperately hoping to become one, albeit being aware that this is a possibility they may have to surrender to. Of course, let us not deny that within each one of us lies a desire to be 'significant' and 'of significance' and assuming a position of leadership seems like an easy way of doing that. However, as the Ignatian Principle and Foundation teaches us, a human being's purpose is to praise, revere and serve God and all other created things are to be ordered to this purpose. Thus, we are called to be indifferent to all created things, and not prefer one over the other like preferring positions of leadership over 'lower' ones.

Given that the highest position of power that one could possibly have in this life is that of 'God', it makes sense to look to Jesus' brand of leadership and what

exactly He used His power for.

1. He chose to accept gladly a giant demotion to Earth from CEO, to be a nobody for the sake of His team.
2. Despite His wealth, talent and power He remained unknown for 30 years.
3. He could have easily accomplished His will without us human beings, but He used mere humans; Mary, Joseph, the disciples, you and me to bring His will to pass.
4. He chose weak, ignorant, poor fishermen and sinners as His dream team.
5. He trusted them with carrying out His mission after 3 years of accompaniment, refusing to micromanage.
6. Instead of coming down heavily on their mistakes, He encouraged and empowered them. Jesus told His disciples that they would do greater things than He did (John 14:12).
7. He washed their feet and affirmed that the smallest would be the greatest.
8. He not only gave His time and resources but ultimately gave His life for them.

No leader, CEO, brand owner leads to their own exclusion. Leadership in this world is about honour and admiration that can be sustained forever. Jesus' end was pitiful and horrific. He poured Himself out as a drink until not a drop remained to be recognised or known. His followers ran away ashamed and



confused. Jesus' leadership style is not for the fainthearted and certainly not for those who choose 'health over sickness, riches over poverty, honour over dishonour and a long over a short life' (Ignatian Principle and Foundation). Indeed, without the grace of God it is impossible for us fickle human beings to live this out.

So what could we learn about servant leadership from Jesus?

- A servant leader does not take positions and titles seriously and is interested in the team's wellbeing over his/her own.
- A servant leader does not use his/her position to seek significance but rather to glorify God.
- A servant leader is not a lone wolf who



- uses manipulation to build a following but rather is one who lovingly invites others alongside himself/herself.
- A servant leader does not measure performance by the standards of the world but is deeply aware of the intrinsic worth, potential and dignity of all.
- A servant leader trusts his/her team and respects them enough to not meddle after handing over.
- A servant leader wants his/her team to outperform their leader, encouraging and empowering them to do so.
- A servant leader seeks the lowest place and is the first one ready to do the 'dirty work', not leaving 'menial' tasks to teammates.
- A servant leader does not seek praise, reverence or service but rather seeks

to become a servant of all, withholding nothing including his/her own life.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-11).

If anything should surprise us about

God, it should be how little He attempts to control us. He has truly set us free. He sees every pit and sinful habit we fall into but in His matchless humility, He stands back and lets us return to Him, while giving us every grace and resource to do so. What about us? How do we respond when people we have authority over displease us? Do we jump in harshly or nurse a grudge?

May God grant us the grace to overcome our ego, pride and comfort seeking to become servant leaders in our offices, communities and homes.

'A nobody who is precious to Christ', Raifiel lives with her husband, Cyril in beautiful Canberra, Australia.

