

ΑΩ

2018

*Sinaron*



# *Congratulations...*

Monsignor James Gnanapiragasam  
on your Golden Sacerdotal Anniversary

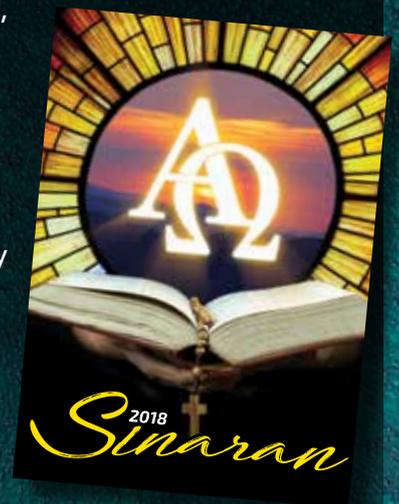
## **Rationale for the Sinaran 2018 Front Cover**

The Alpha and the Omega represent Jesus Christ, the beginning and the end of who we are and all we do.

The Open Bible stands for the centrality of the Word of God in our lives.

The Rosary symbolizes Mary, the Mother of God, who continues to pray for us.

Both palms wide open while holding the Bible, with the Rosary on it, signify our openness to allowing both the Word of God and our Lady to lead us to Christ.



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The Editorial Team

## EDITOR'S FOREWORD:

# The College of Martyrs

College General. It is indeed a privilege to share a few thoughts on the *College of Martyrs*. Sinaran 18' will also feature one of the sons of the College of Martyrs – The journey and ministry of the Golden Jubilarian, Monsignor James Gnanapiragasam. ***“To do rightly, love loyalty and walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8 – NJB)*** is the theme adopted by the College General community for 2018. It is of great significance and this is also the 25th Sacerdotal anniversary theme of Monsignor James G as he is fondly known.

As a seminary forming Diocesan Priests, College General is proud of her 353-years tradition. Owing greatly to the selfless sacrifices of the Paris Foreign Missions (MEP fathers), College General became

a regional seminary entrusted with the mission of forming local clergy. Comprising seminarians from Myanmar (Burma), Vietnam, Thailand, China and Malaysia (Malaya) College General is honored to etch in her tradition brave young men who took up their crosses with courage and followed the voice of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, to go where even the brave dare not go. After completing their formation, seminarians were ordained and sent back to their respective countries – now to be the Men in Mission.

Carrying with them Knowledge, Wisdom, Love and the Heart of Jesus, courageously they went as Witnesses to the Word made Flesh, some to sure martyrdom. St. Philip Minh Van Doan, St. Peter Quy Cong Doan, St. Paul Loc Le Van, St. John Hoan Trinh Doan and St. Joseph Luu Van Nguyen – Alumni of College General were martyred in Annam, Vietnam between 1853-1861. They were canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1988. These 5 young men number among the 47 College General Alumni who bore witness to their faith though gruesome martyrdom. Two MEP priests, namely Laurent-Marie-Joseph Imbert and Jacques-Honore Chastan who served as formators from 1821-1822 and 1827-1830 respectively, were martyred in Korea.

Forming local diocesan clergy was the mission of the MEP Fathers, received from their own communities, formed within a community and sent to serve in a community as witnesses of the saving presence of Jesus. One of these witnesses is Msgr. James Gnanapiragasam. Hailing from the southern town of Seremban, and specifically the community of the parish of the Visitation, he shone brightly during his formative years and more so in the priestly ministry.

Having a deep love for the Word of God, Msgr. James G passionately lived the Word of God everywhere he served, from the pastoral field at Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang to the furthering of his studies in Rome, and then from Rome back to College General as Professor of Scripture and later as Rector. After completing 3 terms as formator at College General, he went back to the pastoral field of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mentakab; Our Lady of Fatima, Brickfields; and St. John's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur. Holding the office of Vicar General, Msgr. James was instrumental in various efforts and programmes of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. Serving a second stint at College General, Msgr. James continued his passion of forming seminarians as Spiritual Father of the Seminary. Now, as he edges to the age of retirement, Msgr. James





is looking forward to returning to the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

From St. Laurent-Marie- Joseph Imbert and St. Jacques-Honore Chastan to St. Philip Minh Van Doan, St. Peter Quy Cong Doan, St. Paul Loc Le Van, St. John Hoan Trinh Doan and St. Joseph Luu Van Nguyen to Msgr. James G. What do they have in common? It is the love of the Word made Flesh that dwells among us. A century apart but with the same zeal and courage to make God's presence felt and lived among the faithful.

Knowing and following Jesus demands a surrender to the person of Jesus Christ and to be able to be open to the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is not surprising then that Msgr. James G. has Micah 6:8 etched into his heart, *"To do rightly, love loyalty and walk humbly with your God"*. Indeed, right discernment and action *whilst remaining loyal to the merciful love of God* and in *constant humble relationship* with God is deeply embedded in the spirituality of the Diocesan Priest and the spirituality of the Eucharist – Taken, Broken, Given.

The objective of the annual Sinaran Magazine is to promote vocations to the Diocesan Priesthood and to introduce the legendary College of Martyrs – College General Major Seminary. This year's issue builds on this tradition while highlighting the Golden Jubilee of Msgr. James G. as a living witness of the faithful journey toward discerning the call to the priesthood as a young person right up to faithful priestly ministry. The life journey of Msgr. James G is truly inspiring. College General formators and seminarians extend our best wishes. Thank you, Msgr. James. *Ad multos annos.*

Rev Fr Simon Labrooy  
Editorial Team Advisor



# Message from the President

Dear Staff & Seminarians of College General and Readers of Sinaran 2018,

On behalf of Archbishop Julian Leow and Bishop Bernard Paul, who are co-responsible for this Regional Seminary, we send you greetings of Hope - Post PMPC IV 2016 and Post GE14.

In both these events, the Holy Spirit has spoken through the People of God, calling for a nation and a Church that is Creative, Inclusive and Bridge-building. Sentiments of New Life and Hope are everywhere even if some may choose to linger and live in the past with unresolved issues.

The Holy Spirit has spoken clearly through the successor of St. Peter, inviting us to be Missionary Disciples of Joy, Mercy and Hope even as we face the realities and the challenges on the ground level of our Church and Nation. His latest Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad) is a clarion call to holiness, inviting all God's People including Seminarians and Members of the Clergy, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. It speaks about the urgency of discernment for all, especially those in leadership.

Discernment is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and the Seminary is a good place to be formed in the Charism of Discernment, which is also a discipline, an art and a skill. I have already mentioned to you at the Inaugural Mass at the beginning of Academic Year 2018 on the need for all of us to purify our motivations for wanting to respond to God's call to the Priesthood. Please read the Apostolic Exhortation, study and reflect on it in the years to come. Digest, Interiorize and Integrate discernment into your daily lives.

It gives me great joy to express Spiritual Communion and Jubilations to Msgr. James Gnanapiragasam, with whom I was blessed to work on the Formation Team in College General for several years. He has become a close companion and a confidante whose advice I seek and cherish. He was also my formator in Sacred Scripture while I was a seminarian. His freshness of approach and vitality for God's Word has never diminished but has grown over the years.

We also thank and praise God for the bumper 9 Priestly Ordination in our 3 Dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia. I am sure all these events will encourage many young adults to consider and ponder the vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood imbued with the Joy, Mercy and Hope of the Gospel. May the Holy Spirit move all of us to Act Justly, Love Loyalty and Walk Humbly with Your God.

**Rt. Rev. Sebastian Francis**  
**Bishop of Penang**  
**President of College General**  
**Major Seminary**  
**Board of Directors**



# With Gratitude and Thanks

"You have already been told what is right and what Yahweh wants of you. Only this, to do what is right, to love loyalty and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6: 8)



From one of the smallest books of the Bible comes a line of incredible richness and depth, a line that sums up our whole spiritual life as priests.

Just as there are many ways to live out the Christian vocation, so are there many ways to live out the priestly vocation.

Not all priests 'fit the same mould', but there are characteristics that we should expect to find in priestly life which is aptly described by Pope Francis as the seven pillars of priesthood:

1. The strength of a priest depends on his relationship with Christ.
2. The priest must be close to the people he serves.
3. A priest's authority must be linked to service, especially to the care and protection of the poorest, weakest, the least important and most easily forgotten.
4. The priest must be a minister of mercy.
5. The priest is called to simplicity of life.
6. The priest must be a model of integrity.
7. The priest is to be a source of blessing for his people.

Yes, the vocation of a priest is a precious gift for the Church. But it makes demands on the man who gives himself to it. St. Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians says that he "handed over to God's people and to the Church, not only the Good News, but his whole life as well" (1 Thess. 2:8). We are fortunate to have here in our midst, our former rector and now Spiritual Director, Monsignor James Gnanapiragasam, who has in the words of St Paul, given 50 years of his life to God, His people and the Church.

St John Fisher (Bishop of Rochester) once said, 'In New Testament days there were no chalices of gold but many golden priests. Now there are many chalices of gold, but almost no golden priests'. So we rejoice and thank God for our very own 'golden priest', Msgr James, who has been a blessing to the Malaysian Church and a champion for priestly vocations over the years.

I learned that if we wish to reach out to younger generations, we must not simply do things for them, but accomplish great things with them, accompanying them, encouraging them, believing in them, handing over to them the hopes, dreams and vision of the Church. Msgr James has in his own ways been exemplifying this for almost half a century now.

I remember Msgr James was Rector when I first joined the seminary in College General in February 1994. Even though it was only for four short months, I could already sense his fatherly, wise and humorous side. Perhaps as a priest I may have 'disappointed' him when his attempts to teach me Italian / Latin before I left for Rome proved too challenging and we gave up after only 2 classes! But I'm sure that he would have had some success with the others after me. Today we are happy to see him continuing to impart his fatherly wisdom to the young men here at the seminary.

God's blessings on Msgr James and our heartfelt gratitude and thanks for his selfless service.

**Most Rev. Julian Leow Beng Kim**  
**Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur**



# Having the Eye of the Tiger



In the movie, "Rocky III", the coach Apollo Creed, an old boxer reminds Rocky Balboa to not "lose the eye of the tiger." Simply he was saying, "Don't lose your focus. We have had glimpses of such fighters, finishers and "comebacks from the edge of defeat" to stand out as heroes or heroines in our times. They set goals. They were focused. Theirs were stories of search, study and sacrifice. Some see this as a three-fold journey of discernment, formation and ministry. When Msgr James Gnanapiragasam celebrates his Golden Jubilee or his 50th Anniversary of his Sacerdotal Ordination, we see these reflective signs and with the many exit points in his life's highway. He began that trip, endured the drive and ministered where he was sent.

To "have the eye of the tiger", one has to be discerning first. Some call it a search; a checking out; a clarifying or a testing of the spirit. It just means "reading the signs" about us. Watch out for the SIGNS in your daily scripture readings, in your dreams, in the inner movements, in what attracts you, at the camps and stay-ins, in the people around you and in listening to your spiritual directors. Note them in your diary or journal. Secondly, the seeker clarifies and even questions his sense of being called. A call attracts. Whether to friendship, marriage, priestly or religious life or missionary or a Christian professional in the world, one is attracted to it. We see it, hear it, feel it, or experience it, which is personal. Be like Mary here: ask, "How can this be? What does it mean? What does it entail?"

Then, we become more focused or begin to develop the "eye of the tiger" as we submit to discipleship, to discipline and to the school of disciplines. The seminary

training was for me the "upper room experience" of 7 years. A time of waiting, praying, learning, preparing and readying for the people, the parishes and diocese out there. As I prepared, I was getting ready to enter ministry. I focused on one thing - "Be ready for what is out there."

