



**MISSIO-AVONA**  
THE PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES

ISSUE NO. 4 / 2025

# SOWER

MAGAZINE 2025



**GLORY**  
to **GOD**  
in the highest,  
and on earth **PEACE**  
to people of good will





# SOWER



We have “SOWER” the title of the digital magazine of the MISSIO-AVONA based on inspiration from the Parable of the Sower (Gospel of Mathew chapter 13). The Sower went to sow the seeds in the field. Likewise, through this magazine we too would like to become the Sowers of the Gospel values of Joy, Love, Hope, Faith, Compassion, Mercy and Inspiration in the minds and hearts of its readers.



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## EDITORIAL



Missio-Avona's digital magazine SOWER completes one year. Wow! It has grown significantly. We are grateful to the Almighty God, Mother Mary, and to our Bishop Aldo Berardi, our Apostolic Vicar, for his vibrant support and blessings towards the mission. SOWER has spread many good messages. The Missio-Avona team would like to thank all our regular and new writers, designers, and promoters for their best contributions.

Do you hear the cry for PEACE? If so, you are alive, and if you make efforts to achieve it, you are a Peacemaker. This issue of the magazine is dedicated to reflecting on the topic of peace. The song of the angels, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to the people of goodwill," is fitting for the start of the Christmas season, as it sets the tone for our reflection on shalom.

This magazine is divided into three parts. The first part covers the most important quotes on peace from His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, H. E. Bishop Aldo Berardi's Christmas message quotes, "May the Child of Bethlehem renew in us His gentle presence, bring healing to our land and strengthen our resolve to live as a reconciled and compassionate people", the decree of the Vicarial shrine of Sacred Heart Church-Bahrain, a brief history of the Mother Church and the church bell of Manama.

In the second section, you will find a variety of topics that explore the concept of peace: the angelic hymn of Gloria a Deus to the shepherds, the picture of peace in Prophet Isaiah chapter 11:6-9 can fill the lacuna that separates peaceful existence; St. Francis of Assisi, the man of Pax et bonum for 800 years, interreligious dialogue to seek common ground to respect one another, and Bahrain: a living model of co-existence and human dignity. Education and formation are essential to the path of peace. Therefore, the young minds are trained with values of prayer, sacrifice, and sharing the good news. The Pontifical Holy Childhood Society is oriented towards building a peaceful world. Our young writers contribute to the topics of the Christmas season: Christmas celebration in my family, Christ, the star, and the Magi. The Magi searched, observed, followed, and found the Prince of Peace. At last, a young poet echoes through her poem on Peace: "If we lived as brothers, then the world's grief would be in danger". This phrase demands silence to understand its profound meaning.

In the third segment, we discuss the spirituality of the Incarnate Word. The joyful celebration of the Simbang Gabi and Sto. Nino festivals add joy and peace to the community. The Message of H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi to the children of the Holy Childhood Society says, "Thank you for your pure hearts, your prayers, and willingness to help others". It also includes the list of reports of the Holy Childhood Society and the reports on the World Mission Sunday. Missio-Avona's prayer to the Missio Ad gentes (to the children of Gaza). Missio-Avona is geared to uplift the Christmas spirit of the children by serenading the joy of Christmas. Like the cherry on the cake, the Pontifical Holy Childhood day will be celebrated in Avona from 2nd to 4th January 2026.

Digital Magazine Vol. 1/ Issue 4  
December 2025

Publisher: Missio -Avona

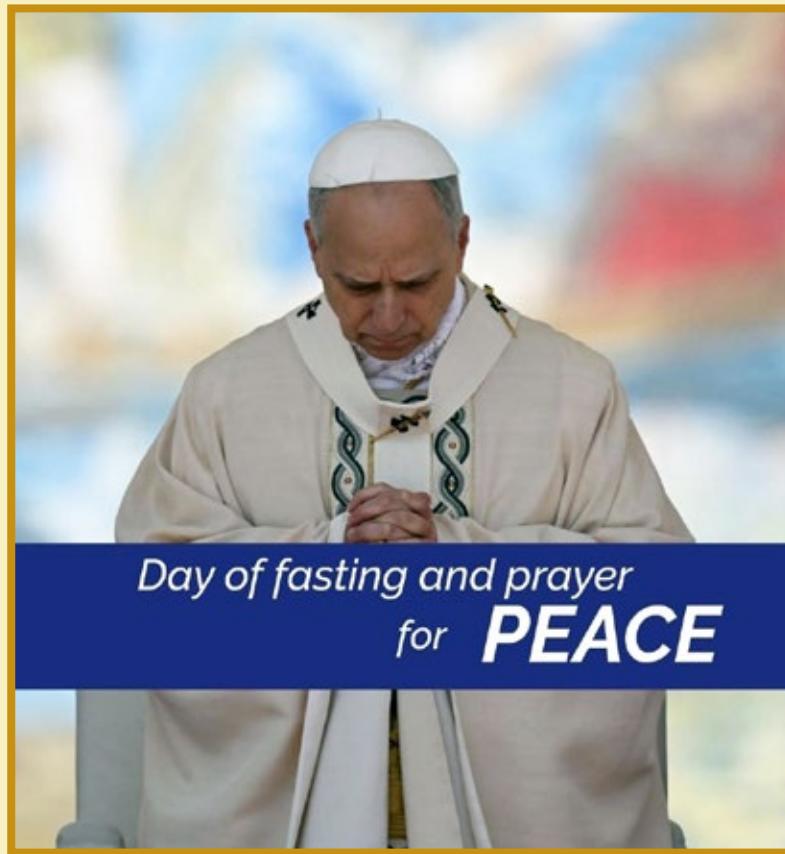
With the permission and Approved by  
H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi O.SS.T

*Editorial Team*

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Delegate of Missio Avona

Dr. Stephen Kachappilly OFM Cap.

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Designer



Pope Leo XIV's first greeting after election: Peace be with you all!

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From the world religion prayer meet for peace:

Pope Leo XIV said, 'War is never holy;

only peace is holy, because it is willed by God' during the world's religions at Rome's Colosseum- gathered for prayer for peace. Peace is a constant journey of reconciliation.

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On Corpus Christi Day:  
Today, more than ever, humanity cries out and calls for peace.

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Pope to young people on 40th World Youth Day:  
Go beyond your comfort zones and build peace.

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On World Food Day, 16 October 2025:  
Defeating hunger is the path to peace: give them something to eat.

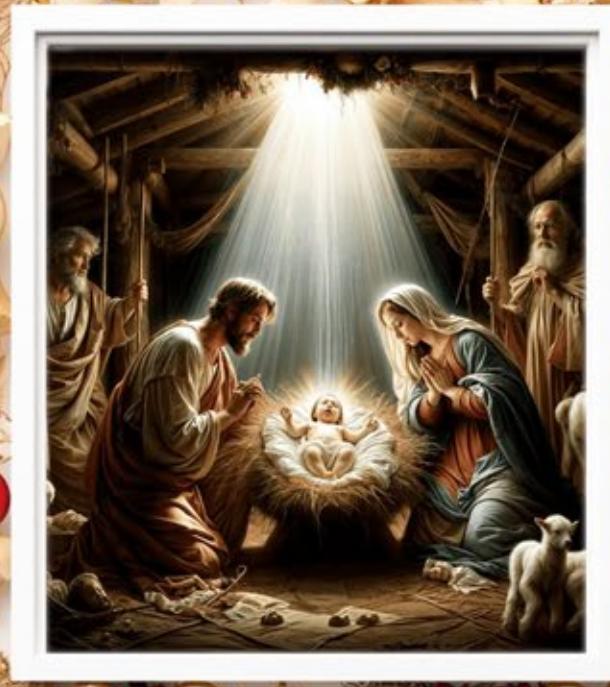
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Pope Leo XIV in Assisi to address the Bishops of Italy,  
"Be the prophet of peace in the fractured world".

---

Pope Leo XIV, during his first apostolic journey,  
"let us all choose peace as a way and not just as a goal".  
Be the Herald and Witness of Peace.





We wish you a  
**Merry  
Christmas  
and a  
Happy  
New Year**

**+Bishop Aldo Berardi O.S.S.T.**  
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia



النيابة الرسولية لشمال شبه الجزيرة العربية

APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF NORTHERN ARABIA

BAHRAIN . KUWAIT . QATAR . SAUDI ARABIA

Prot. N.: 136/2025

Date: November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**CHRISTMAS 2025 MESSAGE**  
FROM THE APOSTOLIC VICAR OF NORTHERN ARABIA  
*"Emmanuel: God with us—God's Peace Reborn Among Us"*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace be with you in the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who comes to dwell among us!

This Christmas, we rejoice in the mystery of Emmanuel—God with us—the Word made flesh who comes to enter our hearts—a filthy manger—to transform it. As St. Athanasius teaches, the Son of God became man so that we might participate in His divine life. In a world often torn by violence, division, and fear, the Child of Bethlehem reassures us that God draws near even into our brokenness, bringing healing, hope, and reconciliation.

In these challenging times, especially in our region, it may feel as though there is “no room” in the world for the weak, the displaced, and the forgotten. Yet, history teaches us otherwise: in a humble stable, God made His dwelling among us. That same power is still at work today. As St. John Chrysostom reminds us, the Incarnation invites us to share in God’s life, becoming vessels of His love and mercy. God calls us not to despair, but to choose a path of forgiveness, to open our hearts to dialogue, and to recognize every human being — regardless of nationality, faith, or background — as a brother or sister in the journey of life. This is the new way Christ offers us: a way shaped by compassion, reconciliation, and self-giving love. Christmas also reminds us that God enters the ordinary and hidden moments of life. Just as the Holy Family experienced simplicity and vulnerability in Bethlehem, we are called to encounter Christ in our daily lives—in our families, communities, and among those who suffer.

In our Vicariate, where people of many nations and cultures gather, Christmas unites us in communion and gratitude. May our celebrations radiate the joy of the Gospel, fostering reconciliation, understanding, and solidarity among all who dwell in this region. Let us carry forward the light of Christ into our workplaces, neighborhoods, and society, so that the peace of God may touch hearts and heal wounds. Even in dark and troubled lands, the light of Christ shines, calling us to be signs of hope, peacemakers, and builders of communion.