ART



Papal Commissions and a Visually Stunning Legacy

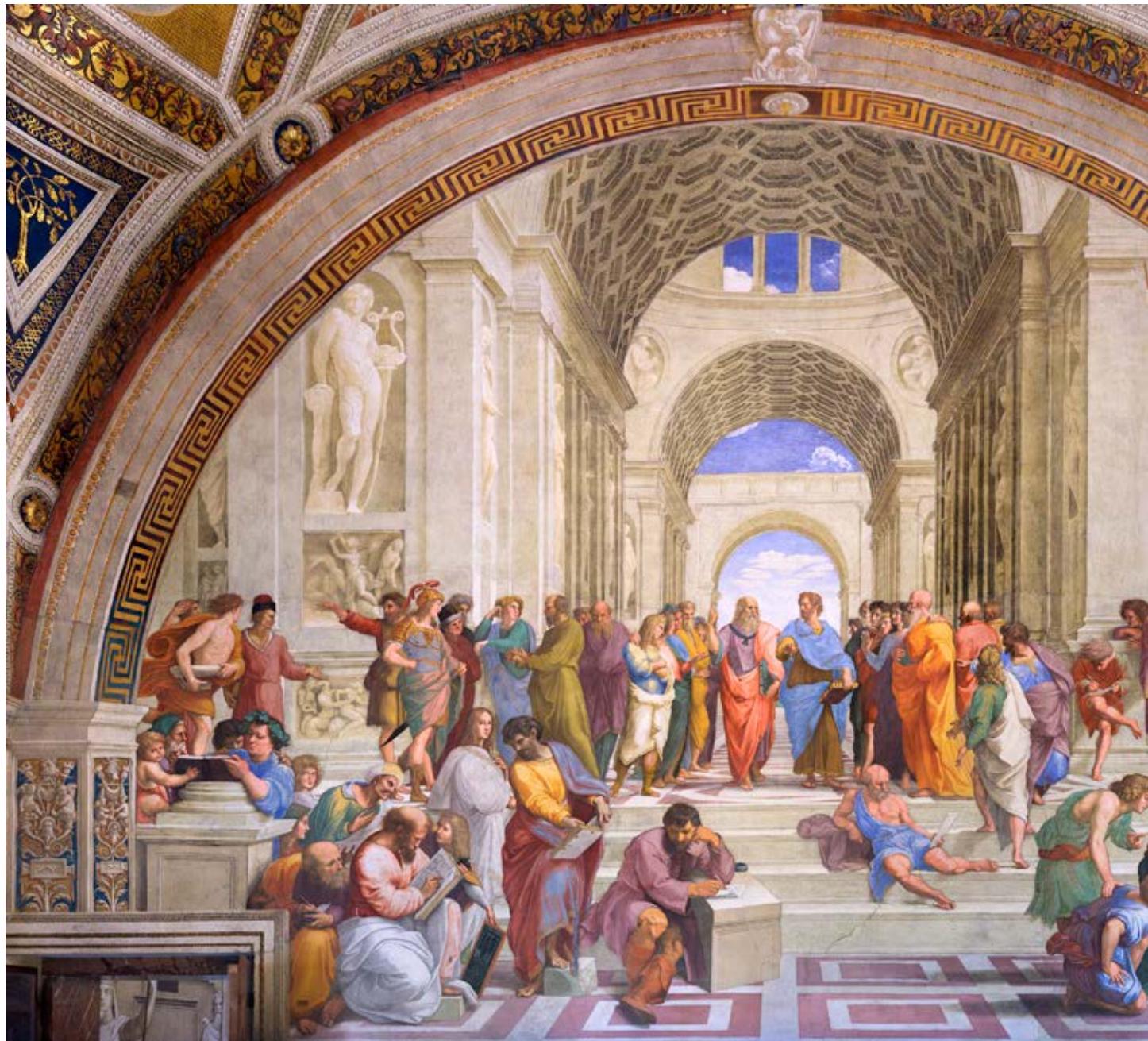
Shaji Joseph Arakkal brings into focus a few grand works of two masters, which were commissioned by various Popes.

Art has a very important place in the Catholic Church. Since the Renaissance period of the 15th and 16th centuries, the Catholic Church began to focus on art and craftsmanship along with its pastoral ministry. This historical path that has encouraged art and craftsmanship led to the creation of numerous masterpieces and contributed to the overall growth of the Renaissance. The astonishing ingenuity of art and craftsmanship spread from Rome to the entire Western world and later expanded globally through missionaries.

Left: Sistine Chapel Ceiling by Michelangelo

Commissioning talented artists to visualise portions from the Bible as well as other sacred texts have greatly helped Church leaders to provide the light of faith to the people. Perhaps it is images and sculptures that have made it easier for people to grasp things rather than reading or listening to sermons. One can see people absorbed before art, absolutely oblivious of time.

It doesn't matter how talented or creative one is, for as the old saying goes, 'There must be a wall to paint a picture.' And so, it is good to remember those who



It doesn't matter how talented or creative one is, for as the old saying goes, 'There must be a wall to paint a picture.'



Above: The School of Athens by Raphael
Left: Stanza della Segnatura by Raphael



commissioned those works when recalling the many renowned paintings in the world and the artists behind their creative brilliance.

MICHELANGELO DI LODOVICO BUONARROTI SIMONI

Michelangelo was an Italian sculptor, painter, architect, and poet of the High Renaissance. Born in the Republic of Florence, his works have had a lasting impact on Western art, drawing inspiration from the models of classical antiquity. Michelangelo's talents were employed by several Popes for various artistic commissions.

Pope Julius II commissioned him for the ceiling frescoes of the Sistine Chapel (1508-1512) and for the construction of the Pope's Tomb (Tomb of Pope Julius II). Since Michelangelo preferred working on sculpture, he initially resisted the commission, but later reluctantly accepted it.