What drives a priest? A missionary? A religious? It is being "purpose-driven" or "mission-driven." This is the final determinant in a focused person. Jesus resolutely made for Jerusalem, his end or destiny. We are in the seminary to be a priest for the diocese or for the kingdom. That's simple and plain. For me, the words of Jesus to Peter on the shores of Lake Tiberius, "If you love ME, feed my sheep, my lambs", drove me. We need a motivator or a word that provides an image to sustain us in our ministry. To fight like Rocky Balboa... to return from defeat, to regain one's lost dignity, to finish what we begin, to begin hot and end hot - we need the eye of the tiger.

Congratulations to Msgr James Gnanapiragasam. The scripture gives credit to finishers. Paul said: Fight the good fight. Run the good race. A motivational speaker with no hands, no legs told the audience: Finish strong. To the Collegians: Don't lose the eye of the tiger.

**FOCUS ON THE SIGNS THAT ATTRACT YOU. FOCUS ON BEING EQUIPPED. FOCUS ON THE DIOCESE AND ITS PEOPLE WHO AWAITS MISSIONARIES OF HOPE.**

Rt. Rev. Bernard Paul  
Bishop of Melaka Johor

# Pilgrimage - An Event and A Process

We are pilgrims. Pilgrims in search of the truth, goodness and beauty. These attributes of truth, goodness and beauty are not things we create. They are something we discover. Our discovery of them can be ecstatic or agonising in nature as this pilgrimage not only affirms but it also calls for conversion. As pilgrims of this pilgrimage we must be open, humble and honest.

## Philosophical Pilgrimage

Socrates calls "searching pilgrims" courageous philosophers who "follow the evidence wherever it may lead". Such philosophers will realise ignorance, prejudices and hypocrisy within and outside themselves. This realization and conversion will challenge them to embrace, grow and establish truth, fairness and authenticity. These are hallmarks of wisdom for Socrates. These philosophers hence will never compromise truth, good and beauty for promotion, money and popularity and end up as "intellectual prostitutes". These are faint-hearted philosophers who have stopped or compromised their search for wisdom, the soul of philosophy.

## Theological Pilgrimage

True religious pilgrims for Micah are pilgrims in search of the real God. Such pilgrims will base their piety on truth, goodness and beauty. Hence, they cannot but "act justly, love loyalty and walk humbly with their God". They will not stop at mere religiosity, religiosity that subdues God through rituals and placations but remains indifferent to social injustices. On the contrary, these pilgrims are open to ongoing conversion simply because they know they have not yet fully embraced the call of justice and to love deeply like God. In these pilgrims the spirituality of concern, compassion and fraternity become a reality; hence, they will continue to grow in their search for the real God, the soul of theology.

## Holistic Pilgrimage

Truth, goodness and beauty are commonsensical, factual,

reasonable and transcendental. They can be known through the senses, science, philosophy and religion.

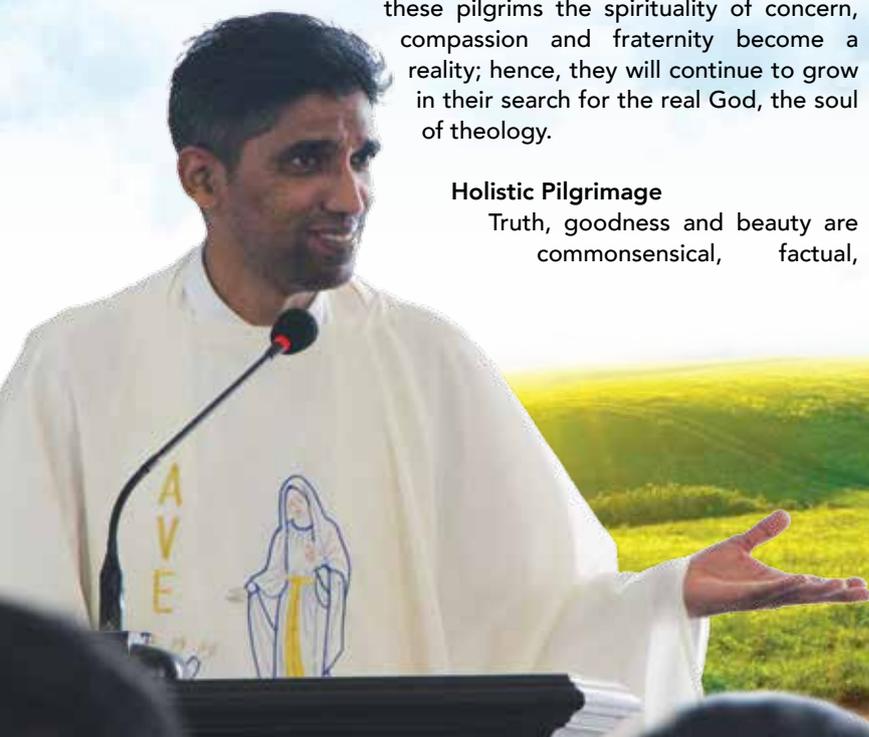
As Catholic pilgrims in our pursuit of them, we are called to be "mystics" of truth, good and beauty, in the sense that we do not just sense, analyse, philosophise and theologize them. We also learn to stand in awe, relate and pray through them, simply because as Catholics we know truth, goodness and beauty are not just mere objects or concepts. They are someone. Someone we call Jesus, "God revealing, and God revealed" (John 1). Someone whom we will never be able to conquer. Someone whom we can only continuously contemplate and allow ourselves to be converted by him.

## Seminary Formation As Pilgrimage

Soulless discipleship is possible since soulless philosophy and soulless theology can be realities. Seminary formation is about growing as priests-disciples of Jesus. Soulless seminary formation becomes a reality when Jesus is compromised - the soul of the priesthood. When such compromise takes place, seminary formation becomes boring, tiring and depressing. Hence, prayer, studies, manual work and community living become chores instead of acts of love and means of discovering the truth, good and beauty. The challenge of seminary formation thus is to maintain Jesus as the focal point of formation - formation that kindles the desire to seek deeper experience, knowledge and relationship with Jesus.

We have to admit this is not an easy task, simply because discipleship is not just about getting excited or mimicking but adopting and adhering to the life of Jesus. Holy priests have proved that this discipleship, to be a "mystic", in the seminary is a reality for those open to conversion in their search for truth, goodness and beauty. Only such seminary pilgrims, later as priests, will make Jesus real, relatable and relevant in any given situation in their priestly ministry.

**Rev. Fr. Stanley Antoni**  
*Rector of College General*



# A Priest to Imitate and Learn From

Praise the Lord, and congratulations for the good work that the Team of Sinaran magazine is doing, especially for information on Seminari Katolik, Pulau Pinang, and for the promotion of the vocation to the Priesthood. Thank you for inviting me to share in this Sinaran issue.

My personal experience is that if we want to promote the vocation to the Priesthood, we need to have an example of a Priest whom our young people can see, hear and imitate. I am happy to know that Msgr. James Gnanapiragasam is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of his ordination to the Priesthood this year, 2018. He has served in the seminary for many years and even when I was still in the seminary, College General, Penang in the seventies. Msgr. James' way of responding to God's call by discernment, being ready to be formed and serving humbly as a Priest is something that we all can learn from and apply to our lives. Sincere congratulations, Msgr. James, and thank you for showing us the way.

In my own reflection and experience of promoting the vocation to the Priesthood or, for that matter, to the Religious life and the secular vocations, we the Church need first and foremost to create an environment where our faithful, especially the young, are able and encouraged to build their sense of



belonging and concern for the welfare of the Church. This of course should begin in our own families and Basic Christian Communities. With all the distractions and attractions of choosing a selfish way of life nowadays, we are facing challenges on how to inculcate

in our youths a sense of belonging towards the Church through their families and communities.

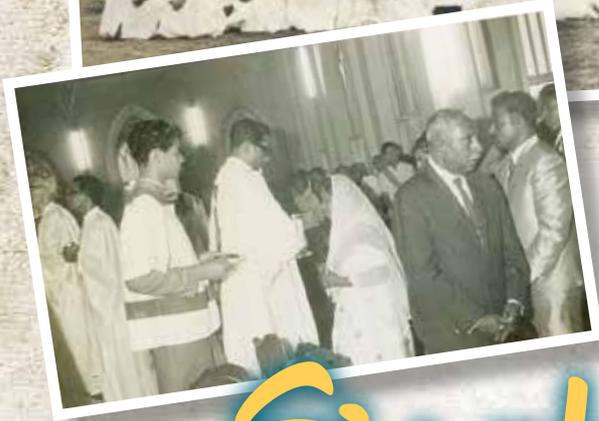
The vocation to the Priesthood belongs to our Lord. He is the one who calls, sends, and sustains the person called. It is therefore necessary that we as church make our relationship with our Lord Jesus our priority always, for without Him we can do nothing (John 15: 4-5).

Let us pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and wisdom in our discernment to face today's challenges, and for the call to the Priesthood to be always heard and responded to.

Thank you.

**Rt. Rev. Cornelius Piong**  
*Bishop of Keningau*





# Simple in Virtue, Steadfast in Duty

Msgr James Gnanapiragasam is a very quiet kind of a person and a deep thinker. He is full of knowledge and very good in the scriptures.

As a person, he is very friendly and an all-rounder, good in football as well as studies. After he was sent to Rome for Scripture studies, he was really steep in it as he was very involved in it for many years, introducing the 'Bible in 100 weeks' and 'Bible in 40 weeks' sessions.

He has been very pastoral too, especially to the Tamil speaking parishes. While I was in the seminary, he was in different parishes, and later he was posted to the Cathedral of St John, and he served as the vicar-general of the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese.

I am glad that he is now in the seminary with the students, for he is very observant, tough in mind and ways, yet tender in heart and understanding. Although he knows many things, he does not show it off. Indeed, I am pleased that he has gone back to the seminary because his presence there will be a great source of wisdom for the students – the future priests.

For me, the best time I had with him was when after undergoing heart surgery, he came to the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Cheras to recuperate. We were together practically every day, sharing many pleasant moments. He is truly simple in virtue and steadfast in duty like the Little Sisters of the Poor.



Congratulations, Msgr James Gnanapiragasam, on your Priestly Golden Jubilee celebration.

Ad Multos Annos.

**Cardinal Soter Fernandez**



## An Ardent Scripture Lover

It is with great pleasure that I pen these few lines for an outstanding “product” of College General. The brilliant, outstanding and awesome Msgr James Gnanapiragasam, at present professor emeritus and spiritual director of College General, this one time Pontifical Major Seminary of the Far East, which was founded in 1664 in Ayutthia, Thailand and continued an illustrious record of producing eminent pastors and even martyrs for several churches in South & East Asia.

Born on 23rd January 1943 in Seremban. Msgr James came from a disciplined and deeply faith-rooted Catholic family. Little wonder that 2 of the bright boys should be recruited to join the school of mini minor seminary that Archbishop Dominic Vendargon started in the Bishop’s House at Bukit Nanas. They had memorable times under Fr Guittat at 528, Jalan Bukit Nanas while attending St John’s Institution for their Senior Cambridge exam. He then proceeded to St Francis Xavier Minor Seminary in Singapore, where he had 3 years of intensive Latin language and also the Form VI Cambridge Exams, with principal levels. When he turned up in College General, Penang in 1963, I had posted their expected results on the notice board of the College General of the batch of bright students who had turned up from St Francis Xavier, Singapore. I was the Caput(head prefect) at the time. When the actual results were reported from Singapore, it was confirmed that Msgr James had scored well in 3 principal levels and in the General Paper. After the 1st year in College General – where Msgr James and his classmates were a new breed of youngsters who brought a fresh modern posture to the traditional College General somber atmosphere – I left college as it had been the last year of studies before ordination.

Msgr James continued with his studies in College General. He was spotted early by the new dynamic MEP lecturers of College General – Frs Jean L’hour and Felix Faure – and was ear-marked for further studies in Rome. Soon after his ordination on 14 December 1968 in Seremban, he was sent to Rome for Scriptural studies at the Pontifical Biblicum. He had to do a Licentiate in Theology before qualifying for studies in the Biblicum where he had to master Hebrew and Greek to be able to read the Bible in these languages – before starting his Biblical Exegetical Studies to qualify for the licentiate.