As we celebrate Christmas, I commend all of you — your families, your struggles, your dreams, and your wounds — to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Arabia, our beloved patroness. May she intercede for us, guiding us to open our hearts ever more fully to the Prince of Peace. May the Child of Bethlehem renew in us His gentle presence, bring healing to our land, and strengthen our resolve to live as a reconciled and compassionate people.

Come, Lord Jesus. Be with us and may Your peace reign in our hearts, in our communities, and across our world.

**Wishing you and your loved ones a Joyful Christmas!**

With every good wish and blessing,

*Berardi*  
✠ Aldo Berardi, O.SS.T.

Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia



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النيابة الرسولية لشمال شبه الجزيرة العربية

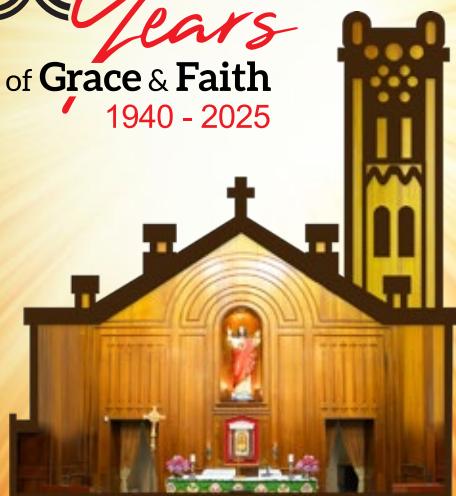
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مطرانية الكنيسة الكاثوليكية

ص 25362

عوالي (البحرين)

CELEBRATING  
**85**  
*Years*  
of Grace & Faith  
1940 - 2025



Mother Church's  
**85<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**  
**& DEDICATION AS**  
**VICARIAL SHRINE**  
of the Sacred Heart of Jesus



**ALDO BERARDI**

By the grace of God and the favour of the Apostolic See

**APOSTOLIC VICAR OF NORTHERN ARABIA**

(Bahrain-Kuwait-Qatar-Saudi Arabia)

**PROT.: 118/2025**

**DECREE OF ERECTION  
VICARIAL SHRINE OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS  
IN MANAMA, KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN**

Whereas, a shrine is defined as a church or other sacred place to which numerous members of the faithful make pilgrimage for a special reason of piety, with the approval of the local Ordinary (*Can. 1230*);

Whereas, for many centuries, shrines and the pilgrimage apostolate have held an important place in the pastoral life of the Church. Pilgrimages remind us that the journey to a sacred place mirrors the journey of the pilgrim People of God, for the Church on earth is a pilgrim Church (*cf. Lumen Gentium VII, 48–51*);

Whereas, the local Ordinary is competent to approve the erection of a diocesan/vicarial shrine (*Can. 1232 §1*);

Whereas, the Sacred Heart Church—reverently known as the “Mother Church”—is of great historical and spiritual significance, being the oldest Catholic church in the Arabian Peninsula (Consecrated in 1940), and over the years has drawn pilgrims and devotees from across the Gulf;

Whereas, the Apostolic Vicar, desiring to preserve and promote the historical dignity and spiritual character of this church, wishes to establish it as a Vicarial Shrine dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus within the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, with all privileges and responsibilities proper to such a title;

**THEREFORE, I**

**DO HEREBY DECREE**

**That the Sacred Heart Church (“Mother Church”) is henceforth conferred the title and dignity of:**

**VICARIAL SHRINE OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS**

**with full rights, privileges, and obligations as outlined herein.**

**1. Name and Title**

The church shall henceforth bear the name and title “**Vicarial Shrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.**”

**2. Nature and Mission of the Vicarial Shrine**

As a vicarial shrine, it shall be a center for worthy and exemplary celebrations of the sacred liturgy, especially the Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance. In accordance with Can. 1234 §1, the means of salvation are to be offered more abundantly to the faithful through:

1. The diligent proclamation of the Word of God;
2. The worthy celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance;
3. The promotion of approved forms of popular piety, particularly devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

To this end:

- The Sacrament of Confession shall be made readily available to pilgrims, especially on the day dedicated to the Sacred Heart (Friday).
- At least one Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart of Jesus shall be celebrated every Thursday or Friday, with the active participation of pilgrims and devotees.

- Common prayers and devotions proper to the Sacred Heart shall be fostered for the spiritual benefit of the faithful.

### **3. Privileges**

1. A *Partial Indulgence* is granted to pilgrims and devotees who participate in the Thursday or Friday Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart, subject to the usual conditions (Sacramental Confession, Holy Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father).
2. The Shrine may develop special liturgical celebrations and devotional practices unique to its purpose, subject to the approval of the Apostolic Vicar (*cf. Can. 1233*).
3. Additional privileges may be granted when local circumstances and the good of the faithful so require.

### **4. Governance**

The Apostolic Vicar shall appoint a Rector of the Vicarial Shrine, who shall be responsible for its pastoral care, administration, and the fostering of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He shall also be entrusted with the preservation and promotion of the church's historical heritage, as well as the supervision of its physical maintenance and upkeep.

### **5. Role of the Faithful**

The faithful are encouraged to make pilgrimages to the Shrine to seek divine grace, manifested in a special way in this holy place where the human and divine meet.

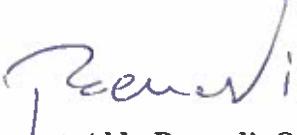
Lay associations dedicated to the Sacred Heart may be organized within the Shrine, subject to the Bishop's approval of their statutes. Such associations shall:

- Assist in safeguarding the Shrine;
- Promote devotion to the Sacred Heart;
- Organize regular prayer meetings, novenas, and other devotional activities;
- Organize conferences, guided tours, and other initiatives to preserve and promote the history of the Shrine, thereby fostering greater awareness of its spiritual, cultural, and historical significance.

## **6. Effective Date**

This Decree takes effect November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 followed by its publication on the official website of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia.

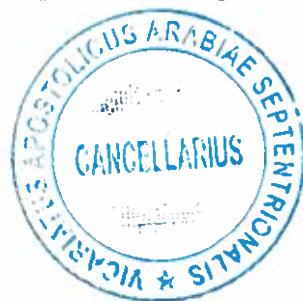
Given in Awali, Bahrain, October 18<sup>th</sup>, on the in the year of the Lord 2025.



+ Aldo Berardi, O.SS.T.  
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia



Rev. F. Antony Lopez, OFM Cap, JCD  
Chancellor





## Brief history of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Manama



*Fr. Francis Joseph Padavupurackal  
Parish Priest & Rector  
Sacred Heart Church, Manama*

“In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’, you shall tell them...”

In the heart of Manama stands the Sacred Heart Church — an 85-year-old symbol of faith, harmony, and the generosity of Bahrain’s rulers. Its story began in 1938, when His Highness Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa offered Monsignor Giovanni Battista Tirinanzi a plot of land for a Christian church. On this gift, the foundations of the first Catholic church in the Gulf were laid.

In June 1939, the construction led by Fr. Louis Magliacani began, and by December the first Christmas bells rang out in Bahrain. On March 3, 1940, the Mother Church of the Gulf was blessed, becoming a spiritual home to a small but growing community.

Over the decades, dedicated shepherds nurtured the flock — Fr. Anselim, Fr. Fleming, Fr. Barnabas, and many others. Under Fr. Walter Connolly, the parish expanded; priests travelled across the Gulf to serve scattered communities. The arrival of the Comboni Sisters in 1953 transformed the parish school into a beacon of education and compassion.

As the years passed, leaders like Fr. Eugene Mattioli and Fr. Adrian Benini continued building schools, halls, and facilities to serve the growing faithful. The parish rejoiced in its Golden and Diamond Jubilees, praying for Bahrain and celebrating its legacy of coexistence.

A new chapter opened in 2013 when His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa donated land for a cathedral. Pope Francis blessed the project with a brick from the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica, and in 2021, the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia was inaugurated and consecrated.

In November 2022, Bahrain welcomed the Holy Father, Pope Francis, who visited the parish, blessing its people and honoring its role in interfaith coexistence. On 18 March 2023, Monsignor Aldo Berardi was consecrated Bishop of Northern Arabia. And now, 85 years after its humble beginnings, Sacred Heart Church has entered a new era — Bishop Aldo elevated to the dignity of the Vicarial Shrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with Fr. Francis Padavupurackal Joseph appointed as its first Rector.

These stones, once laid in simple faith, now stand as enduring symbols of love, tolerance and devotion.

# THE Church Bell OF MANAMA

*Fr. Marcus Fernandes OFM Cap.*

The church bell plays a significant role in the life of the faithful. In ancient liturgy, bells were used with their distinctive and harmonious tones to symbolize the presence of the divine and to mark sacred moments. The sound of the Angelus bell always reminds people to stop and to pray, no matter where they are. It also calls the faithful to come to church for the Holy Mass. A joyful peal of bells reflects the festive spirit of the church's celebrations, such as Christmas, Easter, feast days, the canonization of a local saint, and jubilees. In some countries, the rhythm of the church bell acts as a communicator, signaling the faithful to gather—whether for bishop visits, during emergencies, or for important events. The funeral toll, a slow and measured ringing, reminds us of a soul passing from this life to the next. The Church bell not only marks sacred moments but also serves as a universal language, transcending words to evoke a deep sense of reverence and awe. The church bell invites us to pray or to come to the church and pray as a community.

## The first sound of the church bell in Bahrain

For the first time in the history of the Manama Church, the bell of joyful celebration rang on Christmas Eve in 1939. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the oldest church in the region, with the exception of Yemen. This mother church has served the faithful for a period of 85 years and continues. Prophet Isaiah 66:11 says, "That you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts, that you may drink deeply and be delighted with her bountiful bosom". The Mother Church in Manama has nourished her children, people of God, from different nations, languages, and rites. She has served them sacramentally, spiritually, and pastorally on their journey of faith in the desert.



