

7 Signs of the Call

Here are some signs of a calling to the priesthood vocation. Have you experienced any of these? Have you answered it?

- 1 *I wish to give myself completely to God. I want to exclusively identify myself with Christ and His Church.*
- 2 *I want to contemplate the Word of God and share it with others through preaching and teaching.*
- 3 *I feel a certain sense of attraction to the priesthood. Sometimes I imagine myself being a priest, preaching and helping those in need.*
- 4 *Thoughts of the priesthood have remained with me over a period of time.*
- 5 *I have a love for prayer and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.*
- 6 *I experience a sense of joy and peace deep in my heart when I think about being a priest.*
- 7 *I simply want to love like Jesus Christ.*

If you say Yes to any of the above, share your thoughts and feelings with God and ask Him for the courage to take action. Talk to a priest or parish leader to find out more.

Photo by **Father James (Unsplash)**

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Photo by **Father James (Unsplash)**

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HOPE

N e w s l e t t e r

“Those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.”

Isaiah 40:31

Synod

OUR PATH TO RENEWAL

Listen

WITH THE EAR OF THE HEART

Cardinal

IN MEMORY

Photo by **Father Robert Leong**
Design by **Vanessa Newn**

Hope & Renewal

EDITOR'S NOTE



The Covid-19 Pandemic between 2020 and 2022 was a time of great trial, shock and loss for us, the Apostolic Vicariate in Brunei Darussalam. As one people, many of us lost our sense of normalcy and security, closeness to each other and even lives. Our beloved first shepherd, Cornelius Cardinal Sim also passed on at this time last year, and I thank our Diocesan Administrator Rev Fr Robert Leong and everyone who join me in remembering His Eminence's first death anniversary.

The front cover photo was taken at COOL in the height of the second wave and skyrocketing Covid cases, where the paths of the parish were empty for months. Yet the path was also dappled with rays of sunlight, leading to green trees in the distance reminding us of hope amidst a life that seems empty, that the Lord is with us, always.

Our strength to persevere and recover comes from Him, "those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength."
(Isaiah 40:31)

And now, we in Brunei are in the endemic stage, re-emerging post pandemic from isolation, strict restrictions, and lockdowns back into community albeit in the new normal. This Pentecost marks the full return of the whole faith family to Mass. We will again see our children attending (and making joyful noise) in Mass, the sounds of little feet and loud chatter around the parish, their laughter, songs and prayers ringing out in Sunday Schools once more. Prayer meetings, RCIA sessions, faith formation and parish activities have gradually resumed too, such as the Flores de Mayo celebrations we have just concluded in honour of our Blessed Mother.

As we are renewing our parish life, let us take this moment to reflect if we are also renewing our spiritual life? This World Communication Day 2022, the Holy Father exhorts us to Listen with the ear of the heart!". This underlines the "great need for each of us to listen to and to hear one another. It is the most precious and life-giving gift we can offer each other."

This is also in parallel to the synod 2021 – 2023 process that the worldwide Church is going through, listening to the grassroots of the faithful and the lost alike, to discover the way of journeying together onward, led by the Holy Spirit.

This May, we also celebrated the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Are we listening to God's call in our hearts, to discern and answer His chosen vocation for us?

Let us, as His children and people, continue the synodal heart to heart communication by listening more and changing our ways for the good of ourselves and others around us. Let us take this opportunity to listen, deepen and renew our relationship with God in Communion, Participation and Mission! Let us, each and every one of us, answer His call for our vocation and mission, proclaiming once again, "restore to me the joy of Your salvation; and sustain me with a willing spirit."
(Psalm 51:12)

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, accompanied by the prayers and intercessions of His Blessed Mother and all the saints, be with all of us, as we place our hope and trust in Him.

*Emilian H, Social Communications Editor
Church of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception*



Coronation of Our Lady, Flores de Mayo 2022



Synod : Our Path to Renewal

The Living Church

Some feel the Church is stuck in its two-thousand year-old ways, full of dusty dogmas and doctrines that are not relevant to daily life. Some fear there are too much bureaucracy, politics and scandals overshadowing the good works of the Church worldwide. Some think their comments or suggestions for the Church are not being heard.

But the Church is not stagnant because it is actually its people – the People of God who are inspired by encountering the True Presence of Christ. And as a People, we grow by listening and responding - to each other, the Living Body of Christ led by the Holy Spirit!