During the course of his Biblical studies, he lost his dear father back home in Seremban, so he went back for the funeral and returned so as to complete his course and exams. He graduated with honours for the Licentiate and returned in 1973 to lecture in College General, Penang. In the meantime, I had also been selected to go

to Rome for studies in Moral Theology at the Academic Alphonsian and returned to College General in 1974.

And so we were colleagues on the staff of College General. I must acknowledge that his classes were lively, humorous and offering original insights and applications of scripture to present day situations. During his academic years in Rome, he went during the summer long vacation to brush up his French, German as they were also requirements for the Masters degree. The French priests at the MEP headquarters remarked, as a compliment that he was a cut above the others in his class.

After completing his three times 6-year stint in College General as lecturer, Msgr James returned to KL Archdiocese and served as relief priest for Fatima Church in Brickfields. Then when his term in college was over, he was assigned to Mentakab parish where he had to pastor to all the Tamil-speaking people in the vast state of Pahang. In the meantime, he managed to get the permit for a parish church building and kindergarten.

Later he was made parish priest of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Brickfields and had the task of putting up a church in Puchong and a community centre in Brickfields. He continued working at this while doing parish administration. He had introduced the 100 weeks Bible Course while in KL and in Penang and got it translated in Tamil and trained facilitators to conduct this course in various parishes.

When I took over as Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur in 2003, I had this extraordinary priest appointed as Vicar General and made him a Monsignor of the Papal household. Many people thought that he was Assistant Bishop, thus echoing the esteem in which they held him. We greet this great priest – a builder of parish communities, based on The Word of God and architect for church buildings – a true gift to the Archdiocese of KL and an Emeritus professor and spiritual father to a new generation of seminarians.

Ad Multos Annos and good health and cheer for years to come, Msgr James Gnana.

**Archbishop  
Emeritus Murphy Pakiam  
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur**

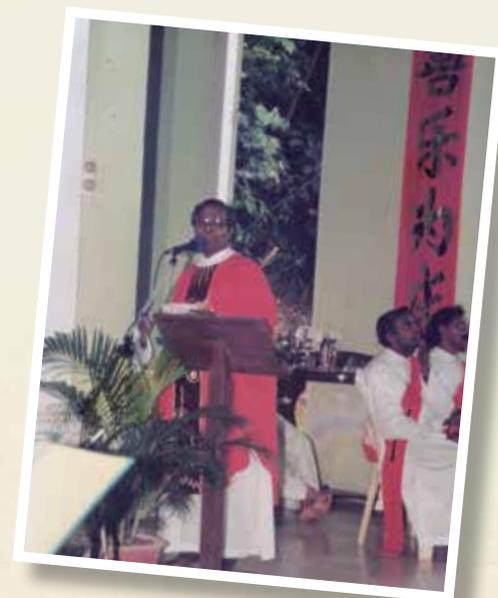
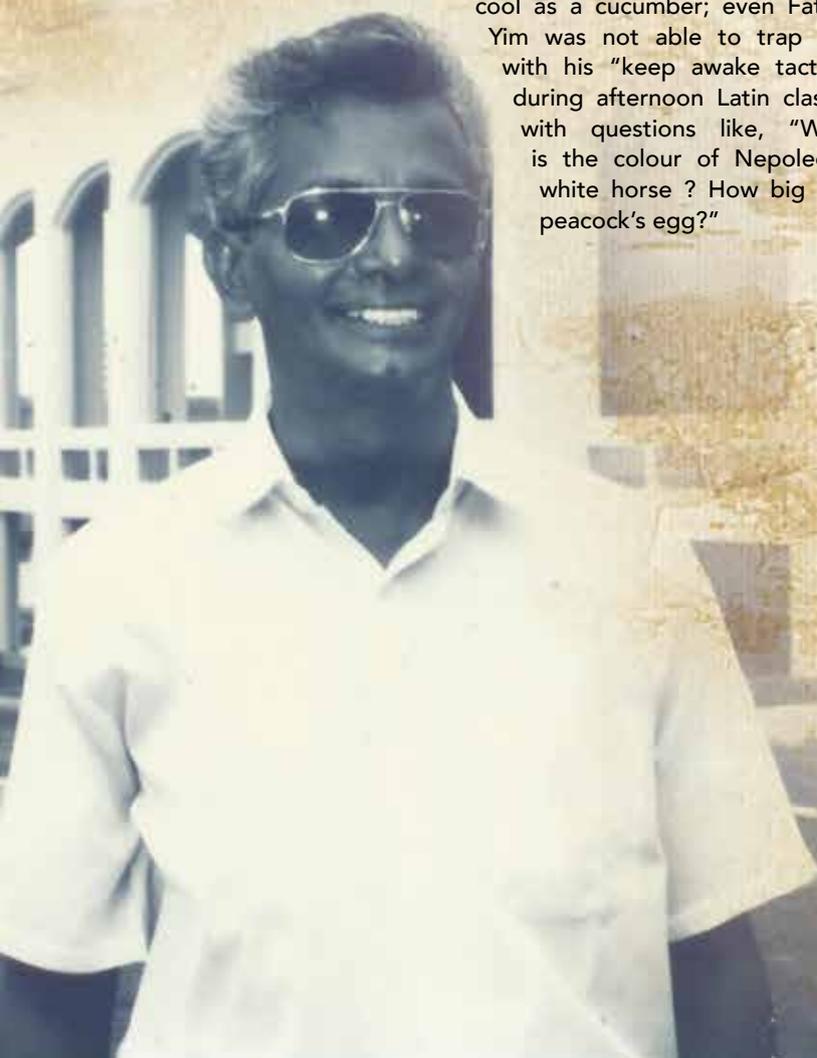


# A Talented Comrade

Celebrating a "Jubilee" is not an achievement but a blessing of God, who is gracious and watchful. James, through your sacramental life especially with the sacrament of Holy Orders, you have lifted your eyes to the mountain; God in return has not let your step slip. He guarded you and shaded you! He guarded you from harm and is your companion (Ps. 121). Let us take this occasion to thank God for His closeness to each one of us. We are his servants. He is the builder of His Kingdom. You were actively involved in building the Kingdom of God through parish work and as formator in the seminary.

We first met in 1960 in the Minor Seminary. Then, you were chubby with rounded big eyes. In the football field you were, where the ball was, due to your "vision" and speed. In volleyball, your weight and height betrayed you. In the classroom, you were as cool as a cucumber; even Father

Yim was not able to trap you with his "keep awake tactics" during afternoon Latin classes with questions like, "What is the colour of Napoleon's white horse? How big is a peacock's egg?"



In College General, you were the "Sanctus" type. You avoided the bad boys who went for beehunting, cycling round Penang Island, or swimming to Pulau Tikus Island. After we got our exam results from Father Rector, the bad boys came out jumping for joy because they managed to get the passing grade; James used to be a little sad and shaken because he missed the ninety-five percent grade by two marks! In community life, he was fully alive with his humour. We complimented one another and walked together towards priesthood.

After the ordination to the priesthood, he brought out his best both in the parish pastorate and as formator in the seminary. I was fortunate to have been with him as a formator. As in football he knew where the ball would come. Likewise, in the seminary he would just be there when the seminarians would least expect his presence! We would be saying Pakiam (Archbishop Emeritus) was sneaky but you were direct with your insights during staff meetings. With your flare for Tamil, (for many of us you were like the Tamil film actor Shivaji Ganesan!) you went out of your way to help the Tamilians in southern Kedah and northern Perak. They are still singing your praises!

Your commitment to the apostolate, your relaxing mannerism sprinkled with jokes, often quoting the person who said it first – very often it would be Father Robin Andrews! You lived your theme, "Act Justly, Love Tenderly and Walk Humbly with your God (Micah 6: 8)". You are always willing to give a helping hand. You motivate your colleagues. You are inspirational to the laity. Most of all, you are faithful to the promise of obedience you made to your Bishop, D.Vendargon and his successors, Archbishop Soter, Pakiam and Julian. "Thus gloriously are the faithful (Msgr James Gnanapiragasam) rewarded! (Ps. 149: 9)"

**Rev. Fr. Francis Anthony**  
*Diocese of Penang*

# An Inspirer of Scholarly Standards

A moment with Msgr James Gnanapiragasam is never dull; he lights up and energizes people and places with his wonderful sense of humour while being deeply connected to his flock. Well-read and intellectually gifted, Msgr James walks with humility in his heart and speech.

As I look back on Msgr James' 50 years of service in the Priesthood, I reminisce the old seminary days back in 1984 when I first came to know him. He was then Vice-Rector and Dean of Studies of the seminary. My initial inspirational encounter with him had led me to choose him as my Spiritual Director.

A reserved man by nature, Msgr James is transformed into a highly spirited and passionate teacher in the lecture halls of the seminary. The Word of God was truly divine for him, and he had in him an innate ability to bring alive the Old Testament scriptures. He enlightened us with the teachings of the Old Testament and filled it with a lively and insightful experience. He inspired us, young lads in the seminary, to always reflect deeply on the true essence of the scriptures, taking us on a journey to experience the personal and pastoral magnitude of it. He introduced us to a biblical exegesis which still makes me savour the taste of the Old Testament to this day. I recall Msgr James carrying his vintage looking lecture notes which were typewritten and cyclostyled back in those days. He would grin from cheek to cheek saying, "You guys better take this down ok, as you would not find it in any book, you know."

Today Msgr James Gnanapiragasam has returned to College General after serving in three parishes in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, namely the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mentakab; Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Brickfields; and The Cathedral of St John, Kuala Lumpur to shepherd our young seminarians as their Spiritual Father. It is a great blessing that he is journeying with the seminarians as they will have the privilege to witness the legacy of this remarkable



man of God. His faithful dedication and long years of service reflect and embody the three very important virtues: "Act Justly, Love Loyalty and Walk Humbly with Your God". Msgr James has touched the lives of so many people in so many places with his colossal and exceptional gift of Priesthood. May he continue to inspire all with his spiritual gifts.

With gratitude to God, I extend to you my dear brother, blessings for your 50 years of service as a Priest and an inspiring teacher in the ways of Scripture.

**Rev. Fr. Edwin Peter**  
*Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Kuala Lumpur*



# Called To Be Men for All Seasons

As I reflect on the priesthood (yet again!) as I approach my Silver Jubilee and more so, on Monsignor James Gnanapiragasam's Golden Jubilee, I realise that a priest is called to be a man for all seasons – and there is something about growing *into* and *in* the priesthood.

Monsignor James' 50 years of priestly ministry can be seen in the background of a changing Church. Ordained just after the Second Vatican Council and trained initially by French missionaries in Latin at the seminary, he has served in a context of change and renewal in the Church as well as in the wider context of society and the nation, always needing to adapt to new circumstances. It is in this context that I see him as '*a man for all seasons.*'

I first encountered Monsignor James as a seminarian. I loved his Old Testament lectures and homilies which were engaging and spiced with dry humour that sometimes went unnoticed. Yet I feared his exam questions, which were far from straightforward – I'd finish a paper and never be sure what he was really after. Getting the results was exciting and scary at the same time – I remember being all confident and receiving a C while at another time what seemed a disaster gained me an A! But the results were not what was important. Both Monsignor James and Fr Francis Anthony shared with me their infectious passion and love for the study and living out of God's Word, which is a legacy that I treasure and hope I have emulated in handing on the treasure that I received. While Monsignor James is often a reserved person, the Bible brought out an enthusiasm and energy in him.