## Festive bell: Mother Church elevated to Vicarial Shrine

H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi, O.S.S.T., on the eve of the 8th of November 2025, while celebrating the 85th anniversary of the Mother Church with joyful emotions, declared that the Sacred Heart Church, dear Mother Church as the "Vicarial Shrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" (Prot.:118/2025 Decree of Erection). Once more, the pealing of the joyful bell of the church made the



solemn announcement and introduced us into the celebration. The joyful proclamation, the church bell ringing, and the choir intoning praises to the Lord filled the temple with Gloria in excelsis Deo.

On this solemn occasion, the Parish Priest and the Rector of the Shrine, Fr. Francis Padavupurackal Joseph OFM. Cap spoke about its historical development, saying, "In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean to you?', you shall tell them...these stones represent the Sacred Heart Church. The mother church is a symbol of faith and harmony.

Joyful Church bell may be silent for some time, but the memory of the bell of the Manama Church will tell its own story of a faith journey from home away from home, that in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, there is a place for all. H. E. Bishop Aldo Berardi's words of hope to every visiting pilgrim of the Shrine: ***"May this sacred place continue to be the wellspring of grace, healing, and transformation to those who will come seeking the boundless love of God. May our hearts enkindle with divine love so that through our lives we draw others closer to God."*** The mission of God's love and mercy will continue flowing through the Sacraments and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

# PART 2



Christmas season  
and orientation on Peace



# CHRISTMAS:

## The Beginning of the Song of Peace to the People of Goodwill



**Dr. Stephen Kachappilly OFM. Cap**  
*Director, Office of care, AVONA*

Every year, as December approaches, hearts around the world are stirred by a warmth that transcends borders, cultures, and languages. Streets shimmer with festive lights, choirs rehearse timeless hymns, and homes glow with love and laughter. Yet, beyond the glitter of ornaments and the joy of gatherings lies a truth that touches the soul: Christmas is the beginning of the song of peace – a divine melody first sung on the night baby Jesus was born. It is a song that calls humanity to harmony, love, and goodwill – a melody that still echoes through the centuries, inviting each generation to embrace its message anew.

### a. The Herald of Peace and the Holy Silent Night

More than two thousand years ago, in the quiet town of Bethlehem, the world witnessed a miracle wrapped in simplicity and grace. In a humble manger, beneath the stillness of the night, angels appeared to shepherds keeping watch over their flocks, proclaiming:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of goodwill.”

This angelic proclamation was far more than a birth announcement – It was a declaration of divine hope and a new beginning for humankind. The Jesus Child, born not in wealth but in humility, embodied the peace that surpasses all understanding. Through Him, God extended an eternal invitation to live in harmony, to forgive freely, and to love selflessly. Thus began the everlasting song of peace – a song not confined by time or place, but carried in the hearts of all who seek goodness and truth.

### b. The Deeper Meaning of Peace and Goodwill

In today’s world, peace is often defined as the absence of conflict or war. But the peace that Christmas proclaims goes far deeper. It is a peace that begins within – the quiet confidence born from faith, love, justice, and reconciliation. It is the serenity that calms the restless heart, heals wounds

unseen, and bridges divisions that words alone cannot mend.

Goodwill, in turn, is peace in motion. It is love translated into action – the willingness to see the divine spark in every person, to extend kindness even when it's undeserved, and to labor for the common good. When peace and goodwill join hands, they create a harmony capable of transforming not only hearts, but homes, communities, and nations. In every act of compassion, every gesture of forgiveness, every word that builds rather than breaks, the Christmas song of peace is sung again.

#### **c. Living the Message of Christmas**

The song of peace does not fade when the Christmas lights dim; rather, that is when it truly begins. The spirit of Christmas calls us to live beyond ourselves – to open our hearts to the needs of others and to be bearers of hope in a weary world. True celebration is not found in abundance of gifts, but in abundance of grace. It is found in the quiet acts of love that mirror Christ's own compassion: a smile offered to a stranger, a hand extended to the lonely, a meal shared with the hungry, or words of comfort spoken to the grieving.

Each of these simple acts continues the angelic chorus first heard in Bethlehem. The beauty of Christmas lies not in what we receive, but in what we give – and in giving with love, we become instruments through which the divine melody continues to play.

#### **d. Peace in a Troubled World**

Our modern world is filled with dissonant notes – conflicts, injustices, divisions, and a deep yearning for meaning. At times, these troubles seem to drown out the song of peace. Yet, Christmas reminds us that even in the darkest night, a light still shines. Just as the star guided the wise men through the night sky, hope still guides humanity toward reconciliation and renewal.

The message of Christmas urges us not to lose faith in goodness. Peace begins in the human heart – when we choose forgiveness over bitterness, understanding over prejudice, and love

over indifference. If each heart embraced even a fragment of that peace, the world would resound with harmony once again.

#### **e. A Call to Sing the Song Anew**

Christmas is not merely a story from the past – It is a living invitation for today. Each time we celebrate it, we are called to join in the heavenly song first sung by angels – to become messengers of peace in our own time and place. The melody of that song can be heard in laughter shared among families, in forgiveness offered between friends, and in compassion extended to those in need.

As we gather this Christmas, may we pause to listen – to truly listen – to that timeless melody that began in Bethlehem. Let it fill our hearts, guide our words, and shape our actions. The world still longs to hear the song of peace, and through people of goodwill, it continues to be sung.

#### **Conclusion**

Christmas is the beginning of the song of peace – a song celebrating the triumph of love over hatred, hope over despair, and unity over division. It is a call to live as people of goodwill, carrying forward the light of Christ into every darkened corner of our world. May this Christmas not merely be a season of festivity, but a renewal of our shared commitment to be instruments of peace. Let the song that began in Bethlehem take new life in our hearts, and may it resound through our actions, our compassion, and our love for one another. For when peace dwells within us, the world itself becomes more beautiful – alive with the music of divine harmony. ■



Glory to God on high and Peace to the people of Good will.  
MISSIO-AVONA ORGANIZES



# SERENADE

*Let's spread the Christmas Joy*

Missio-Avona Invites All Children or  
the children choirs. To sing like the Angels

**Theme:** Serenade

**Language:** One carol in English and a song with  
Christmas wishes could be sung in any language.

**Time:** Duration 4 minutes.

**Presentation and costumes recommended.**



Scan To Register

**REGISTRATION COMPULSORY**  
Last date for registration is  
**8th December 2025**

**REGISTRATION DETAILS**

Parish Name and country  
(In Avona)/Phone number.

**SUBMISSION DATE**

Carol submission by  
17th December 2025

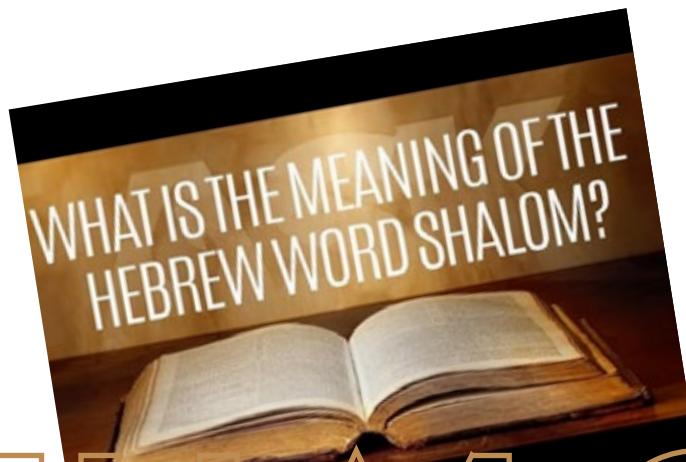
Share your Video recorded carol song on  
[cur.missions@avona.org](mailto:cur.missions@avona.org)

**Participant:** The competition for the Avona's children  
(17 years below) at the Parish Level.  
Organized by Missio-Avona.  
(Group of minimum 10-15 children)

**The best three winners will be declared by three judges.**  
(Parish Priest Please encourage your parish children)

Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia (AVONA)  
P.O.Box 25362, Villa 137, Rd 4603, Awali, Kingdom of Bahrain  
Email: [cur.missions@avona.org](mailto:cur.missions@avona.org)





**Fr. Samer Haddad**  
Our Lady of Rosary- Doha- Qatar

# SHALOM

This Article explains the meaning of the word peace in Hebrew and Greek. It looks at how the term is used in the Bible and how its meaning has grown to represent a universal human value. In both languages, peace means more than the absence of conflict or war—it describes a condition of completeness, harmony, and right relationship between people, God, and the world.

## **Introduction:**

The idea of peace is one of the most important themes in religion and philosophy. However, its meaning changes depending on the language and culture. This article explores the roots of the word peace in Hebrew and Greek, how it develops in the Bible, and how it continues to shape modern faith and society.

## **1. The Linguistic Meaning in Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic:**

In Hebrew, the word Shalom comes from the root shalem, which means “complete” or “whole.” It does not just mean calm or quiet, but a full state of harmony—right relationships between God, people, and creation.

In Greek, the word Eirēnē (εἰρήνη) comes from eirō, meaning “to join” or “to bring together.” It refers to unity after conflict. In Greek philosophy, Eirēnē described both political stability and inner calm built on reason and virtue.

## **2. Cultural Significance:**

In Hebrew culture, Shalom is used as both a blessing and a greeting. Saying Shalom you wish him that all his body be complete and healthy and means wishing someone a life filled with divine wholeness, harmony, and prosperity. It expresses the hope of living in covenantal peace with God and others.

In Greek culture, Eirēnē was more than a word—it was also the name of a goddess who represented harmony in society. Greek philosophers, especially the Stoics, saw peace as inner strength and self-control rather than something depending on outside conditions.

## **3. Biblical Meaning and Use:**

In the Old Testament, Shalom appears more than 250 times and is connected with God’s blessing and favor.

- Numbers 6:26: “The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”
- Isaiah 9:6: The Messiah is called “Prince of Peace,” showing that peace means divine reconciliation.

In the New Testament, Eirēnē appears over 90 times.

- John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”
- Philippians 4:7: “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds.”

Here, peace is not only the absence of conflict but the inner calm that comes from a relationship with God.