Pope Paul III commissioned Michelangelo to paint *The Last Judgment* on the western wall of the Sistine Chapel (1535-1541).

Pope Leo X and Pope Clement VII, both members of the Medici family, commissioned Michelangelo to work on the Basilica of San Lorenzo, the burial place of all prominent members of the family.

RAFFAELLO SANZIO DA URBINO

Rafael was an Italian painter and architect of the High Renaissance. His works are praised for their clarity of form, simplicity of composition, and the visible achievement of the Neoplatonic ideal of human greatness. Together with Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, he forms the traditional trinity of the great masters of that period.

Raphael's father, Giovanni Santi, was a palace painter to the ruler of the small but highly cultured city of Urbino. His father died when Raphael was eleven years old; Raphael is believed to have played a role in managing the family workshop later on. Raphael, who was then trained as a disciple of Pietro Perugino, the Italian Renaissance painter at the Umbrian school, was described as a fully trained 'master' by 1500.

Until he moved to Rome to work at the Apostolic Palace at the invitation of Pope Julius II in 1508, he worked in several cities in Northern Italy. He received numerous significant commissions there, many of which were to work as an architect. When he died in 1520, he was at the height of his power.

Pope Julius II appointed Raphael

to decorate his private library in the Vatican, particularly the Stanza della Segnatura. The frescoes in this room, such as *The School of Athens*, which depicts a congregation of ancient philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists, symbolises the summit of human ideals.

Stanza della Segnatura (Room of the Signatura). The room takes its name from the highest court of the Holy See, the *Segnatura Gratiae et Iustitiae*, which was presided over by the pontiff and used to meet in this room around the mid-16th century. Originally the room was used by Pope Julius II as a library and private office.

The first of the four rooms, that Pope Julius II commissioned Raphael to paint, was intended as a suite of apartments in the Vatican. The frescoes in the Stanza della Segnatura, including *The School of Athens*, represent the three greatest categories of the human spirit: Truth, Good and Beauty.

Pope Julius II was a powerful and influential pope who greatly admired Raphael's talents. In addition to the Stanza della Segnatura, Raphael also worked on other papal commissions such as the *Raphael Cartoons* (commissioned by Pope Leo X, these are paintings on paper depicting scenes from the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles) for the tapestries for the Sistine Chapel, and the *Sistine Madonna* (an oil painting commissioned by Pope Julius II for the church of San Sisto, Piacenza).

JUBILEE IS GETTING HOTTER!



The talk of the town has been all about our new (American!) Pope. As we happened to dissect in my class, more than 70% of news stories make a reference to Pope Leo (XIV) with the word American mentioned. All eyes have been on him, adding to part of the attraction of Jubilee as well – to meet the new Pope. One has to say that the media has taken huge efforts to follow the new Pope to his minutest details.

One of the most culturally and liturgically rich celebrations was the

Jubilee of the Eastern Churches, which took place from 12-14 May. Liturgies in various rites included Eastern Syriac rite, Armenian, Coptic, Byzantine and many others. There are 23 Eastern Catholic Churches, which are self-governing and in full communion with the pope. Pope Leo expressed his deep concern about the risk of the Eastern communities, living in diasporas, losing their religious identity and emphasised that, **'It is essential to preserve your traditions without watering them down.'** Addressing the

'martyr' Churches, he said, 'Who, more than you, can sing words of hope in the abyss of violence?' From the Holy Land to Ukraine, from the Middle East to the Caucasus, the Pope recalled the voice of Christ who cries: 'Peace be with you!'

On 21st May, the Pope held his first General Audience and spoke about the parable of the sower, continuing from where Pope Francis left off. The Vatican has announced that the Pope will preside at Mass every Sunday in June.

On Saturday, 17 May 2025, on



the occasion of the **Jubilee of**

Confraternities, the city of Rome played host to solemn and historic procession, powerful expressions of faith, art and tradition. The main attraction of this Great Procession were two of the most venerated images from the Andalucian Holy Week celebrations: the Most Holy Christ of the Expiration, known as *El Cachorro*, from Seville, and the Most Holy Virgin of Hope, known as the *Bride of Ronda*, from Malaga. It was so vibrant and rich in variety with people dressing up in various traditional and cultural faith-attire with a wide array of statuary during the procession.