What Is A Synod ?

The word “synod” comes from the Greek syn-hodos, meaning “the same way” or “the same path” or “traveling together.”

According to theologian William Clark, ancient Christian leaders gathered together to pray and make decisions about matters affecting all the Christian communities in a region. This process was rooted in the faith that prayers and discussions reveal God’s will and the way to achieve it.

“A synodal Church is a Church which listens,” Pope Francis said. Meaning, a Church that listens to each other and walks forward together.

Why Should I Care?

The synod is our opportunity to voice out.

But how can the Church listen if no one is speaking? Are we Catholics taking up this empowerment?

Out of more than 15 000 Catholics registered in Brunei, only a fraction responded to the synod questionnaire.

Does this mean we don’t understand or care? Does this mean we are afraid of saying the wrong thing or feel unworthy to contribute our input? Does this mean we don’t think anything we say will make any difference?



The Holy Father is calling for the renewal of the Church, by empowering each one of us, all 1.3 billion Catholics worldwide, through the Synod of Synodality 2021-2023.

Do I Make A Difference?

It is true that maybe what we say or do in the synod will not reach the Holy Father or reform the Church on a global scale.

But the Spirit works in each one of us baptised and confirmed in the faith. The synodal process is our chance to explore, challenge and deepen our own identity as a Catholic in our own communities.

There may be actions and suggestions that will not be practical for the Universal Church, but if adopted in our immediate families, communities, parishes and vicariate, can deliver impactful change to ourselves and people around us.

Perhaps voicing out seems like volunteering ourselves for more work, on top of our already busy lives and schedules, that we fear taking on anymore commitment for the Church.

But we are called to trust in the Lord, seek first His kingdom and the rest will fall into place.

If we want to have an active faith life to fill up the God-sized, restless hole in our hearts, He has given us free will to step forward and do something good. Imagine every one of us, a shimmering seam in the wedding gown of the vibrant and radiant Bride of Christ – if only we allow it!



So let’s ask, feedback and suggest; let’s reflect, pray and learn; let’s put our faith, convictions and discoveries into action, to grow together in the Spirit

A stone dropped in water can cause ripples. Be the stone, create the ripple. Then, if it is God’s will, let Him be the wind that blows our ripples into waves of change.

He has invited us to co-create change in His People, so let’s join in the synodal journey of renewal and be amazed.

Review and comment on the Vicariate synod’s document at rcvbd.com this June 2022.



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“... the greatest need of human beings is “the boundless desire to be heard”... Fundamentally, listening is a dimension of love. ... In reality, in many dialogues, we do not communicate at all. We are simply waiting for the other person to finish speaking in order to impose our point of view.”

“It is only by paying attention to whom we listen, to what we listen, and to how we listen that we can grow ... what specifically makes communication good and fully human is listening to the person in front of us, face to face, listening to the other person whom we approach with fair, confident, and honest openness.”

Listen to the Ear of the Heart

WORLD COMMUNICATION DAY 2022

MESSAGE FROM THE HOLY FATHER

“

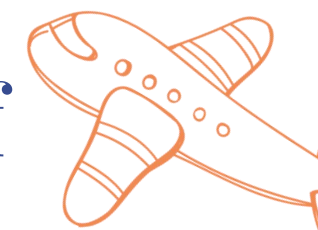
“... think of the infinite curiosity of the child who looks at the world around them with wide-open eyes. Listening with this frame of mind — the wonder of the child in the awareness of an adult — is always enriching because there will always be something, however small, that I can learn and allow to bear fruit in my own life.”

“Communion ... is built in mutual listening between brothers and sisters.... As in a choir,... we can rediscover a symphonic Church, in which each person is able to sing with his or her own voice, welcoming the voices of others as a gift to manifest the harmony of the whole that the Holy Spirit composes.”

Cardinal in Memory



1st Death Anniversary of His Late Eminence Cornelius Cardinal Sim



A collection of personal memories of our first Bishop, Cardinal and Apostolic Vicar..



Gift of the Spirit

A cherished moment for me was at a retreat His Late Eminence led for the Sandakan Confrmandii of 2018. I recalled vividly during the “prayer-over” night, how Cardinal walked us through powerful reflection prayers. I was touched by the fire of the Spirit and broke out in sweat drops from my head to my shoulders in a cold air-conditioned room; I could not comprehend the situation but continued to pray until the session concluded. I am ever grateful to His Late Eminence for this deeply personal encounter with God’s presence, the warm embrace of the Divine Holy Spirit.