#### 4. Modern Meaning and Application:

Today, peace has both spiritual and social meanings:

- In religion, peace remains part of greetings and prayers — “Shalom,” “Peace be upon you,” “The peace of Christ.”
- In global culture, it stands for nonviolence, human rights, and justice.
- In psychology, it means inner calm, balance, and emotional well-being.

#### Conclusion:

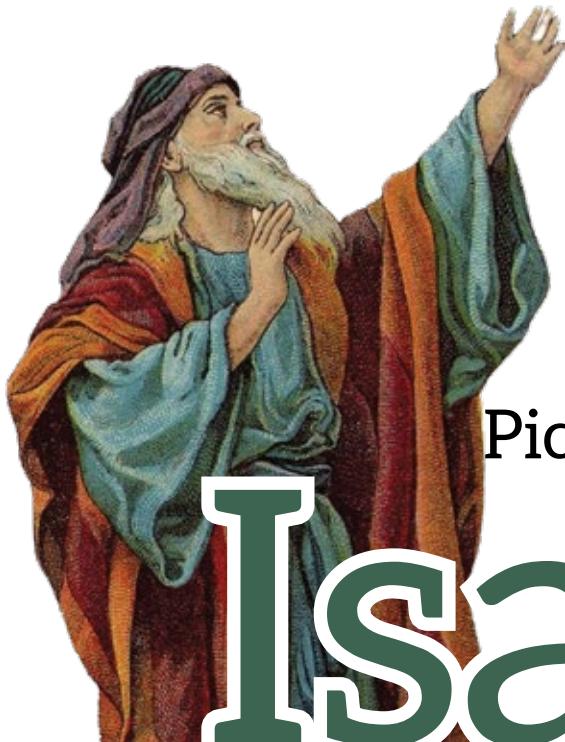
Both Shalom and Eirēnē describe the same deep truth: peace is wholeness and reconciliation. Throughout history, the idea of peace has moved from being a sacred promise between God and humanity to becoming a universal ideal for human harmony and spiritual completeness.

And since we are drawing near to the Feast of the Mystery of the Incarnation (Christmas), we must recall the words of the angels when they announced the good news to the shepherds in Bethlehem:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.”

The word peace in the angels’ proclamation is deeply connected with the glory of God, for His glory brings forth peace upon the earth. It is important to remember that giving glory to God is not limited to praising Him with words or songs, but also in living the harmony that Adam and Eve lost through sin — the harmony with God, which was broken by the loss of His divine presence in human life, and the harmony with creation, which now struggles to bear fruit that brings joy to humanity.

To all our brothers and sisters in our parishes, and to everyone reading this message, we extend heartfelt wishes for peace with God, freedom from sin, peace in your hearts, and peace among us all.



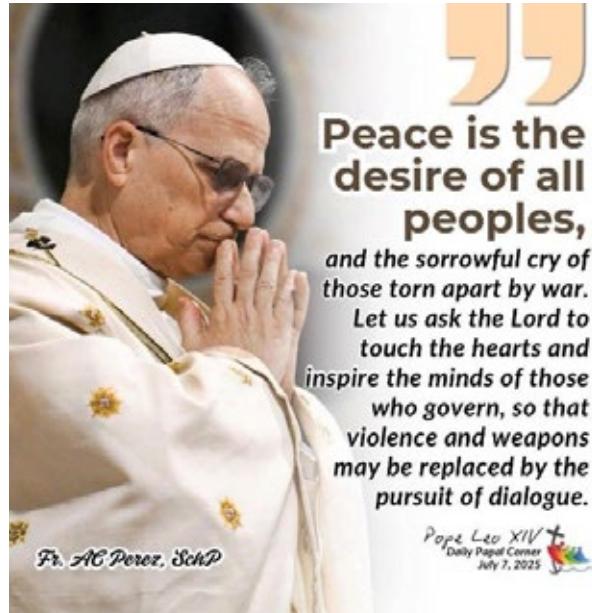
# Picture of Peace in Isaiah

*Fr. Marcus Fernandes*

11:6-9

## Lacuna in attaining peace

There is a deep desire in every human being for lasting peace. Why can't we achieve it? Territorial or border disputes, domination over others, and ego issues have caused many problems between nations, powerful individuals, and even among ordinary people. How many wars have been fought to attain peace, yet each war and separation leaves painful memories. Many have tried non-violent movements to gain freedom and peace by confronting powerful dictators. They have paid the price with their lives, and Heroes are remembered on their anniversaries but often forgotten for their noble values and contributions. How many peaceful dialogues and proposals have aimed to promote coexistence, yet something essential has been missing in the debate. Humans fight for material possessions and power, while the spiritual and immaterial are overlooked. Secularism, which pushes God far away, and atheism, which does not believe in God's reality, can they be an option in attaining peace? There is a lacuna in our search for peace, and the key elements that can bridge it are God, the knowledge of God (the kingdom of God), and belief in Him, that leads to human relationships with one another.



## Let's consider the passage from the Prophet Isaiah 11:6-9.

“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the lion, and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned



child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea".

### Predator and Prey

Here we see two categories of animals: carnivorous and herbivorous, predator and prey in the food chain cycle. But the prophet Isaiah presents an image of harmony between Predator and prey. He disrupts the natural order, but presents peaceful co-existence by ending the violence and restoring the creation in the kingdom of God. The Messiah (small child) will change and transform the very nature of animals of inborn instinct. The grace transforms nature.

### On the Holy Mountain, Knowledge of God

In the new kingdom of the Messiah (Hebrew *mashiyach*=anointed one) or (Greek *Christos*=anointed one), this will be the state of life under the Prince of peace. There will be no more Jews or Gentiles, strong or weak, slaves or freemen; all will be in one in Christ. As the prophet Isaiah says, "The sword will be turned into a ploughshare". Animals

shall lose their ferocity against one another when the lion shall eat straw like an ox. God's knowledge, when accepted in faith and put into practice, will bring a paradigm shift.

Isaiah chapter 11:6-9 is a metaphor of peace in the kingdom of God. When the kingdom of God is amidst us, the lion and the lamb can dwell together, and everything works out harmoniously. Lord's wisdom has the power to bring a peaceful kingdom in the human heart. He can heal wounds, controversies, and bring peace among mankind. He creates *fratelli tutti* (all brothers). Isaiah takes us back into the paradise before the sin of Adam and Eve, which the Messiah will achieve. Christ came but was rejected and killed by the people. Those who have accepted him and followed him have been transformed and have become the instruments of peace. Good governance needs God, good values, love, and dignity for each other. Let's fill the lacuna by including the excluded in our society for a peaceful living. Aloha! peace be with you. Shalom! peace requires goodwill and the best for others. A peaceful heart will build a peaceful world and will enjoy peaceful eternity. Blessed are the peacemakers, for theirs is the Kingdom of God. ■



*Fr. Michael Fernandes, OFM.Cap*

# Saint Francis of Assisi:

**A Man of Pax et Bonum for 800 Years (1226-2026)**

**The Greeting:** Begin with Francis's simple, powerful greeting: "The Lord give you peace" (or Pax et Bonum, "Peace and Goodness be with you").

**The Milestone:** Acknowledge the 800th anniversary of significant events in his life (The Stigmata in 1224, the Canticle of the Creatures in 1225 and his death in 1226). This milestone reminds us that his message is timeless.

**The Paradox:** Francis was a "lightning bolt" to history, known for his radical imitation of Christ, yet his message is simple and universally appealing. He found joy and peace in a life that seemed burdensome by worldly standards. For eight centuries, the greeting Pax et Bonum — "Peace and Goodness" — has echoed through history, carried on the lips and hearts of countless men and women inspired by Saint Francis of Assisi. This simple yet profound salutation captures the essence of Francis's life and mission: to live and spread the peace of Christ and the goodness of God in a world torn by violence, division, and greed.

## 1. The Gospel of Peace in a Troubled World

Saint Francis lived in a time of war, social inequality, and religious tension. Yet, rather than turning away in despair, he chose to live the Gospel radically — with simplicity, humility, and peace. His greeting Pax et Bonum was not a slogan, but a way of being. "Peace is not merely a word or an abstract ideal," wrote Pope Francis, "it is a concrete reality made possible by the daily commitment of those who seek justice, promote reconciliation, and care for creation." (Message for World Day of Peace, 2014) Francis of Assisi became a peacemaker because he was first a peace-receiver. His encounter with the

Crucified Christ at San Damiano transformed his heart. The peace that filled him was not human comfort but divine mercy. From that moment, his only desire was to "follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. Earlier Rule 1:1).

## 2. The Franciscan Greeting: A Way of Life

The greeting Pax et Bonum was the way Francis and his brothers evangelized. They would enter towns and cities saying, "The Lord give you peace!" (Testament 23). In doing so, they proclaimed not themselves but the Risen Christ, the Prince of Peace. "Let us be instruments of peace — not by our words alone, but by our

lives that radiate mercy, joy, and fraternity.” — Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM, Minister General of the Franciscan Order.

Francis's peace was active — it healed relationships, rebuilt communities, and restored harmony with creation. His goodness (bonum) was not sentimental kindness, but the fruit of a heart rooted in God. To live Pax et Bonum means to reflect God's peace and goodness in every encounter, every decision, every moment.

### 3. The Peace of Christ: Interior and Universal

Francis discovered that true peace begins in the heart reconciled with God. From this inner peace flows the courage to reconcile with others and to heal the wounds of the world.

“We cannot be peacemakers unless we are at peace within ourselves,” wrote Pope Benedict XVI. “Peace begins in the human heart, reconciled and renewed by God's mercy.” (Message for World Day of Peace, 2007) Francis's meeting with the Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil in 1219 remains a prophetic example of interreligious dialogue and peacemaking. He did not go to convert by force, but to witness by love. His dialogue was born from respect and fraternity — a sign of what the Church now calls the spirit of Assisi. “Francis showed that dialogue is possible even in the midst of conflict,” said Pope Francis. “His humility disarmed hatred and opened the path of peace.” (Fratelli Tutti, 3)

### 4. Living Pax et Bonum Today

After 800 years, Francis's message is more urgent than ever. Our modern world is marked by technological progress but spiritual emptiness, global connectivity but deep isolation. The Franciscan response remains the same: simplicity, fraternity, and peace.