Another major event was the Inaugural Mass of Pope Leo XIV. During the ceremony, the pontiff received the Fisherman's Ring aka the Piscatory Ring and the pallium, a symbol of his universal pastoral authority. After the proclamation of the Gospel, there was the act of obedience and fidelity of the Universal Church and to the new pope. Instead of the College of Cardinals (as for Pope Francis), this time a group of 'representatives of the people of God,' took the oath. This was an international event, attended by many dignitaries from around the world.

Adding to the list of Jubilee collaborators, Mondadori Store, the largest network of bookstores in Italy, has teamed up with the organisers of the Holy Year to become a cultural partner of the Pilgrim's Card – *Carta del Pellegrino* – the free digital card, that promises exclusive discounts from the bookstore. On one hand, I don't think many are aware of these collaborations and offers, not making good use of them, and on the other, I feel, marketing goes on as well: well, what do you think?

From 30 May to 1 June, the **Jubilee of**



Families, Children, Grandparents and the Elderly took place, participated by more than 60,000 people from over 120 countries, according to booking records. It was marked with plenty of celebrations including movie celebrities and musical fests; every participant received a copy of the *Child's Bible*, edited by the Pontifical Foundation's Aid to the Church in Need. During the concluding Mass, Pope Leo reminded that family was the cradle of humanity's future and that 'marriage is not an ideal but the measure of true love between a man and a woman: a love that is total, faithful and fruitful.'

As I write this, the Vatican is getting ready for the **Jubilee of Movements, Associations, and New Communities** (including Jesus Youth) set to take place from 7-8 June, with over 70,000 pilgrims for the events. With the Mercury hovering

around 30°C, Rome is burning brighter and hotter with the onset of summer and it is going to be tough with a huge influx of pilgrims. Mind you, Rome has always been an international tourist destination, a prime pilgrimage location and add to this all the Jubilee pilgrims and you will have close to 1.5 lakh people in the city every weekend. It is evident, with summer and vacations in Europe starting, the city is getting crowded. For the next couple of months, Pope Leo will also be a 'person of interest and curiosity' as people are trying to work out how he is going to be! ■

Fr Justin Panachickal MSFS is currently doing his licentiate in social communications at the Pontifical University of Santa Croce, and will share with us throughout the Jubilee year ground reports from Rome.

Chandeliers

★ St John Eudes: A Heart that Loved the Two Hearts



Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque received her famous visions on the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1673. But decades before these revelations, in the mid-1600s, there was a lover of the Sacred Heart who was already preaching Christ's Heart as the fountain of divine love and mercy.

Not only did he taste and internalise the sweet nectar of Jesus' Heart, but he also gazed into its depths and discovered a love that did not burn alone. He realised that the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary beat in perfect harmony, a divine exchange of love that began at the Incarnation and continued through Christ's passion, drawing all souls into

their embrace.

His name was John Eudes, and he would become the apostle of these Two Hearts, ensuring that their love was not just admired, but lived. He believed that Jesus' Heart was more than just a symbol – it was the very core of His love for humanity, a fire burning with compassion and sacrifice. And 'just as Christ's Heart burns with love for humanity, Mary's Heart burns with love for Christ – completely united in His mission of redemption.' For Eudes, devotion to one naturally led to the other. 'You must never separate what God has so perfectly united,' he wrote, 'the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of His Holy Mother.'

While many in his time viewed these devotions as private or personal acts of piety, Eudes sought to bring them into the liturgical life of the Church. In 1672, he introduced the first public Mass and Office in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, making it a central part of Catholic worship. But even before this, in 1648, he had already established the first liturgical feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary – nearly two centuries before the Church would officially approve it.

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

His teachings on the Sacred Heart were groundbreaking in their depth and clarity. He saw the Sacred Heart as the dwelling place of divine tenderness – the fountain from which all graces flow – and emphasised that it was not just an object of love but a model for every Christian life.

Unlike many of his contemporaries who viewed devotion as an external practice, Eudes insisted that it must lead to an interior transformation: 'To be devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is to make our hearts like His: burning with love for God and neighbour, full of kindness and compassion, humble and gentle.' When he introduced the liturgical feast for the Sacred Heart, his ardent desire was for the Church to recognise the Heart of Christ as the centre of worship, not just in personal devotion but in the Eucharistic celebration itself.

THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

Ever the visionary, he taught that Mary's Heart was completely united to Jesus' mission – loving as He loved, suffering as He suffered, and interceding for the salvation of the world. His book *The Admirable Heart of the Most Holy Mother of God* was one of the earliest theological explorations of Mary's Heart. In it, he described her Heart as the 'workshop of divine love,' where the Holy Spirit formed the greatest masterpiece – her maternal

love for Christ and all humanity. 'Jesus and Mary are so intimately united that they share the same feelings, the same desires, and the same love for us. The Heart of Mary is the purest mirror in which we see the Sacred Heart of Jesus.'