Later, Monsignor James became the Rector of the seminary, while also juggling the three parishes in Bagan Serai, Parit Buntar and Nibong Tebal. As Caput of the Community, I had the opportunity to interact closely with him and found him listening intently as I communicated the students' needs. After my ordination and studies, there was again a mutual collaboration in the Biblical Apostolate. By this time, Monsignor James had moved out of the academic setting of the seminary and was now in Fatima Parish and then St John's Cathedral after his sabbatical. I saw in him the pastor who was concerned and involved in the life of his people.

After having been made Rector myself, and then having Monsignor James coming on board as a 'recycled' formator, I have to admit I was a little nervous at first to have my former rector on staff with me now as head. Yet, this was not the first time; earlier I had the same situation with Cardinal Soter. The tables had turned but I didn't have to worry. Monsignor James was a valuable wisdom figure who often helped me to look at a different viewpoint, willing to contribute what he could while also understanding and accepting that the entire situation had changed since he was at the helm.

Today as Monsignor James celebrates his Jubilee and looks ahead towards another phase of life, I know that he will enter it with grace and poise – open to the ongoing call of God as life evolves.

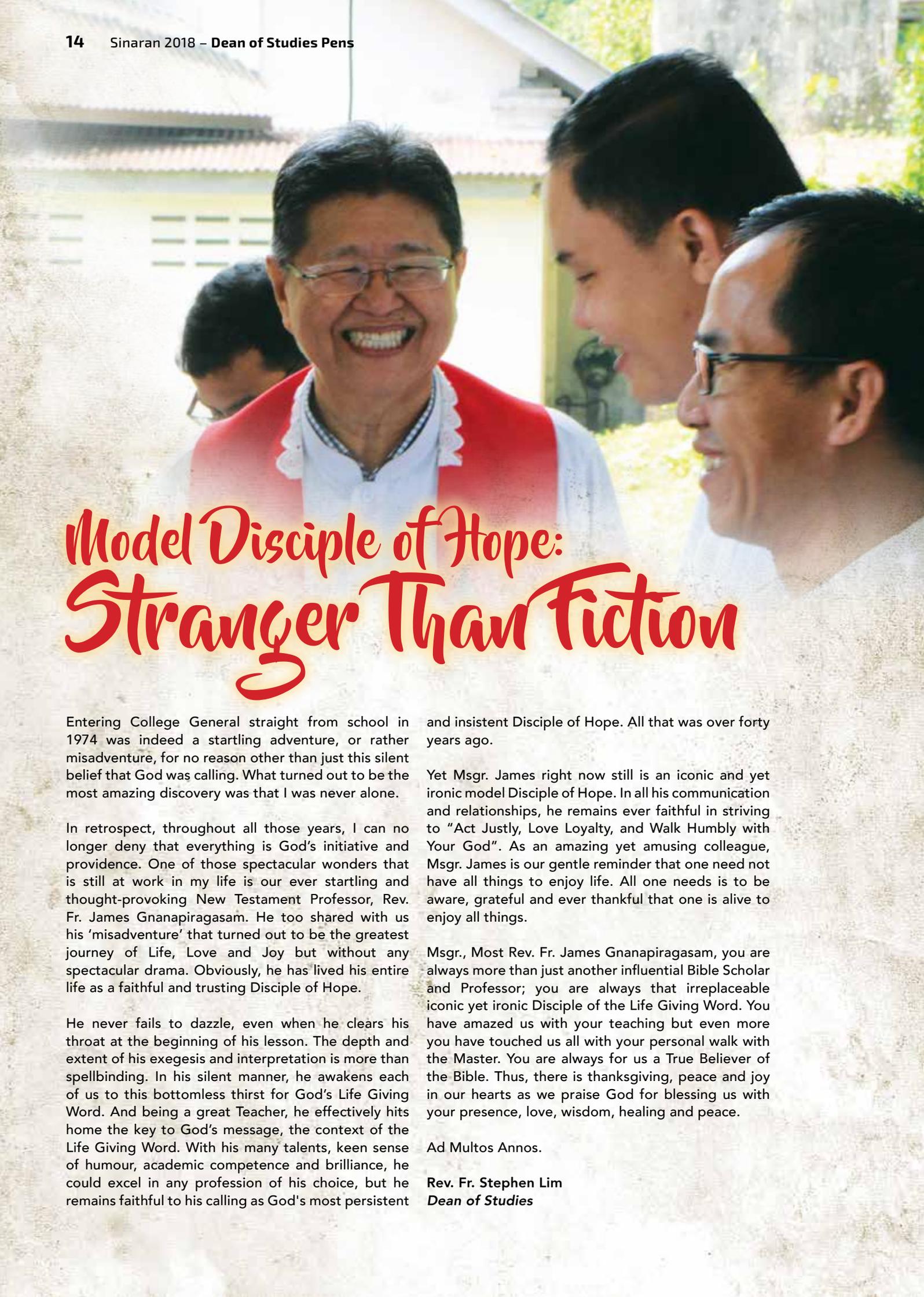
Thank you, James, for the great example of a man of God who has allowed himself to be moulded and shaped for the evolving shape of the priesthood that you have been called to. May your students at College General appreciate and emulate your example.

Congratulations! Ad Multos Annos!

In prayer, love and peace,

**Rev. Fr. Gerard Theraviam**  
**Church of the Divine**  
**Mercy,**  
**Shah Alam**





# Model Disciple of Hope: Stranger Than Fiction

Entering College General straight from school in 1974 was indeed a startling adventure, or rather misadventure, for no reason other than just this silent belief that God was calling. What turned out to be the most amazing discovery was that I was never alone.

In retrospect, throughout all those years, I can no longer deny that everything is God's initiative and providence. One of those spectacular wonders that is still at work in my life is our ever startling and thought-provoking New Testament Professor, Rev. Fr. James Gnanapiragasam. He too shared with us his 'misadventure' that turned out to be the greatest journey of Life, Love and Joy but without any spectacular drama. Obviously, he has lived his entire life as a faithful and trusting Disciple of Hope.

He never fails to dazzle, even when he clears his throat at the beginning of his lesson. The depth and extent of his exegesis and interpretation is more than spellbinding. In his silent manner, he awakens each of us to this bottomless thirst for God's Life Giving Word. And being a great Teacher, he effectively hits home the key to God's message, the context of the Life Giving Word. With his many talents, keen sense of humour, academic competence and brilliance, he could excel in any profession of his choice, but he remains faithful to his calling as God's most persistent

and insistent Disciple of Hope. All that was over forty years ago.

Yet Msgr. James right now still is an iconic and yet ironic model Disciple of Hope. In all his communication and relationships, he remains ever faithful in striving to "Act Justly, Love Loyalty, and Walk Humbly with Your God". As an amazing yet amusing colleague, Msgr. James is our gentle reminder that one need not have all things to enjoy life. All one needs is to be aware, grateful and ever thankful that one is alive to enjoy all things.

Msgr., Most Rev. Fr. James Gnanapiragasam, you are always more than just another influential Bible Scholar and Professor; you are always that irreplaceable iconic yet ironic Disciple of the Life Giving Word. You have amazed us with your teaching but even more you have touched us all with your personal walk with the Master. You are always for us a True Believer of the Bible. Thus, there is thanksgiving, peace and joy in our hearts as we praise God for blessing us with your presence, love, wisdom, healing and peace.

Ad Multos Annos.

**Rev. Fr. Stephen Lim**  
*Dean of Studies*

# Former Lecturer: Rev Fr Michael Arro M&P Shares

7 April 2018

Fr Michael Arro  
Church of St Teresa

James, Monsignor,

Yes, these big eyes, this thunderous laughter, this eagerness for life, no one can forget!!

The Seremban Seminarian has gone a long way: Though he took it coolly in college, he became a Biblical Scholar, a Lecturer and Priests' Formator, a Cathedral Rector, a Vicar General, a Monsignor and then back to the starting blocks, back in College as a Spiritual Director.

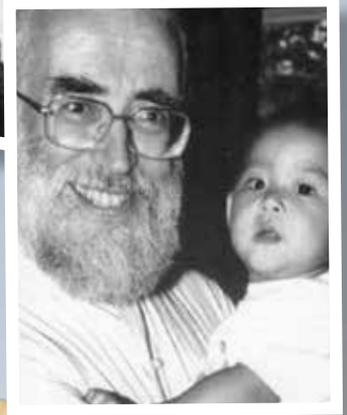
Hwa! Quite an achievement, and every step taken gracefully.

James, dear Monsignor, congratulations from the time the Gurney Drive was out of bound for most, but not for you.

Carry on being tonic and live-giving. That is the way Christ has shown us.

In the joy of His Resurrection, an old friend you make proud.

*Michael Arro*  
7/4/18



Singapore 16/5/18

Dear Father Simon,  
Thank you for your letter dated 20th April.

I have been cracking my old brains but cannot find anything I could write about Ingr James besides what I already sent you.

When in College I would say he was a seminarian of good behaviour & of pleasant relationship - the average, or better than average seminarian - Nothing was showing he would become a bible scholar, a vicar general and a Monsignor. But a devoted, competent and caring pastor - And he has been so

With best wishes for you & the College Fathers.

An old hand from the College,

*Michael Arro*

## Thoughts from the Golden Jubilarian:

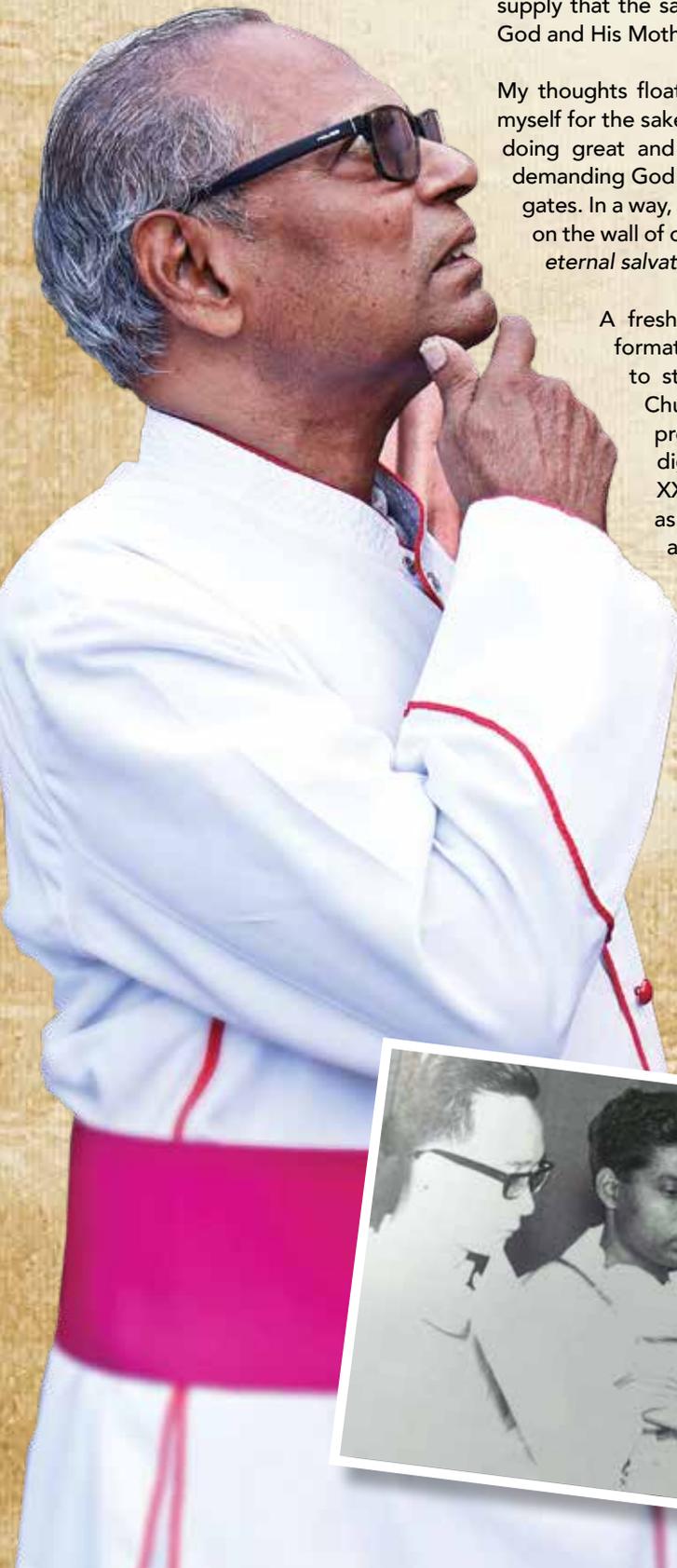
# A Fresh Gust of Wind

I watched her as she lighted the sixth tea candle at the shrine of Our Lady. She always insisted on six. I never understood the reason but all hell would break loose in this heavenly atmosphere if she did not get the six from the supply that the sacristan reluctantly left in the box. Perhaps she thought God and His Mother would not go for anything less than six.