“The Franciscan vocation today,” notes Br. Massimo Fusarelli, “is to walk humbly with the poor and the suffering, to bear the wounds of Christ with hope, and to announce with our lives that peace and goodness are possible.”

To live Pax et Bonum today means:

- Peace with God — through prayer, conversion,

and trust in divine providence.

- Peace with others — through forgiveness, dialogue, and service.
- Peace with creation — through care for the earth, simplicity, and gratitude.

As Pope Francis reminds us: “The peace of Saint Francis is not a naïve or romantic idea; it is a demanding peace, rooted in the cross and born from conversion.” (Homily in Assisi, 2013)

### 5. A Legacy that Still Breathes

For 800 years, Pax et Bonum has inspired friars, sisters, and laypeople across the world to live as builders of peace. From the small towns of Umbria to the bustling cities of the modern world, the Franciscan spirit continues to shine as a light of hope and reconciliation.

Saint Francis teaches us that peace is not achieved by might or wealth but by love — by emptying ourselves so that God may fill us. His life remains a reminder that the Gospel, when lived with joy and simplicity, can still change the world. “Go and rebuild my Church,” said the Crucified Christ to Francis. Today, the same words echo to us: rebuild peace, restore goodness, renew hope.

### 6. The Path to Inner Peace: Humility and Simplicity

- Renunciation of Self and Wealth: Francis was a rich young man who dramatically renounced his possessions, calling poverty his “bride” and seeing it as a path to freedom. He demonstrated that true fulfillment comes not from having much, but from needing little.
- Embracing Humility: He called himself “God's fool” and found joy in little things, an antidote to the pride and materialism of his time and ours.
- Modern Application: Challenge the modern obsession with wealth and status, inviting a reflection on what we can simplify to make space for God's grace and inner peace.

### 7. The Peace of Reconciliation: Love for the Marginalized and Interfaith Dialogue

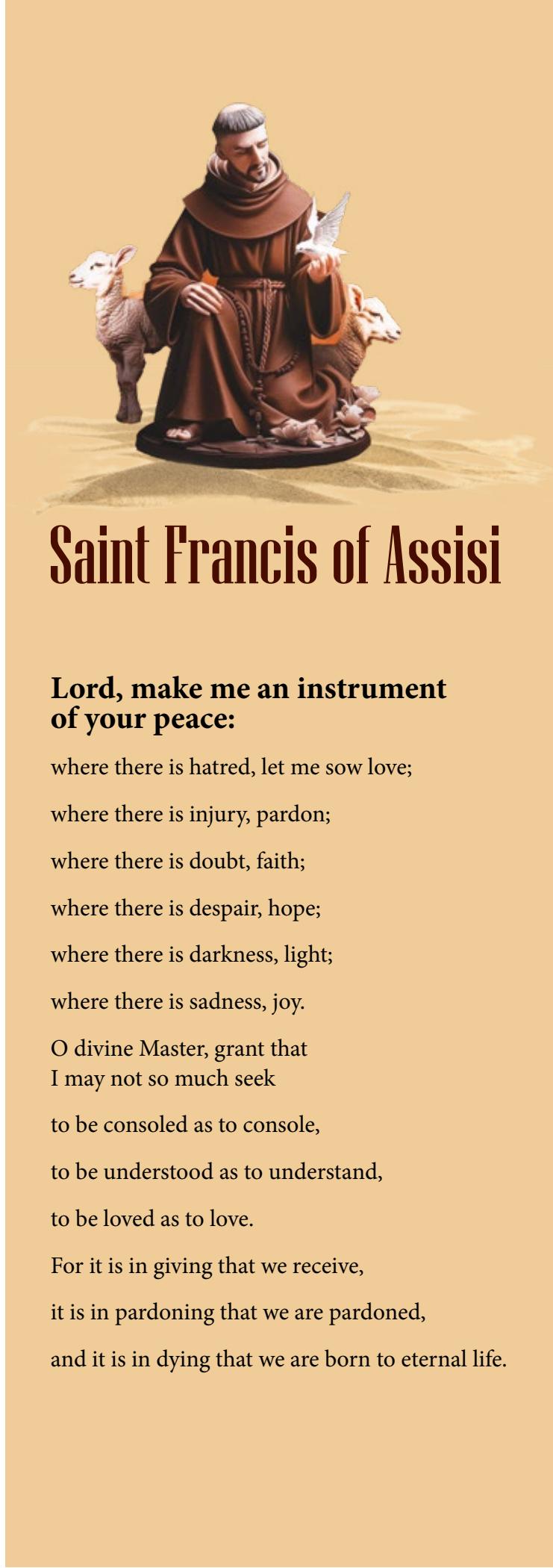
- Seeing Christ in Others: A turning point in his life was embracing a leper, an act of profound love that transformed what he once found repulsive into a door to grace. He saw the face of Christ in the poor and sick.
- Beyond Divisions: Francis was a tireless peacemaker. During the Crusades, he bravely crossed enemy lines to meet the Muslim Sultan al-Kamil, engaging in respectful dialogue and leaving on good terms, a powerful example of interfaith respect.
- Modern Application: Emphasize Francis's call to be instruments of peace in a divided world, advocating for forgiveness, deep listening, and speaking kindly across divides.

#### 8. The Harmony of Creation: Integral Ecology

- Brother and Sister to all Creation: Francis's love for creation flowed from his love for the Creator. His Canticle of the Creatures praised God through "Brother Sun," "Sister Moon," and all elements, seeing every being as a reflection of God's love.
- Stewardship, Not Domination: He shows us that true progress lies not in dominating nature, but in living in harmony with it, a message that resonates deeply in an age of climate crisis.
- Modern Application: Inspire environmental stewardship and a renewed sense of the interconnectedness of all life, recognizing that concern for nature is inseparable from justice for the poor and interior peace.

**Conclusion:** The Enduring Legacy: After 800 years, the life of St. Francis remains a living roadmap for spiritual growth. His "Pax et Bonum" motto is a call to action: to actively pursue peace and goodness in our hearts, our communities, and our world.

A Personal Call: Conclude with a challenge to embrace Francis's radical faith, humility, and love, striving to embody his message: Preach the Gospel at all times; use words if necessary. May we, like Francis, be men and women of Pax et Bonum, bearing in our hearts the peace of the Risen Lord and the goodness that transforms the world. ■



## Saint Francis of Assisi

**Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:**

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that  
I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

# Interreligious Dialogue:

## Universality of Religious Questions



**Fr. Theophilus Chidozie  
NTADINOBI O.SS.T**

Interreligious dialogue begins with the recognition that, despite our differences, all religions share a concern for the same ultimate questions of human life. Every faith tradition seeks to understand the mystery of existence, the meaning of suffering, and the purpose of human destiny. As Charles Kimball reminds us in Comparative Religion (2008), all religions ask, “Where do we come from? What is our purpose? What happens after we die?” (p. 4). These questions form the heart of dialogue among religions, not as debates about truth claims, but as shared explorations of what it means to be human before the divine.

Indeed, religious questions such as “Who am I?”, “Why are we here?”, and “What is the purpose of life?” are universally relevant to the human experience, transcending cultural and religious boundaries. These fundamental inquiries explore the nature of existence, human purpose, and the relationship between individuals and a higher power or universal order. Interreligious dialogue, therefore, should begin with the recognition that all religions wrestle with these universal concerns: meaning, purpose, and the afterlife. This foundational awareness helps to counter the impulse to view other religions as alien or irrational. Instead, it frames different traditions as varied responses to the same human longings. In this sense, interreligious dialogue should not be a contest between religions but a mutual exploration of humanity’s deepest concerns. These shared questions invite a common search for the good of all.

Although religions differ widely in theology, doctrines, and metaphysics, these universal concerns form a bridge of understanding across traditions. They show that similar hopes, fears, and longings animate believers everywhere. Dialogue should therefore move the conversation from “Which religion is right?” to “How do our traditions respond to the same fundamental questions?”

Take, for example, the question of suffering. In Buddhism, dukkha (suffering) is the first of the Four Noble Truths. Siddhartha Gautama’s enlightenment begins with the recognition of life’s impermanence and dissatisfaction. The Buddhist path offers an eightfold remedy leading to liberation (nirvana) through the cessation of desire. Christianity, on the other hand, presents suffering as a consequence of sin and human fallenness, yet it can also become redemptive through Christ’s passion. For Christians, Jesus’ crucifixion—the ultimate symbol of suffering—becomes the gateway to reconciliation with the Divine Creator and eternal life. Viewed in this way, interreligious dialogue encourages empathy and humility while avoiding both relativism and triumphalism. It helps us understand that, while religious answers differ, the questions bind us together in a common human search for truth and meaning.

In conclusion, interreligious dialogue is most fruitful when it begins with the shared recognition of universal human questions. Every religion, in its own way, seeks answers to the mysteries of life, death, and destiny. By focusing on what unites rather than divides us, dialogue becomes not a battle of doctrines but a meeting of hearts and minds. Through this understanding, humanity can grow closer to peace, compassion, and wisdom: values that lie at the center of every authentic faith tradition. ■

## Bahrain: A Living Model of Coexistence and Human Dignity

By: Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa – Chairman of the Board of Trustees

King Hamad Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance

The Kingdom of Bahrain has long stood as a beacon of coexistence and interreligious harmony, a vision championed by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. This vision took institutional form in 2018 with the establishment of the King Hamad Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance (KHGC), marking a milestone in Bahrain's commitment to building societies grounded in respect, understanding, and human dignity.

Since its inception, KHGC has been a dynamic bridge between people and nations, guided by His Majesty's belief in respect, dignity, and freedom of belief for all. The Center serves as a hub for dialogue, research, and community engagement, promoting mutual respect and shared responsibility across cultures and faiths.