Long before the 19th-century Marian dogmas or the Fatima apparitions, Eudes was already preaching that Mary's Heart beats in perfect union with Christ's – making it a model for every Christian heart. This devotion wasn't simply about honouring Mary, but about imitating her purity, humility, and perfect surrender to God.

For him, the veneration of the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts was a call to live as they lived, love as they loved, and suffer as they suffered.

OPPOSITION AND CHALLENGES

Yet, pioneering such devotions did not come without challenges. Some theologians and Church authorities of his time saw his emphasis on the Heart of Jesus and Mary as unnecessary and overly sentimental. Others, especially the 'Jansenists,' opposed his focus on God's love and mercy. They stressed an austere and severe vision of God, where only a select few could receive His grace. Eudes, however, preached a God of love, mercy, and open arms.

This opposition meant that for much of his life, his teachings on the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts were not widely accepted. Though his ideas were slow to gain widespread approval, they eventually laid the groundwork for the Sacred Heart revelations received by Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque in the 1670s and, later, the Church's full embrace of both devotions in the 19th and 20th centuries.

BEYOND THE LEGACY

While Saint John Eudes is best known for his work on the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts, his holiness extended far beyond

Not only did he taste and internalise the sweet nectar of Jesus' Heart, but he also gazed into its depths and discovered a love that did not burn alone. He realised that the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary beat in perfect harmony, a divine exchange of love that began at the Incarnation and continued through Christ's passion, drawing all souls into their embrace.

these devotions. He was a missionary, preacher, and reformer who worked tirelessly for the renewal of the Church.

He founded the Congregation of Jesus and Mary (Eudists) to train priests in holiness and effective ministry, believing that a holy priesthood was essential for a holy Church. He also established the Order of Our Lady of Charity, dedicated to helping women in need, especially those marginalised by society. Traveling across France, he preached missions that called people to conversion, repentance, and a deeper relationship with God.

ON FIRE WITH LOVE

John Eudes was a man consumed by the fire of divine love. His devotion to the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts was not about sentimentality, but about a radical interior transformation of the soul, a call to make our own hearts burn with love, mercy, and sacrifice.

Though he faced opposition in his time, his vision endured. From every tabernacle where Christ dwells in the Eucharist to every heart consecrated to Mary, the legacy of Saint John Eudes is still alive.

His life reminds us that true devotion

is not just about admiring the love of Jesus and Mary – it is about allowing that love to reshape us. To honour the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts is to let our own hearts beat in unison with theirs, turning love into action, compassion into sacrifice, and prayer into transformation.

In a world that often grows cold, may we, like Saint John Eudes, become flames of divine love.

KEY MILESTONES OF ST JOHN EUDES

- 1648 – Established the first liturgical feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
- 1672 – Composed the first Mass and Office for the Sacred Heart of Jesus
- 1855 – Pope Pius IX declared him the 'father, apostle, and doctor' of both these devotions
- 1925 – Canonised by Pope Pius XI, affirming his spiritual legacy
- 1944 – Pope Pius XII extended the Feast of the Immaculate Heart to the Universal Church

Maria Teres is a social worker by education, and writer by passion and profession. In her spare time, you may find her curled up on a couch crocheting, reading, or sketching.



ABOVE ALL HOLD UNFAILING

Kingdom Keys

Just as Peter was entrusted with a solemn appointment, each of us is given the authority to carry on the mission of Christ, writes **Anil Israel**.

Vatican City is the smallest country in the world. The Vatican City State flag is square in shape, with yellow and white vertical halves. The yellow represents gold and the white represents silver. The white half of the flag features the emblem of the Holy See, which consists of a papal tiara and the crossed keys of Saint Peter. The tiara symbolises the triple power of the Pope as *father of kings, governor of the world and Vicar of Christ*.

The keys are a symbol of the power, the Catholic Church believes, that Christ gave to St Peter and his successors: *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven and whatever you permit on earth shall be permitted in heaven* (Matthew 16:19) The gold key, on the

right, alludes to the power in the kingdom of the heaven, and the silver one, on the left, indicates the spiritual authority of the papacy on earth. The interlacing indicates the link between the two aspects of the power, and the handles of the key are at the base to symbolise the power being in the hands of the pope.

The keys mentioned in the New Testament are also referred to in the Old Testament: *I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open* (Isaiah 22:22). The keys signify transfer of ‘authority’ and ‘responsibility’.