My thoughts floated back to the days when I would physically 'punish' myself for the sake of Christ, imitating the hermits of old. I would consider doing great and outstanding things that I thought would satisfy the demanding God who should one day give me safe conduct to the pearly gates. In a way, I must have misunderstood the motto that dad had hung on the wall of our prayer room for us siblings to constantly ponder: *"Let eternal salvation be the sole object of our care."*

A fresh gust of wind blew in with Vatican II and seminary formation. The French fathers of the MEP Society never failed to stimulate our quest for truth with every new angle of Church doctrine that floated over weekly from the Vatican press. Renowned theologians together with other Church dignitaries at the Council were making waves. Pope John XXIII's call for a "new Pentecost" was taking shape. It was as if the Holy Spirit was re-founding a new Church. A new and exciting panorama of pastoral involvement opened up for us.

When, in December 1968, my classmates, Fr. Anthony Naden, the late Fr. Reginald Miranda and I prepared our invitations, I do not remember any theme or motto or slogan that we wanted flashing on the Visitation Church walls in Seremban. After having received the tonsure and becoming clerics, we had been installed and ordained over the years into the six preliminary steps to the priesthood. We just yearned for the seventh – the ordination to the priesthood of Jesus Christ. We cyclostyled our common invitation and distributed it in the parish. No cards. No fanfare.



It was only in December 1993, when I was celebrating my silver jubilee that the passion of the younger generation of priests who ardently search for a theme for their ordination kept haunting me. I was always fascinated by the prophets who took in a situation and proclaimed God's word forcefully to the people. The pre-exilic prophets of the eighth century – Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah especially – caught my attention. Micah's harsh indictment of Judah in chapter 6, where he brought Yahweh's case against the people for their flagrant overturn of economic justice, just resonated with me. The people thought they could placate the God they had hurt by multiplying their offerings.

*"With what shall I enter Yahweh's presence and bow down before God All-high?"*

The worshipper ruminates over a few possibilities all rising with escalating intensity:

*"Shall I enter with burnt offerings, with calves one year old? Will he be pleased with rams by the thousand, with ten thousand streams of oil ...? (Mi 6:6-7).*

The possibilities had surged beyond the realm of reality. The next two questions make an unimaginable leap from burnt offerings to human sacrifice!

*"Shall I offer my eldest son for my wrong-doing, the child of my own body for my sin?"*

But the judge gives an unequivocal answer:

*"...this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God." (Mi 6:8) (JB 1965).*

But the New Jerusalem Bible (1985) captures it more sharply to avoid any misunderstanding.

*"You have already been told what is right and what Yahweh wants of you. Only this, to do what is right, to love loyalty and to walk humbly with your God."*

The worshipper had been under the impression that he had to offer a 'thing' so that this God would not lash out in fury, but the verdict expresses that being in a right relationship with God and with his fellow-men and women was all what Yahweh desired. God does not

want his covenant people to offer a *thing*; he just wants *them*, his personal possession!

The fundamental dichotomy between religion and life seems to be the keynote theme of the prophets of the eighth century. On the one hand, the people thought that religious obligations meant offering sacrifices and gifts, and on the other, their life did not conform to the faithfulness required by the God of the covenant in relationships with other human beings. To do what is right is a dynamic notion; justice is something one does. Therefore, to do justice is the continuous and social dimension of one's relationship. To love loyalty (*hesed*) is the thematic word for Hosea. Speaking of human relationships, *hesed* expresses love with a strong element of loyalty as in a marriage, and when referring to human relationships with God, it means kindness, mercy and steadfast love, not just a sentimental or emotional love. To walk humbly expresses the theological dimension of the orientation of one's whole life, and not only with humility. The accent is on the walking.

*Eureka!* I had found my theme. The name *Micah* means *Who is like Yahweh?* The book seems to give a meditation on the character of Yahweh. Mi 7:18 gives the answer: no one can compare with this God, there is no one like Him. And Mi 6:8 for me was a summary of biblical religion, and so I pounced on this saying of Micah as my theme and motto. No more just only lighting candles and doing great things, but trying to build an intimate relationship with the covenantal God, who has been faithful to me in my ministry of 50 years. May this time of the Golden Jubilee be for me a time of thanksgiving to this great and wonder-working God in our midst.

**Msgr. James Gnanapiragasam**  
**Spiritual Father**



# Here's What They Have to Say



I thank God that you are part of my Christian discipleship and earthly pilgrimage. You fit the title of a **C.A.T**, a **Credible and Authentic Teacher**. Integrating high I.Q, E.Q and S.Q (Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual Quotient), you practice what you preach!! In you, Wisdom, Justice and Compassion are embodied! May God bless you always.

- Cheryl Lee

The youth ministry marked a great revolution under his guidance as he was the master mind in the formation of a new name and calling for this group of young – the "St John's Youth Ministry" was born. 'He Rocks' spawned a generation of young enthusiasts. He was always there urging us to reach greater heights, giving us strength and hope and, unceasingly guiding us to be true ministers of Christ. Msgr James is truly an image of God and the outpouring of love overflowed.

- The Y generation



When one mentions Msgr James, the connection is Scripture. But in all truth, he is more than a Scripture scholar. He is what you may say 'diversity par excellence'. One who has a flair for languages – he did not hesitate to equip himself with learning Greek and Hebrew online so as to make Scripture more vibrant and enriching. He presented Scripture with so much vigour and passion and has a razor-sharp mind when it comes to 'breaking the word'. Besides that, he was assigned the task of putting

up three building projects i.e. Casa De Fatima, Church of Guadalupe and the new Community Centre at St John's Cathedral. We thank God for the bountiful years of blessedness and the outpouring of grace upon grace on his delightful servant.

- KLABA Team

He welcomed us to be part of the local church. That stopped the 'wandering' for us and paved the way to sacramental and spiritual life for us by initiating faith formation and retreats while being in charge of migrants. His selfless service to the Myanmar Community will forever remain alive in the heart of each and every one of us.

**- Myanmar Catholic Community Malaysia (MCCM).  
Ikaw ay napalampas**



The Tahanang community is blessed you came along to be our priest, friend, and counsellor. You encouraged us with our activities and provided financial assistance especially with the setting up of the skills enhancement program with Bro Anthony Rogers. Our prayer: "God, look upon this humble servant and may he find favour with you; may your face shine on him always as he continues to touch the lives of many and transform them with your grace and wisdom. Amen!"

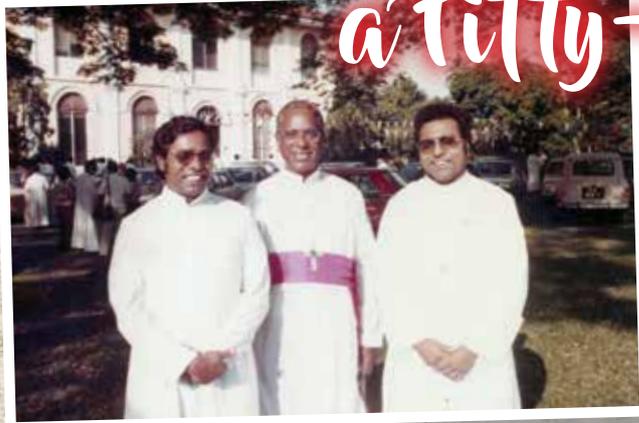
**- Tahanang Filipino Community**



You have truly exemplified your ordination theme - 'act justly, walk humbly and love tenderly' in every living way. We wish you well and are forever grateful for your homilies and teachings as well as guidance and direction for a meaningful and spiritual life. We pray that God continues to pour down his blessings on you for continuing to do his will.

**- African Catholic Fellowship  
St John's Cathedral**

# The Beginnings of a Fifty-Year Journey



My recollections of the silver jubilee celebrations of Msgr. James are still very vivid in my mind after 25 years. It was at College General in Penang in 1993, where both of us were lecturing then. It was a very simple celebration with a small gathering of the College academic, office, kitchen staff, a few members of the clergy, seminarians and family members.

I was the homilist at the Eucharistic celebration. The choice of his theme, "Act Justly, Love Loyalty and Walk Humbly with God" is reflective of his firm rootedness in the Word of God. The new living translation of the Bible renders "Act Justly" as "to do what is right". This desire to do what is right was very evident from his earliest years, especially in his discernment process towards the priesthood. Having grown up with him, I would capture it in three significant words – SIMPLICITY, SERIOUSNESS, and SINGLE MINDEDNESS.

His simplicity was very evident from a very young age, a simplicity that he has unwaveringly maintained right up to this very day. When it comes to whatever events or celebrations, he always says, "Let us keep it simple". He has been simple in his dressing as well as in his tastes. He has never had a flare for extravagance, and has always shunned the limelight. I believe his simplicity has been reflective of the simplicity of St. Joseph, the just man who always sought to do what was right, and in his desire to do what was right, he was always attentive to the voice of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

His discernment process was grounded in his SERIOUSNESS, a seriousness he showed in his many undertakings in pursuit of his perceived goal in life. If he has shown such remarkable excellence in his Biblical knowledge today, it can be traced back to his serious commitment to his academic studies, a commitment that he has continued and pursued right up to this day both in his utilization and application of the Word of God in the preparation of his homilies and his research and reference to the original languages of Hebrew

and Greek, as well as in the preparation for his Biblical lectures and seminars. He was active as an altar boy, a member of the Junior Legion of Mary, and the Benildus Club – a vocation promotion and discernment group that was conducted by the La Salle brothers.

Finally, his SINGLE MINDEDNESS in discerning and pursuing his vocation to the priesthood was evident in his radical decision to leave family and friends, after having completed his Form Three education in St. Paul's, Seremban. He then joined the first batch of students residing in the late Archbishop Dominic Vendargon's residence at 528 Bukit Nanas, Kuala Lumpur, which were the beginnings of a preparatory seminary. Together with him were Fr. Anthony Naden and the late Frs. Herman Bateman and Benedict Saverimuthu. He completed his studies in St. John's, Kuala Lumpur after obtaining a Grade One in the Cambridge exam.

His SIMPLICITY, SERIOUSNESS, and SINGLE MINDEDNESS were grounded and cultivated in family discipline and religious fervor. The words of St. John Paul II in reference to the importance of the family, "the future of humanity passes by way of the family" can also be said of the church, "the future of the church passes by way of the family". Msgr. James is the product of a wholesome traditional catholic family, the nurturing by missionary schools, and the accompaniment of a supportive parish church and priests. Our prayer is for more such families, schools, parishes and priests.

**Rev. Fr. John Gnanapiragasam**  
*Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Cameron Highlands*



# There Is No Justice without His Mercy

I am 37 years old, and I am in my Initiation Year. I entered College General in February 2018. Before entering the seminary, I was in the corporate world for 16 years. I was a project manager with Malaysia Airlines, for the CEO of MAS. You could say that I had a good job, career and high flying life.

My call came in 2005, at Sunday Mass, when Father Clarence was consecrating the Eucharist, I heard a voice that said that I wanted to be like Fr Clarence. To bring Christ to His people. Immediately I rejected it and thus began my journey of running away from God's call.