Evangelizing the Youth

Cardinal saw the Church of tomorrow in the youth, hence he personally initiated and led countless retreats and programs for young Catholics not only from Brunei but also from neighboring Sabah and Labuan. He led years of fun-filled and faith-forming sessions for our vicariate young adults, teaching us to learn about life and love ourselves better through Christ. He maintained many online friendships and inspiring advice sessions with youths he encountered during his many travels across the



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Hope to us is
like the Star
of Bethlehem
to the three
wise men.
Our ultimate
hope gives us
direction and
assurance to
get to
Heaven,
where we will
be happy
forever with
God.

—Cornelius Cardinal Sim,
January 2018
(COOL Catechetical Sunday)

world including the Philippines and East Timor (where he was fondly known as Lolo Bishop).

Flight of Fear and Faith

As I accompanied Cardinal on a flight from Kota Kinabalu to Sandakan, it was my very first experience in an ATR 72 propeller plane. The rough flight left me utterly shocked. On arrival at Sandakan airport, His Late Eminence giggled and asked me, “How many “Hail Mary” did you say?” Still stunned, I could only reply to him – “Countless....”

Where Are You Going To

(Diana Ross)

Do you know where you're going to?
Do you like the things that life is
showin' you?
Where are you going to?
Do you know?

Do you get what you're hopin' for
When you look behind you, there's no
open doors?
What are you hopin' for?
Do you know?

Remembering Cardinal sharing
with us his favourite song. Deep
meaning indeed.



Memories



“ At Late Cardinal Sim's Ordination Dinner held at COOL Parish Hall Seria, with him sitting with Seria and KB English, Chinese and Bahasa Prayer Group representatives. Those were the days, Cardinal, do you remember? Please pray for us.”

“ Late Cardinal's first Mass in St. John's Church, Kuala Belait which was his first Parish in Brunei.”



“ SJC Silver Jubilee cake-cutting by Late Cardinal Sim and former SJC parish priest Msgr. Paul Tong, who was later based at the Archdiocese of Taipei, Taiwan). What a precious moment! Both were our beloved parish priests and both now praising God with the angels!!”



“ YOU ARE LOVED. YOU ARE MISSED. YOU ARE REMEMBERED. RIP Cardinal.”



“ We thank you very much for giving us strength and grace to overcome all the hardships in life through the constant praying of your beloved servant, Cornelius Cardinal Sim together with Blessed Mother Mary and all the saints in the Kingdom of God. Amen.”



Journeys of Joy

Cardinal was a man of easy laughter – I can still remember him happily attacking his durian and “magic buko” right after a half hour of beaming and blessing hundreds of youths after a Mass during our trip to Balingasag and Camiguin Island. There was also once in our Young Adult session in Brunei when he snorted out half his whiskey while laughing uproariously over our impromptu skit!

During our trip to Kuching, Sarawak in 2010, we stayed at the St Peter's College Major Seminary. Rules were strict but, there was one night Cardinal brought us for drinks at a Coffee Bean outlet. We arrived back way past the 10pm curfew and the seminary gates were locked. Our driver was busy making calls to reopen the entrance when our Cardinal decided to climb the gate. I can still remember his yelp of surprise clinging to his perch as the electric gate started to swing open!

A Father to the Youth

When we were in Spain for the World Youth Day (WYD) pilgrimage and celebrations in August 2011, Cardinal was entitled to a host of privileges offered to prelates – five-star hotel beds, hot showers, air-conditioned buses or limousines, catered meals, and the works.

Guess what, he turned all these down and chose instead to accompany us youths, sleeping on a thin mattress on the school auditorium floor and the Quatro Vientos field of dusty dirt and thorny weeds, braving the hot searing sun, ice-cold open-air showers, eating fast food and Chinese takeaways. He had meetings to attend and papal masses he had to concelebrate, but as much as possible, he was with us.

And that was the point— he was with us, he was one of us and with us, sharing the joys and challenges of our journey. More so, he was a father to us, pointing out quiet marvels and miracles, reminding us to thank and trust in Divine Providence while guiding us to stay united “it’s not a vacation, it’s a pilgrimage!” and “it’s not that bad, choose to smile!”