‘No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother.’ (Saint Cyprian, CCC 181). When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we acknowledge God as our Father. Our relationship with our heavenly Father implies our relatedness to the Mother Church. By virtue of our baptism, we become a child of God and a member of the mystical body of Christ – the Church. Our relationship to the Mother Church, connects us to the Head of the Church – Christ and His visible representative on earth – the pope.

St Peter was the first pope. It was after Peter’s confession: *You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God* (Matthew 16:16), that Jesus declares the solemn appointment: *You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it* (Matthew 16:18).

Peter denied Christ thrice. After the cock crew, he repented, *went out and wept bitterly* (Luke 22:62). After the resurrection, Jesus entrusts him thrice: *Feed my sheep* (John 21:15-17). After the Pentecost, Peter preached: *Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:38) and *those who received his word were baptised, and there were added that day about three thousand souls*



(Acts 2:41). Later the number of believers grew to *five thousand* (Acts 4:4).

The Gospel is further proclaimed to *many villages of the Samaritans* (Acts. 8:25). Finally, the Gospel reaches the Gentiles as well, with the baptism of the household of Cornelius the centurion (Acts 10). Thus, we see the threefold response of the entrusted authority: *you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8).

In his apostolic letter, Peter addresses us as *God’s own people* (1 Peter 2:9) and exhorts us to *live as servants of God* (1 Peter 2:16). The universal commandment

YOUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER, SINCE LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS → 1 PETER 4:8



Jesus taught us to love by serving others. Service is love in action. Jesus presented Himself as the ultimate example of servant leadership: I am among you as one who serves (Luke 22:27). Am I putting love in action?

of love is reiterated: *Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins* (1 Peter 4:8). The key to the Kingdom is vividly captured: *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you* (1 Peter 5:6). The divine invitation to *become partakers of the divine nature* (2 Peter 1:4) is exclusively unveiled to the flock.

Jesus instituted the Eucharist and the priesthood on Maundy Thursday. *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you* (John 13:15). *For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom*

for many (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). Jesus taught us to love by serving others. Service is love in action. Jesus presented Himself as the ultimate example of servant leadership: *I am among you as one who serves* (Luke 22:27). Am I putting love in action?

The resurrected Jesus claimed authority: *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me* (Matthew 28:18). He passed on the authority to His followers: *I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you* (Luke 10:19). *In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover* (Mark 16:17-18). Am I embracing the God-given authority to defeat the Enemy? To carry on the mission of Christ, is to imitate Christ. *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her* (Ephesians 5:25). *The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep* (John 10:11). The followers of Christ are called to live their lives for the sake of the Gospel. Am I willing to assume this responsibility – to serve with the kenosis attitude of self-emptying love? Am I willing to serve God, by serving those entrusted to me – in my family and in my neighbourhood? Am I willing to step out of my comfort zone to serve those most in need – to *bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to set the oppressed free* (Luke 4:18)? Am I willing to embrace the keys to the kingdom – to humble myself as a *servant of all* (Mark 9:35)? May the indwelling Spirit encourage us to respond to the divine call.



Newswatch

Pope Leo XIV Approves Recognition of Three New Venerables



Pope Leo XIV has authorised the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints to release decrees officially recognising three individuals as Venerable, acknowledging their virtuous lives and devotion to the Catholic faith. They include two missionaries and an Indian bishop.

During his first official meeting with Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery, Pope Leo XIV approved the decree recognising the 'offering of life' by Alejandro Labaca Ugarte, a Capuchin missionary and bishop. Born on 19 April 1920, in Beizama, Spain, Labaca served in various missions, including a difficult assignment in communist China. After his expulsion from China, he continued his mission work in Ecuador. There, he became the titular bishop of Pomaria and apostolic vicar of Aguarico. Labaca was

deeply committed to evangelising in the remote regions of the Amazon rainforest. On 21 July 1987, he was killed by members of the Tagaeri tribe in the Tigüino region, a group that was under threat from expanding oil activities – an issue Labaca actively opposed. His death is considered a result of his giving his life in defence of these indigenous people.

Alongside Labaca, missionary Inés Arango Velásquez was also declared venerable. Born on 6 April 1937, in Medellín, Colombia, she served for a decade in the Aguarico region as a member of the Capuchin Tertiaries of the Holy Family. Arango dedicated her ministry to the Huaorani people, another indigenous group of the Ecuadorian Amazon. She died in the same attack that took Labaca's life, sharing in his mission

and martyrdom.