God knew that if I had answered His call immediately, I would have failed. I was a luke-warm Sunday Catholic. I had the arrogance to think that I didn't need people to pray for me and I stayed away from confession. Like most single adults, I was living a life that wasn't very Catholic and probably very sinful.

Yet God allowed me the time to prepare myself and gave me the illusion that I was running away from His call. He led me into a Single Adult Ministry, called CHOICE, where He allowed me to grow in my faith and love for Him, through service. There I discovered the joy of service, the beauty of my faith and God's love for me. "To know, Love and Serve". I did not know it, but God's Mercy

was at work in preparation for His Justice.

After 10 years of denying, running away, arguing and ignoring God, in 2013, the call returned strongly. I was in the midst of planning and preparation for World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro. I struck a bargain with God. I told Him not to disturb me until the World Youth Day when I would make a "decision".

God kept to His bargain. He left me in peace. It was the calm before the storm.

Day 1 – Rio de Janeiro – World Youth Day. God reminded me of my bargain. All the sessions that I attended had elements of Vocations and responding to God. In our Catechesis sessions, Cardinal Sean O' Malley asked us: *Why do we thirst for God? How do we quench this thirst?* In the afternoon, a session I attended turned out to be vocation sharing, and Eucharistic adoration using a specially blessed Monstrance by Pope John Paul II for Vocations.

During that day, I went for confession, and confessed that I had been running away from God's call, afraid to respond, and most importantly I felt unworthy because of my sinful ways. Fr Gary simply told me to respond to the Call, regardless of my sinful ways. God will use my crosses to make me a saint one day.



I didn't know if I should laugh or cry at God's sense of humour. I kept to my end of my bargain, and seriously began my journey to discern. It took me another 4 years to make my application to the seminary. I struggled with my worldly attachments and my fears. In these difficulties, He continued to nudge me along, prompt me and guided me when I needed it most, and so here I am today.

In reflection, He has always been merciful and just throughout my journey. At the worst of times, He gently pulls me back from the brink of disaster. It is why today Christ is my daily companion, and it is in His Justice that I have found His Mercy.

**Lincoln Lee**  
(Initiation Year)  
**Church of the Assumption,  
Petaling Jaya**  
**Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur**

## Doing Justice in Class

Keeping students attentive in class is not an easy task, whether it is teaching Parish youth Catechism or here in College General itself. Attention span is relatively short, and boredom can set in quickly. To do justice in classwork therefore, the teacher must prepare the syllabus well, and structure his lesson plan to get students involved and attentive.

Getting students to participate in workshops and group discussions is another way to get them active and attentive, a method used by Msgr.

James during lectures. It ensures we study, we learn and we remember. Students gain interest because it requires research. This will not apply to Catechism students, but we can still do justice through simple explanations, story-telling and sharing personal experiences.

In a nut-shell, doing justice in class requires both the teacher and student to engage with and challenge each other. There must be mutual acceptance because learning, like communication, is a two-way process.



**Pierre Chang**  
(Philosophy – Year 2)  
**Cathedral of the Sacred Heart,  
Johor Bahru**  
**Diocese of Melaka Johor**

# Msgr. James G. and the Prophet Micah: To do what is right, love loyalty and walk humbly with your God, Micah 6:8 (NJB)

The Penang College General's Publication – Sinaran 2018 – will be blessed to celebrate Msgr. James Gnanapiragsam's 50th anniversary of his Priestly Ordination in a Golden way, featuring the journey from his discernment process before entering the seminary right to the 50th year of ministry.

Prophet Micah comes from a small interior town of the Kingdom of Judah. He is a contemporary of the Prophets Amos and Isaiah. The book of the Prophet Micah contains a collection of orders and prophetic messages, taking various forms. Some are oracles and some prophecies. Some are harsh judgements (Mic 1:8 – 2:11), some are comforting prophecies that God will not desert or abandon His people (chap 4) and some are the prophet's own confession of faith (3:8-7:7). The Prophet Micah presents to us a God who is passionate for Justice and fairness (3:9) as well as God's compassion and steadfast love (7:18-20).

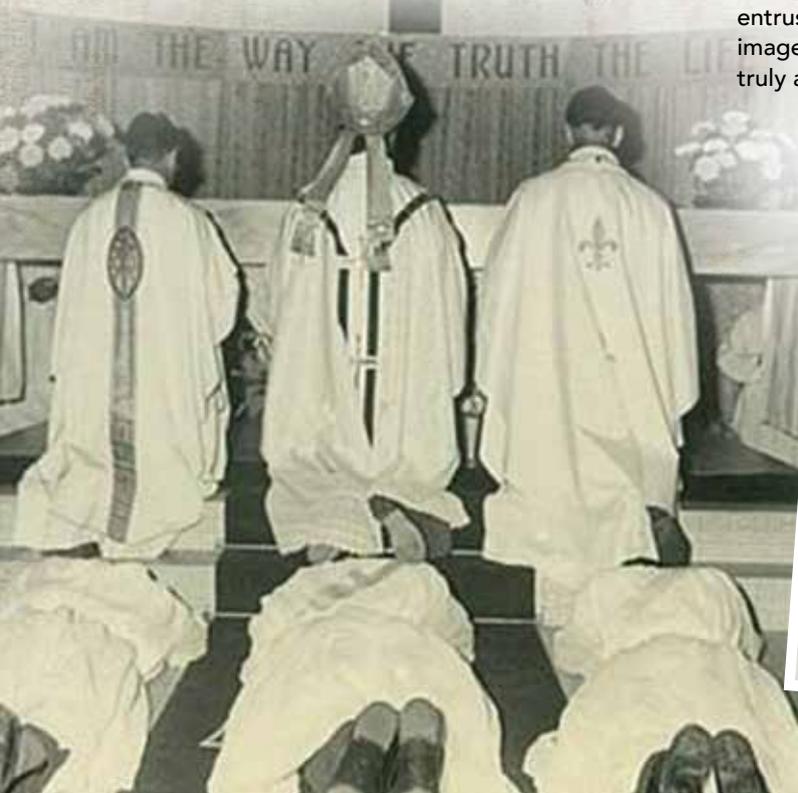
Reflecting on the Book of the Prophet Micah and looking back on the last 50 years, I understand why Msgr. James G. is attracted to it and fell in love with it in such a way that it became a cause for his priestly and prophetic mission to champion our Lord God's Love and Mercy. Called to this purpose and mission, the way Jesus Himself was sent by His Heavenly Father, Msgr. James too was sent, is being sent daily, and will continue to be sent by Jesus to live out his theme of Micah 6:8 wherever he is and whoever he is sent to.

I can see underlying his 50 years, from his journey which began with his discovering of his vocation to his golden jubilee, the 3-fold phases of his chosen theme (A) Act Justly (B) Love Loyalty (C) Walk Humbly with Your God.

When Msgr. James was a secondary school student, coming from a holy, faithful and practicing family of believers was very instrumental in moulding him. Acting rightly always and in all situations was the fruit of his upbringing. The inspiration and upbringing in faith gained from his family helped him to journey towards the priesthood, in the minor seminary in Singapore from 1960-1962, and then at College General from 1963-1968. Msgr. James loved joyfully and he expressed it in parish ministry while serving in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur before leaving for Theology and Scripture studies in Rome. After coming back from Rome and being sent to the seminary, he developed the love for teaching. Through his teaching, he continued to have Micah 6:8 close to his heart – loving joyfully the seminarians as part of the mission entrusted to him. Today Msgr. James is a spiritual image of a faithful priest walking humbly with God – truly a disciple of hope.



Rev. Fr. A. Amalanathan  
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur



# A Tribute to Rev. Monsignor James Gnanapiragasam - A Great Friend



Let me put it in this way: Monsignor is an excellent theologian, having graduated with a Licentiate from Universita Gregoriana, Rome besides being a graduate from Institutum Biblicum, Rome.

While in Rome, he was a great man for encouraging

fellowship among the Malaysian/Singaporean priests who were doing graduate work, keeping them sane and emotionally balanced amidst their studies. Whenever there was an English film at Pasquino Trastevere, we would all go, forgetting our books.

Monsignor James is a Vatican recognized "Monsignor" for all his work as a Seminary Lecturer, Formator,

and Staff-member for all these many years, not forgetting his ministry as Parish Priest in Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese. He makes a great friend when one is in need.

A big joker indeed! He would make a good comedian. He makes others laugh sometimes. He made me a butt of his jokes too, but that is alright. What about, Monsignor? I remember the incident with the kitchen Sisters, when we wanted to do some Malaysian cooking. "*Suora, noi voliamo cucinare...* (Sister, we want to cook...)"

A final word. Our words of blessing and gratitude for the wonderful time together. Congratulations on your Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee. AD MULTOS ANNOS from your Roman friends, and grant us your blessing.

**Rev. Fr. Francis Tsen**  
*Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu*



# The "Real Deal"

Though I have known Monsignor James Gnanapiragasam for almost twenty-eight years, first as a seminarian and then as a fellow priest in the same Archdiocese, I will say that I have gotten to know him better during three significant periods of my life: *firstly*, when I arrived at College General Major Seminary in 1990; *secondly*, prior to leaving for Rome to undertake post-graduate studies, I stayed for two months in the parish he was serving so as to brush up my Latin and Greek; *thirdly*, upon my return from Rome, I was appointed to succeed him as Parish Priest in the parish he was serving then.

In these three periods that I have come to know him better, I will say that one of the qualities that I have appreciated in him is the 'love of knowledge'. He is a man who continually reads, reflects and engages in meaningful

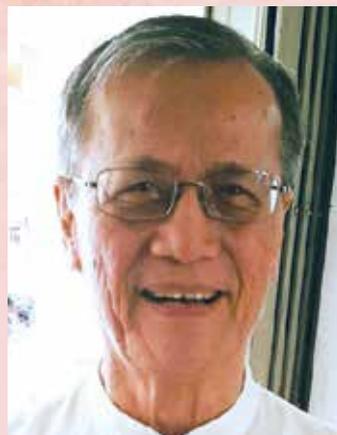
and thought-provoking conversations. In his own humorous ways, he is able to convey his thoughts without making others feel small. As a seminarian I enjoyed his Scripture classes. Though he is man of great knowledge and thinks ahead of his time, it is not pride that exudes from him but rather the awareness of being a humble servant of God.

In the parish where I succeeded Monsignor James, many parishioners remember him fondly for his simple yet meaningful ways he touched their lives. He is a man who had the people in his heart and was always trying to lift them to the next level... one who does not 'put on airs' but is approachable and ready to offer words of encouragement. This has also been my experience of him. In the words of Thomas Merton, *pride makes us artificial and humility makes us real...* Monsignor James is the 'real deal'.

**Rev. Fr. Clarence Devadass**  
*Church of St Paul the Apostle, Kuala Kubu Baru*



## Bible Teacher with "Gnana" Style Humour



Monsignor James Gnanapiragasam graduated with a Licentiate from Universita Gregoriana, Rome. He is also a graduate in Sacred Scripture from Institutum Biblicum, Rome. He is a good and ardent teacher of the Bible both inside the seminary and outside of it in Penang. He has conducted the 'Bible

in 100 weeks' and 'Bible in 40 weeks' programmes and encouraged as many as possible Catholic students to sit for the Bible Knowledge paper in SPM examinations. He gives enlightening Scripture-based homilies that move people's hearts.

Trying out new approaches and making changes if they answer pastoral needs speak of his mind in terms of his good leadership qualities. He is a good fund-raiser and builder, especially of Casa de Fatima in Brickfields, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Puchong and the new hall of St. John's Cathedral.

His sense of humour is sometimes used to express his ideas and opinions in a special way...what I would call the "Gnana" style -- not to be mixed up with "Gangnam Style"-- where the punch line is delivered more with the eyes than with words.