Education and training lies at the heart of KHGC's mission. Among its flagship initiatives is the Joint Postgraduate Diploma on Coexistence, organized in collaboration with the United Nations-mandated University for Peace (UPEACE) and the GIOYA Higher Education Institute in Malta. The program brings together students from more than sixty countries to explore coexistence, intercultural dialogue, and human rights, preparing future leaders to turn understanding into action. Complementing this, the King Hamad Leadership in Coexistence Program, developed with Faith in Leadership and the 1928

Institute at the University of Oxford, equips emerging leaders from Bahrain and the Gulf with skills in ethical leadership and inclusive community-building.

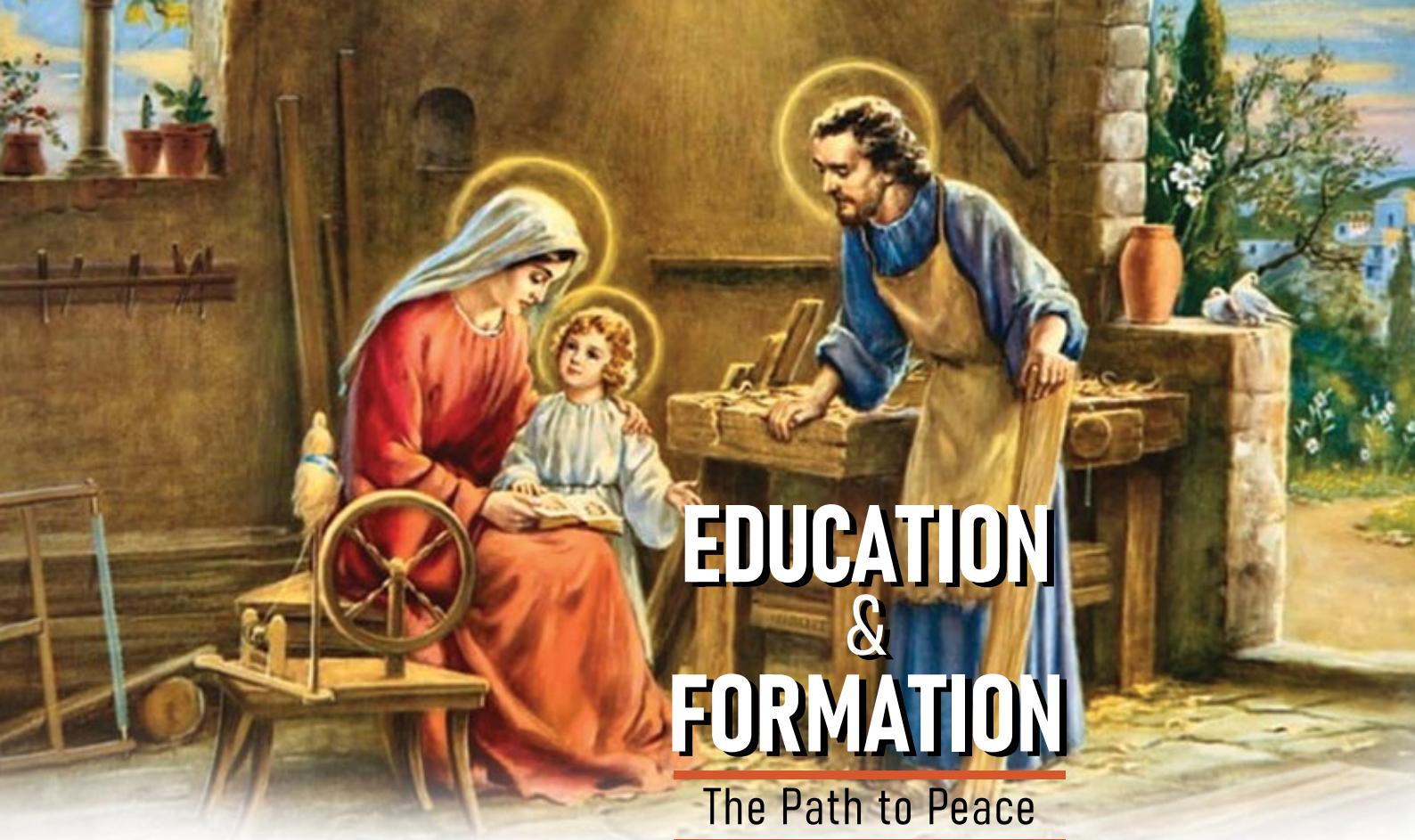


**KHGC reinforces Bahrain's role as a global advocate for coexistence through partnerships with multilateral organizations.** A recent example is the Bahrain–EU Conference on Freedom of Religion and Belief, held in Brussels in collaboration with the European Union. The conference gathered policymakers, diplomats, and faith representatives to promote dialogue and collective action toward protecting freedom of belief.

Beyond academia and diplomacy, KHGC's work extends deeply into community life. The Center regularly engages with Bahrain's diverse communities through visits and cultural initiatives. Among its most symbolic projects is the "Coexistence Path" in the heart of Manama, a walking route that highlights Bahrain's living heritage of religious diversity, where houses of worship from multiple faiths stand side by side, reflecting the kingdom's enduring spirit of harmony.

At the core of KHGC's philosophy lies the "Pillars of Coexistence," a framework defining coexistence as a balance between human dignity, societal harmony, and environmental responsibility. Spanning twelve domains - from politics and law to education and culture - it offers a holistic vision of how societies can thrive through justice, equality, and respect.

Today, KHGC stands as a living expression of His Majesty's vision. Through every program and partnership, the Center continues to transform coexistence from an aspiration into a way of life, one that unites communities, bridges differences, and reminds us that coexistence itself is sustained not in moments of agreement, but in the daily practice of embracing our common humanity.



# EDUCATION & FORMATION

## The Path to Peace

Christmas is the season of peace, a time when heaven touched earth and the angels sang: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of goodwill.” But peace does not come automatically. It begins in every heart that learns to love, to forgive, and to serve. This is what true education is all about not just learning from books, but learning how to live.

### Education, More Than Books and Lessons

Recently, Pope Leo XIV released his Apostolic Letter “Designing a New Map of Hope” to remind the Church and the world that education is one of the most powerful paths toward peace. He explains that education is not only about collecting facts or earning certificates. It is about forming the whole person, mind, heart, and soul. Pope calls it “integral formation.” It means helping every person discover their dignity, their purpose, and their responsibility toward others. When education is guided by the Gospel, it becomes light for the world. It helps us see the image of God in every person and respect each one as our brother or sister.

True education builds bridges, not walls. It teaches us to listen, to care for creation, and to work for justice and truth. Such education gives birth to peace in our families, our schools, and our communities.



**Mr. Rogy Joseph**

*Catechism Coordinator for Bahrain*

### Teachers, Parents, and Students: Builders of Peace

Pope Leo XIV reminds us that teachers, parents, and all who guide others share in God’s work of shaping the human heart. When they teach, they are not only sharing knowledge, they are giving hope. He invites families and schools to form “educational communities,” where everyone learns together, children, parents, and teachers alike.

In such places, love replaces competition, and forgiveness becomes a daily lesson. Education then becomes a way of living in peace each day. A smile, a kind word, a helping hand, these are small lessons that form the foundation of a peaceful world. Education is the very fabric of evangelization.

### A Small Childhood Experience, A Seed of Peace

Let me share a small memory with you, something very simple, but very close to my heart. Whenever

I reflect on the Pope's message, this childhood moment gently returns to my mind. In our neighborhood, there were a few poor children who found it hard to keep up with their studies. My brother, my sister, and I felt a deep desire to help them, even though we ourselves were young. Every week, we sat with them, teaching them the subjects they were learning in school. We opened a small corner of our home for them, a place where they could sit, read, and feel safe to learn.

But more than the lessons, it was the time we spent together that mattered. We played together, enjoyed happy moments, and helped them feel part of our little family.

Very slowly, but very beautifully, our neighborhood began to change. It became a place filled with joy, friendship, and peace.

Looking back now, I realize something precious: Education is not only about teaching, it is about

creating a loving, peaceful community where everyone can grow.

This simple childhood experience taught me more about peace than any textbook ever could.

And this is exactly what Pope Leo XIV invites us to do today, to let our simple actions become seeds of hope in the lives of others.

### Walking Toward Peace Together

As we celebrate Christmas, the Child Jesus reminds us that peace begins in the smallest of places, in simple kindness, shared time, and hearts willing to care.

Your life, my life, and every home can become a small "map of hope" if we choose to educate with love and to live with compassion. May this season inspire us to be teachers of peace, wherever we are, with whatever we have, so that our world may shine again with the light the angels once proclaimed: "Peace on earth to people of goodwill." ■

# Merry Christmas

AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

In this holy Christmas season,  
 we rejoice in the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  
 May His glorious light shine upon your homes and hearts,  
 bringing peace, joy, and love to all.





# HOLY CHILDHOOD SOCIETY IS ORIENTED TO BUILD A PEACEFUL WORLD

## Introduction

“The Society of the Holy Childhood is no longer a simple sprout, but a tree that stands tall and grows visibly, and many will come to rest under its branches,” wrote the Vicar of Pottier in France in his letter of September 17, 1847, to the Director of the Society, founded only four years earlier.

## Holy Childhood, a sprout transformed into a tree- forest

Today, the tree is thriving; I would even say it is a forest that provides oxygen and refreshment to the smallest and most genuine disciples of Jesus Christ, but also to those who approach them and are approached by them. Following the example of the Master who, newly risen, bestows peace on his apostles, the members of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood are increasingly striving to be missionary disciples, workers, promoters, and builders of peace.



*Sr. Roberta Tremarelli, AMSS*

Just as in the early days of society, so too today, childhood remains one of the weakest links in society. It suffers particularly in situations of violence, war, exploitation, persecution, and disease, all of which often lead to a lack of hope for the future.

Therefore, the project conceived by Bishop Charles de Forbin Janson, more than one hundred and eighty years after its founding, is even more necessary today than ever in building a more beautiful world, through a network of prayer

and solidarity that springs spontaneously from the hearts of children who have encountered the Savior of the world.

In reality, the children and young people who join the Work and share and promote its charism are concretely committed to being missionary disciples and witnesses of the risen Jesus, the Lord of peace.

Beginning with their immediate family and extending to their various groups, such as school, friends, sports, and more, the young missionaries daily promote love, forgiveness, acceptance, and listening, learning from the example of Jesus and listening to his Word of life and peace.