The declaration of venerability follows guidelines laid out in Pope Francis' 2017 apostolic letter *Maiores Hac Dilectionem*, which introduced 'offering of life' as a recognised path toward beatification, alongside martyrdom and heroic virtue.

In addition to Labaca and Arango, Pope Leo XIV recognised the heroic virtues of Mathew Makil, a 19th-century Indian bishop. Born on 27 March 1851, in Manjor, India, Makil was the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He served as the titular bishop of Tralles and was the first apostolic vicar of Kottayam. He died on 26 January 1914. Now declared Venerable, a verified miracle attributed to his intercession will be required for his beatification.

Cardinal Koovakad Calls for Christian and Buddhists to Embrace Values of Peace

At the opening of the eighth Buddhist-Christian Colloquium in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Cardinal George Koovakad, Prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, emphasised the shared responsibility of Christians and Buddhists in fostering peace through reconciliation and resilience. The colloquium, held from 27 to 29 May at the Catholic Pastoral Center, gathered religious leaders, scholars, and representatives from across Asia to explore ways both traditions can work together to promote harmony in a troubled world.

Bishop Olivier Schmitthaeusler, Apostolic Vicar of Phnom Penh, welcomed attendees and acknowledged Cambodia's

legacy of peaceful religious coexistence. He highlighted the significance of the event for the local Catholic Church and expressed appreciation to the Royal Government for supporting interfaith harmony. Quoting Pope Francis, the bishop encouraged a culture of dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding, expressing hope that the colloquium would serve as a sign of unity and lead all participants toward hope.

In his keynote address, Cardinal Koovakad stressed the importance of religious cooperation in addressing global challenges such as violence, poverty, injustice, and environmental crises. He described the colloquium as a sacred space for both Buddhists and Christians –

By Sam Biju

two ancient traditions – to come together not only in dialogue but in shared commitment to peace. He acknowledged the discouragement many feel amid ongoing conflicts and injustices, but emphasised the deep spiritual resources both religions possess to foster healing and unity.

According to the cardinal, 'reconciliation and resilience' are values embedded in both Christian and Buddhist traditions. These principles, he argued, are essential for building sustainable peace in societies often marked by division and suffering. Citing Pope Leo XIV, he described peace as 'an active and demanding gift,' which begins with personal accountability – removing pride, using respectful language, and engaging in open, honest dialogue.

The cardinal also paid tribute to Pope Francis, referencing his posthumous Testament where he dedicated his final sufferings to world peace and human fraternity. He expressed gratitude for the global interfaith solidarity shown after the pope's passing.

Concluding his address, Cardinal Koovakad invoked Pope Leo XIV's message to religious leaders, urging them to collectively reject war, arms races, and exploitative economies, while promoting disarmament and integral human development. He called on both Buddhists and Christians to continue building bridges of peace rooted in shared compassion and faith.



FOUR BISHOPS DECLINE PARTICIPATION IN GERMAN SYNODAL BODY

Four German bishops, Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki, Bishops Gregor Maria Hanke, Stefan Oster, and Rudolf Voderholzer, have formally declined to participate in a new national synodal body set to launch in 2026. In a 19 May letter to organisers, the bishops stated they would not assume their assigned seats on the synodal committee, which aims to include all 27 German diocesan bishops.

Their absence challenges the effort to portray the body as representative of the entire German Catholic Church.

These bishops, who participated in the 2019–2023 Synodal Way, have consistently voiced concerns over proposals for significant reforms, including women deacons, lay preaching, and revisions to Church teaching on sexuality. A particularly controversial resolution in 2022 proposed a permanent synodal council with joint decision-making power over pastoral and financial matters. However, in January 2023, the Vatican clarified that such a council

lacks canonical authority and that participation in the interim synodal committee is voluntary.