The pastoral care that he had for the foreign migrants was indeed enormous, especially for those from Myanmar, Vietnam and Philippines.

Congratulations Msgr James Gnanapiragasam and Ad Multos Annos.

**Msgr Daniel Lim**  
*Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur*

# I Will Do What You Want Me To Do



My name was the last being called when our Rector assigned the four persons to do pastoral work at Little Sisters of the Poor. I asked myself whether or not I could do it because I did not have any experience in taking care of or serving the elderly. However, I took it as a challenge to share God's love. "You have already

been told what is right and what Yahweh wants of you. Only this, to do what is right, to love loyalty and to walk humbly with your God"- Micah 6:8.

During pastoral work, I was so happy when I was appointed to help out in the kitchen and serve the elderly during meals, washing, feeding and playing games because I could use my skills as I had worked as a waiter and temporary teacher before. But I still took some time adjusting to the routine. After a few months, I had learnt a lot from my pastoral work because I had managed to build those memorable relationships with the residents; and I had started to listen to their life experiences and bring all this into my personal prayer and reflections. As Saint Jeanne Jugan said: "Humbly, so as to love more."

**Dannie Luis**  
(Philosophy - Year 1)  
*Holy Spirit Church, Lundu, Sarawak*  
*Archdiocese of Kuching*

## PASTORAL AT LSP.

# Living Out the Theme



Hello readers. Greetings of the peace, love and joy of Christ to all of you.

I thank God for this opportunity to pen a few words on my pastoral experience at Little Sisters of The Poor, home for the aged, also known as 'Domus Dei Et Porta Coeli' (house of God and gate of Heaven). My reflection is based on our theme for this year.

**ACT JUSTLY:** I had the chance to live out the exemplary act of Christ the Servant Master (John 13:14) through the noble service to the residents there.

**LOVE LOYALTY:** I can never deny the fact that I have enjoyed the sweet affirmation and encouragement for my journey through the love and support of the entire LSP community.

**WALK HUMBLY:** Through this wonderful pastoral experience, I have learned to walk humbly as it reminds me of the very words of Christ in (Luke 17:10): "We are unworthy servants, we have done only our duty."

All of the above contributed to the sure hope and perseverance in my formation towards the priesthood after the very heart of Jesus. May Mary the Queen of Vocations continue to intercede for us.

United in Christ,

**Gabriel Puvaneswaran Pillai**  
(Philosophy – Year 1)  
*Church of the Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru*  
*Diocese of Melaka Johor*

# Mgr James Quana - An Excellent Theologian

It seems as though Pope Francis may also have had Fr James in mind when he released 'Gaudete et Exultate' on March 19th this year, reminding our Golden Jubilarian that 'great is your reward in heaven'[Mt 5:12]. Yes, dear James, no more LAW of Micah 6:8 [ie Act Justly, Love Loyalty & Walk Humbly with your God] since you have come a long way faithfully pasturing to the rural Tamils of Kulim, passing on the Joy of the Gospel in your 'Bible in 100 weeks' and 'Bible in 40 weeks' sessions, assisted by your video clips and lectures that you painstakingly produced while administering to big parishes besides jointly shouldering the pastoral governance of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. And we all believe that you have done so these last 50 years following the LAW you set as your target!

As I pen the above, I am looking across the Straits of Melaka towards Punggol Point – our regular 'hangout' during our Minor Seminary days – for in January 1969, I saw this young, stern looking, reticent yet witty guy coming into the gates of the then St Francis Xavier Minor Seminary at the beginning of Punggol Road. He came together with his nine classmates to concelebrate their first Mass for us. We had to put up a show for them after dinner because Fr Peter Barthoulot, the then Rector, thought it was a good idea to have them share their vocation journey with us in order to boost up our priestly vocation; some of us did not make it after hearing their stories though.

Ever since that memorable evening, James had just remained a name to me till I had to study the cultic priesthood in Hebrews with Fr James. He gave me good marks for it and I guess his insights did help me to continue to love the mass. James has been true to his

goal of walking humbly, not just when he is most comfortable preparing meticulously and patiently with his simple estate folks for the Easter Vigil, but even when he is with us staff members every Tuesday so as to \*'pastores dabovobis' the students under our care in order [hopefully] to transform the 'raw materials' sent to us by the Bishops with the hope of grooming them into people-loving and serving priests. This has been in contrast with examples of episcopabiles who may have assumed a bureaucratic CEO style of pasturing!!! Yes, James not only advocates but also takes teamwork seriously and follows the principle of subsidiarity very closely. James, as an enabling leader, ensures that the team players give of their best, with compliments coming forth easily from his mouth. Working with James helps one to be one's true self!

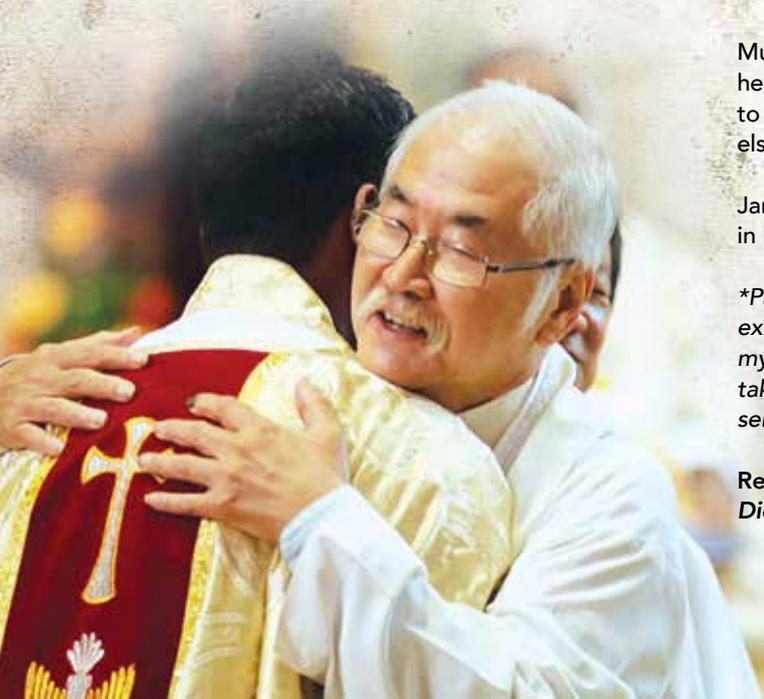
James is often asked to preach at important events like anniversaries. I believe he is not only a good homilist but also one who has the art of using the right words to sum up or synthesize the eccentrics of the person concerned while being able to use anecdotes from the person's life to amuse the audience. Being a scripture scholar, he knows which quote to use and when to use it, injecting it at the right spot to give the right punch! Next time you are celebrating something special, just call James; he is as good as Tagle, if not better!

Much more can be said, but suffice it to conclude that he is one who treasures you as much as you treasure him to be your friend, companion, confidante and whatever else arises from your association with him.

James, thanks for being our model priest for the Church in Peninsular Malaysia.

*\*Pastores dabovobis, Saint Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation(25 March 1992): 'I give you shepherds after my own heart', indicating that every potential priest takes after Christ the High Priest in His care, love, service and sacrifice for the flock.*

Rev. Fr. Moses Lui  
Diocese of Melaka Johor



# Msgr. James Guanapiragasam - Walks the Talk

It is a great privilege for me to pen a few words of gratitude in the Sinaran 2018. As a scripture scholar he walks the talk as prescribed by Prophet Micah in 6:8 – what God wants from us is to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our Lord.

Acting justly always, he has as Rector and Scripture Professor not given in to any nonsense from seminarians. At the same time, his acting justly is like God who is always compassionate, balancing between the heart and mind. His demand from the seminarians was to bring out the best potential buried within each. At my first assessment meeting with him, he told me, "Albert, I expected more from you." That gave me the inspiration to be fully involved in the holistic formation at the Seminary, which was for me a land flowing with milk and honey.

As Rector, Msgr. James made sure the formators and seminarians aligned with Pope John Paul's view point in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. Together with his team of formators, he helped us to grow accordingly in human, intellectual, spiritual, communal and pastoral formation. He was a very just shepherd in shepherding all of us seminarians to enjoy the best and bring out our best in the Lord. Even later, when he was appointed as parish priest in various parishes, he was a just man of faith, enabling parishioners to experience God through various formation sessions in the parish, to make them disciples and not merely devotees.

I also experienced him as a loving priest and person when we were caught by him sneaking out for 'teh tarik'. He summoned us and I thought "Gone, today going to 'kena' from Rector." As I walked into his office he asked, "So how was the teh tarik?" He was able to correct our misbehaviour with a loving heart. I thought then he was a shepherd given by God after His own heart. His simplicity and effectiveness in his teaching methodology helped me to see his tender heart. I liked his scripture classes. On Monday mornings, even though he had to rush back from Nibong Tebal after his weekend ministry and walk in late to class, 10

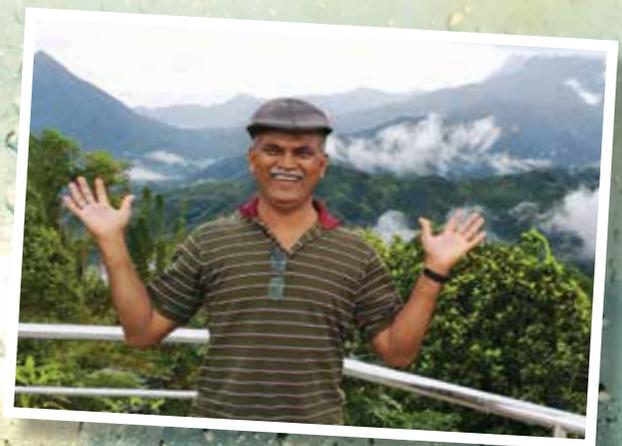
minutes of his input would make us go and search out the many commentaries from Raymond Brown to Peter Elis to reinforce why he had said what he said in the class. Wow! Such amazing wisdom in an experienced formator. He has shown himself to be a very simple and humble man who never expects or demands anything for himself.

In his farewell speech, he told us that when he was called to go to Rome to further his studies to come back to teach, he thought why him? Maybe because it takes a thief to catch a thief! In other words, as a seminarian he was adventurous, knowing the ups and downs and all the tricks of the local seminarians. He would be the right person to form the future priests, and he did the job well.

When he finished his first stint in the seminary, he came back to KL Archdiocese and had a humble beginning in the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mentakab. He later moved into Church of Our Lady of Fatima, KL, and later as Vicar General of St. John's Cathedral he was always obediently accepting and fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted by the Lord with great effectiveness, from managing parishes to scripture classes in the Bible Apostolate (KLABA). I am simply amazed at this shepherd of the Lord who has walked the talk for the past 50 golden years as faithful, loving and humble priest. I thank God for such a wonderful priest, mentor and companion.

God bless you Msgr.

**Fr Albet Arockiasamy**  
*Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong*



# Walking Humbly with Your God

["FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE..." MARK 10:45]



This year I was assigned to work together with the Society of St. Vincent De Paul of the Church of Immaculate Conception, Penang to reach out to people there who really need help, not just food and financial aid but also a listening ear. Listening to their problems or sharing

their problems and hardships was quite challenging as we needed to listen not only with our ears but with our hearts too.

One of the places that I did my pastoral work in was Hong Seng Estate. It was a place that totally changed the way I see my life as a seminarian and as a human being. Here I learned how people with nothing have

such a big heart. Even though they don't have to give, they give everything that they have to others without thinking twice. Here, I see God's love working among them. One thing that I have learnt from the SSVP is always to be humble and caring in everything that we do.

Therefore, as a seminarian I really appreciate the opportunity given to me by God to see the reality of the world that we are living in and start to appreciate all the blessings that I have.