### **Holy Childhood missionaries are peacemakers**

There are various ways in which missionary children and young people experience God's love for every human being and from there learn to be peacemakers: Daily prayer, universal in scope and not confined to their own needs; The missionary rosary, which embraces the universe; Regular participation in the Eucharistic celebration, a source of love and peace because, through the real presence of Christ, it offers an encounter that reconciles with God and inspires fraternal love; Generous service to the weakest and most defenseless, young and old, near and far; Offering sacrifices for children around the world; The commitment to spreading the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of love and peace.

### **A particular example of the Holy Childhood Society- Myanmar.**

There are many examples of these young missionaries around the world, but I would like to share one in particular: that of the members of the Missionary Childhood Association in Myanmar, an Asian country afflicted for years by a civil war that intensified after the 2021 military coup, unleashing widespread violence and a serious humanitarian crisis. Many villages and ethnic groups have been forced to flee for months, even years, and take refuge in temporary, well-organized camps where Catholics continue to live the Gospel day after day.

Children and young people grow up without a safe space to learn and dream of a different future. But even when bombings continue to hit refugee camps, despite the promise of a truce, hope continues to burn, and despite the pain, these families find the strength to move forward. Amid the rubble, faith is not extinguished; on the contrary, it is strengthened. And children are the living testimony of a Church made up of people, a missionary Church that never loses faith or hope.

The children and youth in the displaced people's camps in Loikaw last January, on the occasion of Missionary Childhood Day, joyfully shared the celebration, the dances, and the games, even donating small donations to the Universal Solidarity Fund of the Society. And in the month of October, they intensified their daily prayer for peace, as requested by the Pope. Let us look into the eyes of the children and youth who have Jesus as a friend, and we will discover in them a spark that ignites our hearts. Because building peace is nothing other than living fully according to the Gospel, with a heart and a gaze filled with faith, hope, and charity.

### **Conclusion**

Pope John Paul II on April 19, 1979 stated "The Missionary Childhood and her young apostolic workers, from whom we find similar figures in the Gospel, keep their place in the new gospel preaching. Children are able to participate in acts of justice, solidarity, peace, triumph and affirmation of God's Kingdom. Through evangelization it shed the light on the adult world which many times is indifferent to solidarity and self-donation."

We are called by God to live in harmony and peace with people, sharing our life with them, serving others serving each other and giving glory to God together. Thanks to the Holy Childhood Society for its commitment to building peace through the active involvement of children. ■



**Renessa Banz**  
(Qatar)



# JESUS AND THE THREE KINGS

## A Journey of Light, Faith, and Revelation

*Every December, as Christmas lights shimmer across homes and city streets, one ancient story quietly reminds us of faith, mystery, and divine guidance—the story of Jesus and the Three Kings. This timeless tale, woven into the heart of the Nativity, remains among the most captivating episodes in Christian tradition.*

### A Star That Changed Everything

Over two thousand years ago, a brilliant star—a star unlike any the world had seen before—appeared in the night sky. It immediately caught the notice of three wise kings from the East named Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthazar. Scholars, philosophers, and astronomers in their own right, the three believed the star signaled the birth of an extraordinary King into the world.

And so, filled with deep faith and determination, they undertook the long and hard journey through deserts and distant lands, following the Star's radiant trail. Bravery that points to an eternal message: with faith as the guide, even uncertain pathways will take one to the truth.

### The Encounter at Bethlehem

Until they came to this very humble stable in Bethlehem, where instead of a royal palace or a throne of gold, they found a newborn child—Jesus—lying in a manger. The Kings bowed before Him, recognizing something far greater than earthly power. In this moment, the simplicity of His birthplace contrasted beautifully with the majesty of His purpose.

### The Symbolism of Their Gifts

Each of the Kings gave a meaningful gift: Gold represents kingship and honor; this was to acknowledge Jesus as the King of Kings, honoring Jesus's divine kingship. Frankincense is an aromatic resin used in worship to represent His priestly mission. Myrrh is an anointing perfume of great value, which foreshadowed His future sacrifice and death. These gifts were not for luxury, but for prophecy. Together, they paint a portrait of Jesus as Savior, Ruler, and Redeemer.

### A Message That Still Resonates

The story of the Three Kings reminds us that sometimes faith invites us into unknown territory. It teaches us the importance of truth-seeking, heeding signs, and offering our best—our kindness, our generosity, and our hearts.

In a world filled with distractions, this story asks us to pause and reflect, while following our personal light wherever it may take us.

### A Legacy of Faith and Wonder

Today, Epiphany is observed all over the world as the appearance of the Three Kings and it represents the revelation of Jesus to all humanity. In this sense, their journey was not only a historical event but a spiritual path that nowadays continues to inspire millions. Whether from the point of view of faith, history, or even symbolism, Jesus and the Three Kings' story still remains a beautiful reminder that greatness is not found in grandeur but in humility, hope and the courage to believe.



# Christmas Celebration in my family

**C**hristmas in our family is a time of happiness, festivity, family time, and prayer. Our preparations begin at the start of Advent with the decorating of the Christmas tree and putting up the Advent Calendar!

We decorate our tree with beautiful ornaments as we listen to some old Christmas music. Every year we also put up our own very special ornaments which our parents began putting up for us since the year we were born in 2010 and 2012! Often while placing these ornaments, the bickering usually begins, about whose ornament is placed where but even though we fight over these little things, it only brings us closer to each other, and we all enjoy and look forward to seeing the decorated tree lit up each night during Christmas. Our parents put up an Advent calendar for us where we try to do an extra act of kindness or say an extra prayer for someone during this season.

We then begin making the crib and our dad loves getting creative with it. In our home, we wait until Christmas to place baby Jesus in the crib, do you do the same too?

Christmas cannot be complete without sweets to celebrate Jesus' birthday and share with family and friends! We make many different sweets but the ones we enjoy making are kulkuls, which is one of the traditional Goan Christmas sweets - it takes a lot of patience to make but we all sit down together as a family to make them, and enjoy this time together.



**Kyle and Rachel Fernandes**  
Kuwait

Last year, we did something different – we tried to read a chapter daily from the Gospel of Luke, together as a family, starting December 1st, which was a suggestion we came across for Advent. Did you know it is perfect for December because there are 24 chapters in the Gospel of Luke! Of course it was quite a challenge, but we look forward to doing it again this year.

On Christmas eve, we usually attend the Christmas night vigil mass, and we wait for an opportunity to serve as altar servers if we get the chance. After mass, we wish everyone and then go out for dinner or we head straight home to open our gifts - wondering on our drive back home, if we got what we wanted!

On Christmas morning, our mom packs these sweets and sends us to distribute them to our friends and neighbors. In the afternoon, we enjoy a special lunch at home. As the day draws to a close, we all like to relax on the sofa and watch a Christmas movie together and sometimes our dad makes some popcorn for us.

Christmas is our favorite time of the year, and we wish all of you a Blessed Christmas. Let's try to make Christmas more about Jesus this year. ■

# PEACE



*Aleena Sandy*



Growing gunshots, bloodshed everywhere  
Mightier fights to figure out who's fair  
Innocent hands do their fallouts bear.

A place where violence is the centerpiece  
If only hearts could hold their peace  
Would the world's brutality come to cease?

If only we turn to the one born in a manger  
Could we see in others- a brother, not a stranger  
Peace then would put the world's grief in danger.

## The Star of Christmas guides the **THREE MAGI** to Jesus

Baby Jesus is the center of the Christmas season, and the various events surrounding His birth reveal God's miraculous power for all people. Jesus' nativity was in Bethlehem, fulfilling God's promise by becoming Emmanuel: God with us. His humble birth shows how God chose simplicity to reveal the greatest gift to the world.

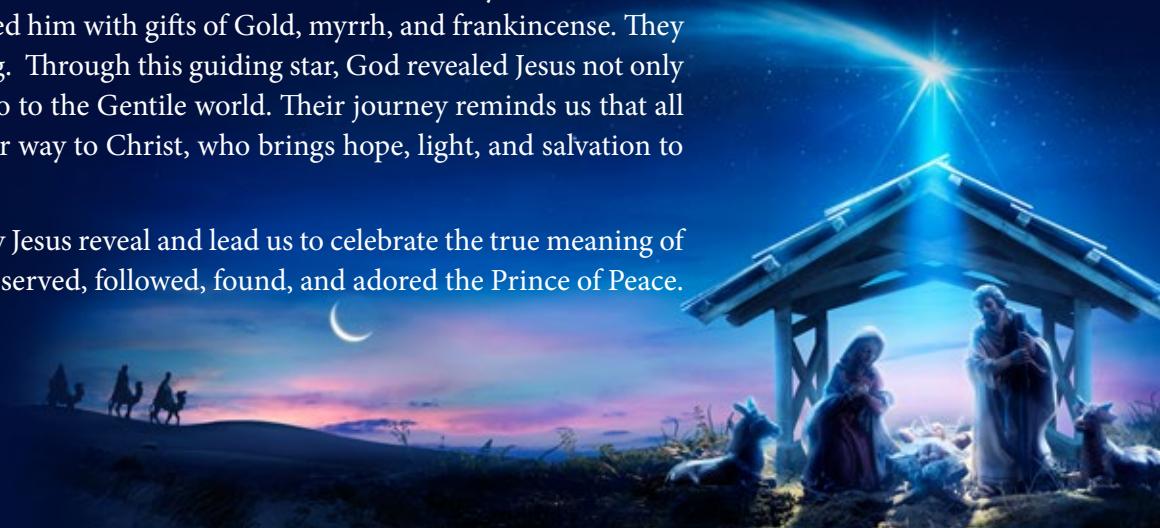
One of the most important signs of this moment is the Star of Christmas, which shone brightly to guide those who were seeking the newborn King. The Star of Christmas – also known as the Star of Bethlehem – is the heavenly light that appeared in the sky at the time of Jesus's birth, as said in the Gospel of Matthew.