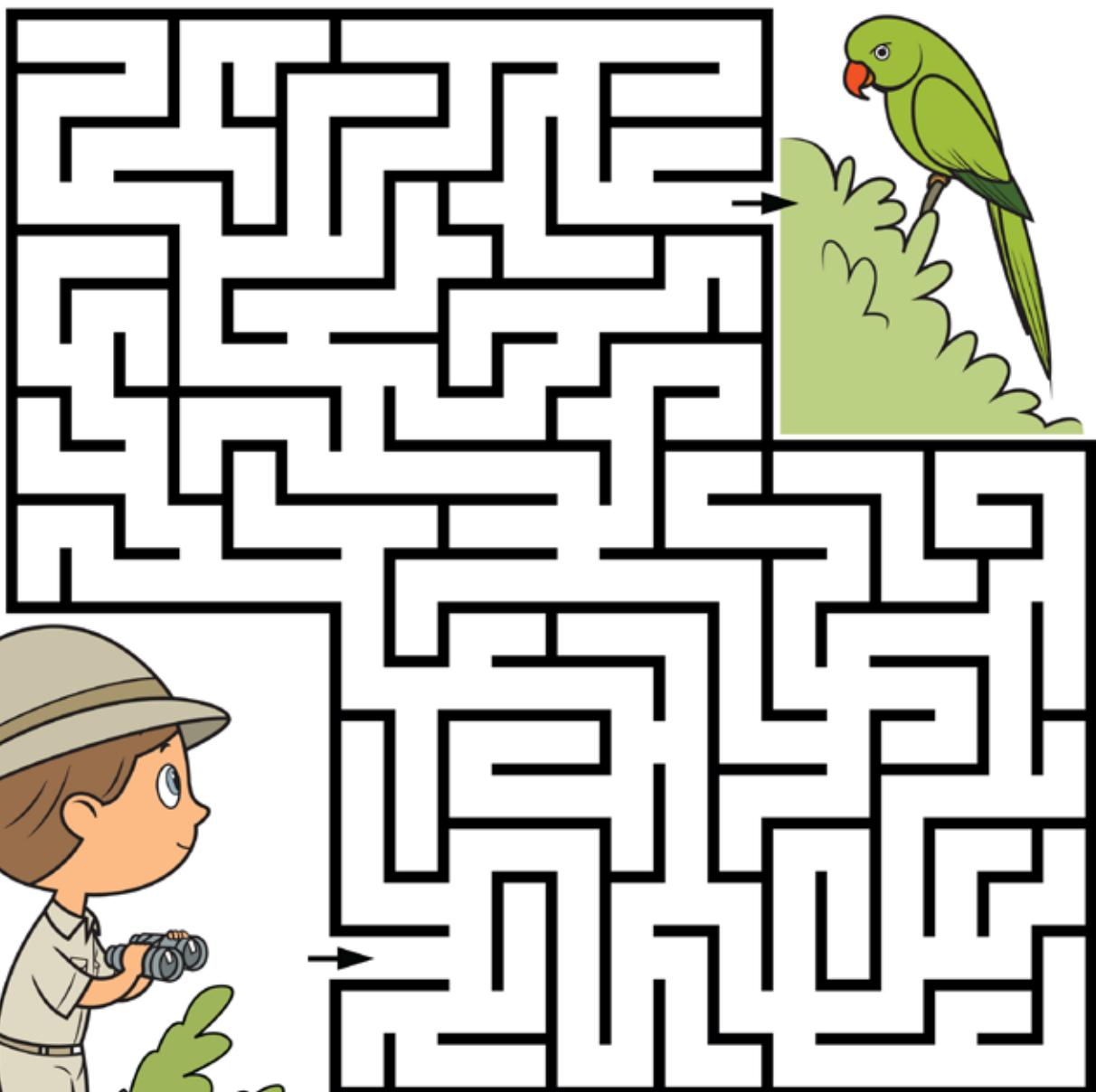
The four bishops have refused funding for the committee and boycotted meetings. At the latest meeting in Magdeburg in May 2025, committee members reviewed draft statutes for the new body, but the bishops reiterated they were neither *de jure* members nor supporters of the initiative. They emphasised Rome's continued opposition to the proposed council, even after recent Vatican talks.

In their letter, the bishops reaffirmed their commitment to 'authentic synodality' aligned with Pope Francis' global synodal process, focusing on dialogue, spiritual discernment, and fidelity to Church teaching. They stressed the Eucharist as central to Church life and synodality. As discussions continue, further talks in Rome are planned, with final statutes of the synodal body expected by late 2025. ZdK leaders welcomed Pope Leo XIV's election and plan to maintain dialogue with the Vatican.



Take a picture of the solved image and send it to quiztime@jykairosmedia.org before 25th July 2025.
The winner will be rewarded with 1 year subscription of Kairos Global

SOLVE THE MAZE



LUKAS and RAY

Scripture Pictures
@scripture.pictures.316

Wait... that Peter? First Pope?

Yep. Fisherman, loudmouth, ear remover... total legend.

He freaked out in storms and denied Jesus thrice.

And Jesus still said, 'On this rock I'll build my Church'

Peter probably just stood there like, 'Cool. No pressure, Jesus'

Then Jesus gave him the keys to the kingdom. That's serious authority

Wild. He messed up, but still got the mission?

Exactly. Grace doesn't cancel calling—it fuels it.



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