**Jerry Joseph Muhamat**  
(Philosophy – Year 2)  
*Good Shepherd,  
Manggatal, Sabah  
Archdiocese of  
Kota Kinabalu*



## PASTORAL WORK WITH THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL (SSVP)

# Walk Humbly With Your God



In Micah 6:8, it says 'You have already been told what is and what Yahweh wants of you. Only this, to do what is right, to love loyalty and to walk humbly with your God'.

I feel privileged and blessed to be able to share my personal experience of this passage in the Bible when I was

able to walk humbly with God during my pastoral in Hong Seng Estate with the SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL (SSVP). It was a God-given opportunity for me to serve the poor and needy. Serving the poor and needy helped me to discover myself, to learn humility and become very passionate about working with poor

people. I have learned so much from them, like being simple and grateful to God for what they have. It was such a rewarding experience getting to know them.

I believe that both the rich and the poor are created in the image of God. For me it was a privilege to be able to see Christ in the poor and with God's mercy to have this experience of experiencing a Gospel value of walking humbly with Him. Throughout my pastoral work, God really guided me to discover myself through this wonderful experience.

I am now more fully aware of the message in Proverbs 19:17 – "whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed."

**Kennedy Nakudah Killin**  
(Philosophy – Year 2)  
*Cathedral of St Francis Xavier  
Diocese of Keningau*

# JAMES - Gospel on the Ground

It has been an honour for me to become a spiritual son of someone who has been in the Priesthood for 50 years. Two years of spiritual direction with him changed me in many ways. Msgr. James has helped me to see my own weaknesses and struggles as tools for me to grow in the human aspect. He is someone who will listen attentively and offer advice from what he has reflected and experienced. Furthermore, he always gives encouragement and hope at the end of every session. He has made me grow a lot spiritually. Well, I believe my personal spirituality has grown slowly but it has been fruitful for me. In every session, Msgr. James always advises and talks to me as a friend, a father, a brother and as a spiritual companion, not as a spiritual director or as a priest, and it has become much easier for me to express my feelings and to share about my weaknesses. As a priest, he humbly walks with God and the greatest thing he did for me was to humbly journey with me as a friend. In this approach, the 'Good News' has been made alive in me. Journeying with Msgr. James as my Spiritual Father, I have indeed become closer to the person of Jesus Christ.

I now witness Jesus as someone who protects me.  
He is the medicine when I am sick.  
He is my joy when I am down.  
He is the One who holds my hands in times of trouble.  
He is my brother, my friend.  
He is the reason why I am here.  
Without Him, I cannot breathe. I am weak, sick and disabled.  
He is the pillar that supports me. Without that pillar, I am nothing, I am useless and because of Him I am somebody.

Jesus is the wind of change in my life.  
I am an empty vessel that needs the wind to push and guide me to find and to see something worthy in my life.  
The direction of life can be changed: an empty cup can be filled.  
For me, Jesus is simple. He is the wind that steers my way and the water that fills the emptiness in me.  
He is the One who commands the storm to stop in my life.

**Joel Rut Markus**  
Initiation Year  
*Cathedral of St Joseph*  
*Diocese of Miri*





# Manual Labour



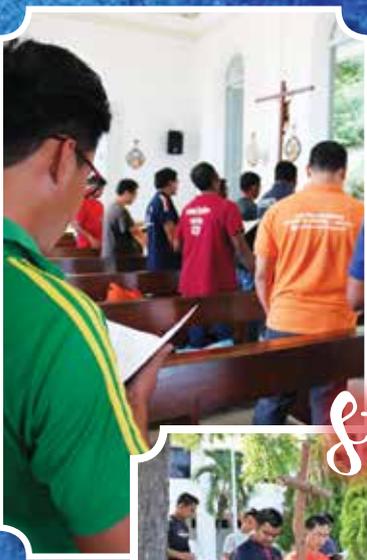
# Sports



# Team Development



# Stations of the Cross





# Easter Vigil at Holy Spirit Cathedral



# Feast - Sts. Chastan and Imbert



# Feast - St. Philip Minh & Companions





# Gawai and Kaamatan



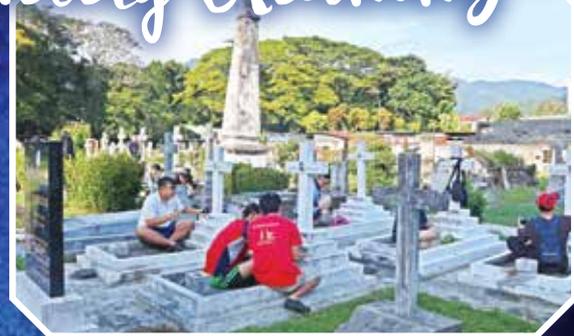
# Outreach Programme



# Cemetery Cleaning



# Recollection



# Acting Justly Means...



Acting justly is when you stand up for what is right in a desert of injustice and cruelty.

**Fabian Anand – IY  
Penang Diocese**



Acting justly in our Christian faith is not only about fairness, but also about the ability to put love first before judgement.

**Ricki Boy – P1  
Sandakan Diocese**



Justice is doing the right thing at all times with the grace of God.

**Nelbart Peter – P1  
Keningau Diocese**



I truly believe that 'Actions speak louder than words' because our actions reflect us and our beliefs and have greater significance than mere words. Acting justly and morally personifies the ideal Christ-like priesthood.

**Albert Arputhan – P2  
Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese**



There are many personal weaknesses in which God guides me to act justly and be sincere in my vocation. Jesus, the centre of my life, helps me to appreciate my brothers and live in peace.

**Scany Polycarp – P1  
Kota Kinabalu  
Archdiocese**



It means being guided by a well-informed conscience; the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, just and unjust while guided by the spirit of truth.

**George Vaithynathan – P2  
Penang Diocese**

# Loving Loyalty Should Be...



Love is gained and Loyalty is returned; loving loyalty cannot be practised without commitment, patience and perseverance. Only those who are able to make self-sacrifices understand the true meaning behind it.

**Joel Rut - 1Y**  
Miri Diocese



There is no meaning in 'love loyalty' without self-sacrifice.

**Andryno - P1**  
Keningau Diocese



The greater love is to be able to open your heart for forgiveness with mercy and without conditions. Togetherness until the end, which even the greatest storm cannot separate.

**Paddelyne Pius - P1**  
Keningau Diocese



Be faithful and steadfast to the call of God by living out the love and life of Christ.

**Jonathan Rao - P2**  
Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese



To love loyalty is to love with zeal, sincerity, faith and truth.

**Canisius Benjamin - P2**  
Kota Kinabalu Archdiocese



Loving loyalty, first of all, involves an experience of mercy towards self and others, which blooms into a fuller life with Jesus Christ.

**Philip Asir - P1**  
Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese

# Walking Humbly with Your God is...



HumiliTy is being Human - real and honest. "ili" means "I" lowering the "I" - When the "I" decreases, Christ increases. "Ty" stands for thank you - always being grateful and appreciative.

**Leon Gautier - IY  
Penang Diocese**



"To walk humbly, especially as one community, is to take away our pride and selfishness and start to share the joy and love of Christ with each other"

**Yoseph Jup Matias - PI  
Kota Kinabalu Archdiocese**



"Walking humbly with God" - omission of this essence may turn me into being either I and you or I and it; but by doing it I may be transformed into I and thou.

**Ricky Abi - P2  
Keningau Diocese**



If we walk humbly with God, He will lead us exactly to who and what we need - to those who will bring us our deep fulfillment and happiness.

**Jayce Mujis - P2  
Sandakan Diocese**



Walking Humbly with God allows me to be moulded by Him in order to respond to His 'call'.

**Edward Yahan - PI  
Sandakan Diocese**



Walking humbly with God is not just for time in the prayer closet; it's a lifestyle that we can only cultivate through Jesus Christ, in the same way Enoch walked faithfully with God in Genesis 5:24

**Anthony Robert - PI  
Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese**

# Our Community

## INITIATION YEAR CLASS

(left to right) Leon Gautier, Anthony Suphakon, Fabian Anand, Joel Rut, Marvin Voo, Peter Sarun, Lincoln Lee



## PHILOSOPHY YEAR 1

*Front Row (left to right)* Gabriel Puvan, Ricki Boy, Nelbart Peter, Dannie Luis, Philip Asirwalam

*Back Row (left to right)* Edward Yahan, Anthony Robert, Yoseph Jup, Scany Polycarp, Paddelyne Pius



## PHILOSOPHY YEAR 2

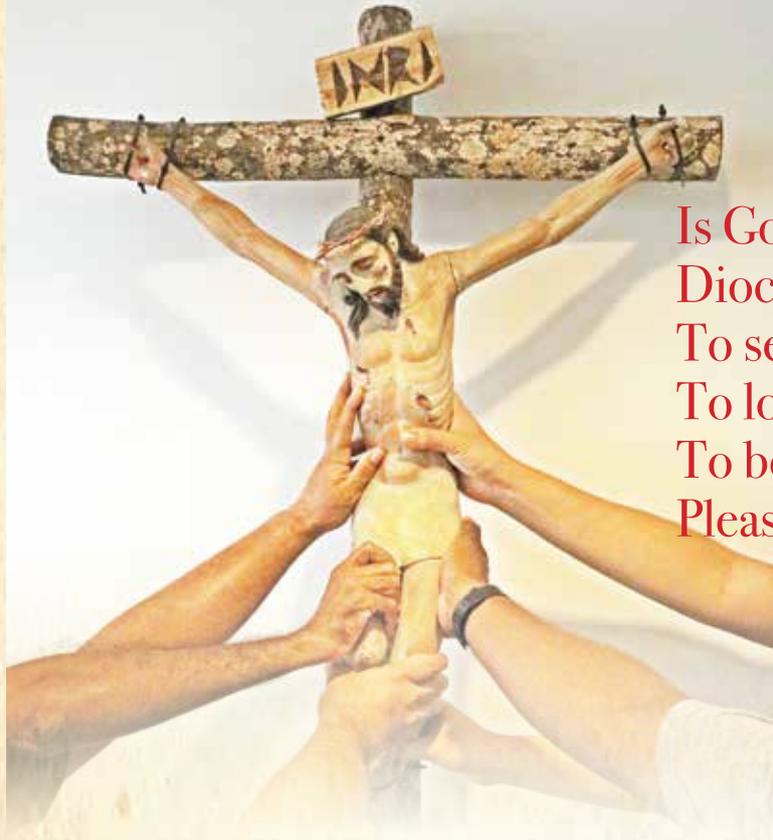
*Front Row (left to right)*  
George Vaithynathan, Ricky Abi, Kennedy Nakhudah, Jayce Mujis, Canisius Benjamin  
*Back Row (left to right)*  
Pierre Chang, Jonathan Rao, Jerry Muhamat, Albert Arputhan



## OUR COMMUNITY

*Front Row (left to right)* Rev Fr Simon Labrooy, Anthony Suphakon, Fabian Anand, Leon Gautier, Edward Yahan, Kennedy Nakhudah, Nelbart Peter, Ricki Boy, Jonathan Rao, Gabriel Puvan, Jayce Mujis, Pierre Chang, Philip Asirwalam, Peter Sarun, Monsignor James Gnanapiragasam

*Back Row (left to right)* Rev Fr Stanley Antoni, Anthony Robert, George Vaithynathan, Ricky Abi, Yoseph Jup, Paddelyne Pius, Jerry Muhamat, Albert Arputhan, Scany Polycarp, Canisius Benjamin, Joel Rut, Rev Fr Stephen Lim, Lincoln Lee, Dannie Luis.



Is God calling you to the  
Diocesan Priesthood?  
To serve?  
To love?  
To be there when it matters?  
Please contact...

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#### **COLLEGE GENERAL, PENANG**

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Administrator



Ms. Juliana  
Librarian



Ms. Kelly  
Book-Keeper



Ms. Tan Paik  
Choo  
Cook



Mr. Anandh  
Udhayakumar  
General Worker

“To act justly,  
to love loyalty,  
and to walk humbly  
with your God”

- Micah 6:8



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