The feast of Epiphany tells us of the manifestation of Jesus to the three wise men of the East. The Wise Men followed the star with faith, and when they reached Jesus, they paid homage and honored him with gifts of Gold, myrrh, and frankincense. They recognized him as a true King. Through this guiding star, God revealed Jesus not only to the people of Israel but also to the Gentile world. Their journey reminds us that all nations are called to find their way to Christ, who brings hope, light, and salvation to everyone.

In this Christmas season, may Jesus reveal and lead us to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. They searched, observed, followed, found, and adored the Prince of Peace.



*Miss Angel Mary  
Bahrain*



# PART 3



## Spiritualities and Reports



النيابة الرسولية لشمال شبه الجزيرة العربية  
APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF NORTHERN ARABIA  
BAHRAIN . KUWAIT . QATAR . SAUDI ARABIA

December 6, 2025

MESSAGE FOR THE FEAST OF HOLY CHILDHOOD

**Dear Children, Parents, Teachers,  
and Beloved Members of our Community,**

May the peace and gentle love of the Child Jesus be with each one of you.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Childhood, we rejoice in the gift of children—those in our families, our parishes, and all over the world. Children bring joy, hope, and the simple faith that reminds us to trust in God with open hearts. Their laughter, curiosity, and prayers are a living sign of God's love among us.

This celebration also invites us to think about how we speak and act in the world. Our words have great power. They can encourage, heal, and bring joy, or they can hurt and divide. Jesus calls us to use our words kindly, to pray for others, and to speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves, especially children in need. When we share our thoughts, prayers, and love, we create bridges of understanding and compassion.

Holy Childhood reminds us that unity is essential. We are one family in Christ, called to care for children everywhere. Many children around the world face poverty, illness, loneliness, or conflict. By joining together in prayer, acts of kindness, and generosity, we show them that they are not alone and that they are deeply loved. As the three mottos of the Pontifical Holy Childhood Society expresses it, every small gesture—sharing, helping, praying—strengthens the bonds of unity and brings hope to those who need it most.

To our dear children: thank you for your pure hearts, your prayers, and your willingness to help others. Your words and actions—no matter how small—carry the light of Jesus to the world. Keep speaking with love, sharing your joy, and reaching out to those in need.

To parents, teachers, catechists, and all who guide children: thank you for nurturing faith, teaching kindness, and showing the power of unity in your words and deeds. You help children understand the importance of love, prayer, and community, and you inspire them to follow Christ with courage and joy.

May the Child Jesus bless every child, strengthen the unity of our communities, and guide our words to bring comfort, hope, and love to all. Let us work together, speak with love, and act with compassion, so that every child may feel the warmth and joy of God's embrace.

With heartfelt prayers and blessings,

✠ Aldo Berardi, O.SS.T.  
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia



**THE PONTIFICAL HOLY CHILDHOOD SOCIETY**  
**MISSIO-AVONA**  
celebrates  
**HOLY CHILDHOOD DAY**  
2 - 4 January 2026



**Theme:**  
**“Children, be One in Christ,**  
**United in Mission:**  
**Pray, Help, Share”.**

# Celebriamo

The Holy Childhood Day will be celebrated (Friday) on January 2nd 2026, for all the children below 15 years of age.

**Venue and Time:**  
Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia, Bahrain, 8:30 pm -1:30 pm.

## ACTIVITIES:

Prayer – Pep Talks - Games- Action songs- drawing, essay writing, and lots of fun will be conducted, etc., based on the above theme.

Children are encouraged to prepare themselves in advance.

**On Sunday, January 4th, 2026**

we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord:  
Like the three magi, come to adore Jesus.

All Children are warmly invited to attend the

**7:00 pm Pontifical Mass**

celebrated by H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi O.SS.T.

## *Religious Order and Spirituality*

### **Institute of the Incarnate Word**

#### **Coat of Arms**

The coat of arms of the IVE has a red cross for the blood of Christ, white for purity, a crown signifying the Kingship of Christ, the rosary reflecting devotion to Our Lady, a sword referencing the “two-edged sword of the Word of God”, and the initials VCFC which stand for “Verbum Caro Factum Est” meaning in Latin the words from the Angelus recalling the Annunciation “the Word became Flesh.” Lastly, the lily symbolizes the fourth vow of consecration to Jesus through Mary in a spirit of maternal slavery.



**Fr. Joseph LoJacono, IVE**

#### **Our Presence in mission:**

As part of our missionary endeavor, the IVE oversees the only Catholic parish in the Gaza Strip, inside Palestine, Holy Family Church. In addition to our presence in the Northern Arabian Vicariate, we have parishes in other places in the Middle East, including in Alexandria, Egypt, where we have a house of charity, a high school seminary, and help with Catholic Coptic liturgies. We have a parish in Baghdad, Iraq, ministering to Latin Rite Catholics there. We minister to Latin Rite Catholics in Cyprus. We have foundations in Aleppo, Syria, where we served throughout the recent Syrian civil war. Our order has a monastery at the place of the Baptism of Christ and the ascension of Elijah the prophet, Bethany beyond the Jordan in the country of Jordan.

#### **Apostolate**

We have both an active and contemplative branch. Our missionaries in the active branch serve in various roles as parish priests, overseeing houses of charity, teaching in seminaries, and performing other special ministries in the Church. Our contemplative branch, while focusing on the life of prayer, also carries out active ministries to pilgrims and spiritual aid, in places such as Argentina, Brazil, Spain, the United States, Israel, Jordan, and the Philippines. A distinctive mark of our missionary outreach is our commitment to minister in places that few others want to go or where there is a great need. Thus, we have missionaries in the jungles of

#### **Religious Family of the Incarnate Word**

I am blessed to belong to the religious order, the Institute of the Incarnate Word (IVE), a missionary order dedicated to bringing the Gospel into all areas of human life through the evangelization of culture. The IVE was founded in San Rafael, Argentina, on March 25, 1984, and shortly after, in 1988, a female branch, the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin Matara (SSVM), as well as a secular Third Order, were established. Since it was founded in a Spanish-speaking country, I.V.E. stands for Instituto del Verbo Encarnado (Institute of the Incarnate Word). We are a missionary order active in 46 countries, with at least 165 local communities, aiming to “reestablish all things in Christ” (Eph 1:10) as another Incarnation of the Word, making Him “incarnate” in all aspects of human life.

#### **Charism**

The specific charism of our Institute calls all its members “to work in supreme docility to the Holy Spirit and according to the example of the Virgin Mary, so that Jesus Christ will be the Lord of all that is truly human, even in the most difficult situations and under the most adverse conditions” ([Iveamerica.org](http://Iveamerica.org)).

Papua New Guinea, in Iceland, in Tajikistan, in the South American country of Guyana, and in the toughest parts of cities such as Sao Paolo, Brazil, Philadelphia, and New York in the United States, and Toronto, Canada.

### Personal Experience

I personally served for 4 years in the tough neighborhood of Philadelphia, where illegal drugs are rampant and there are about ten murders in the parish boundaries yearly. While there, I saw a car explode outside the rectory and heard gunshots from the police. In the midst of such missionary outreach, I found people of faith, as our missionaries have found everywhere, and fostered that faith, including public processions and popular missions. A mark of our religious order is that we continue with zeal in our missions, often as foreign missionaries in the midst of difficulties such as the Syrian war or the recent war in Gaza.

### The fourth Vow of Marian Slavery

Like other religious orders, we take the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but we have a distinctive fourth vow of Marian slavery to Jesus through Mary, according to the method of St. Louis Marie de Montfort. The Marian dimension of spirituality especially marks our outreach wherever we are with daily rosaries, promotion of pilgrimages to her shrines, adorning her statues, and always acclaiming her glories with song and festivities.

Among our distinctive focuses are what we call “essentials” including seeking to prolong the incarnation of Jesus among all men, to carry our cross with enthusiasm, a reverent offering of the Mass, serious focus on the spiritual life including the Spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, a devotion to the Magisterium following the Tradition of the Church, placing a focus on the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, labor zealously as missionaries including the popular missions inspired by St. Alphonsus of Ligouri, live in community with joy including promoting the oratory of St. Philip Neri, to embrace the missionary reality, and seek the most challenging missions.

### Evangelization

Finally, we seek as the end of all our endeavors to evangelize the culture, extending the Incarnation of Christ. Evangelization of culture means working to transform it “through the power of the Gospel, mankind’s criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation” (Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 19). As a young order, we have had our fair share of trials, and not all our members represent the best of Christ; yet we also have heroic witnesses among us. Like other young religious orders, we have had to learn to refine our founding charism and what it means to be a missionary encountering new cultures. I feel graced to be a member of the IVE for many years now, and serving our religious family in the Northern Arabian Vicariate at the parish of Our Lady of Fatima.



*Our Patroness, Our Lady of Lujan*

Our Lady of Lujan is the largest place of pilgrimage in Argentina, which is based on the miracles associated with this image that Our Lady desired to remain in the place where it now resides in Buenos Aires. Our IVE religious family traces its foundation to Our Lady of Lujan, who inspired our founder and the first religious in Argentina. She represents our great devotion to Our Lady under our fourth vow, and we call her the “mother of our vocations.” ■



# Simbang Gabi:

A Filipino Tradition of History, Hope, and Spirituality

Simbang Gabi—also known as Misa de Gallo (dawn mass)—is one of the most cherished and enduring traditions of Filipino Catholics. Celebrated from December 16 to 24, this series of nine dawn or evening Masses prepares the faithful for Christmas, creating a unique blend of history, culture, and deep spirituality that has shaped generations.

## HISTORICAL ROOTS OF SIMBANG GABI

1. Spanish Influence (1600s) - Simbang Gabi began during the Spanish colonial period in the late 1600s, introduced by Spanish missionaries as a novena of Masses to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary in preparation for Christmas. It was originally called Misa de Aguinaldo (Gift Mass).
2. Dawn Masses for Farmers - The early Filipino farmers and laborers had to start working before sunrise. To make it possible for them to attend Mass, the Church moved the celebration to early dawn—before the day's work began. This practical adjustment eventually became a beautiful tradition of gathering in the dark and welcoming the light.
3. A Community Event - As years passed, Simbang Gabi grew into a community celebration. Streets lit with parol, vendors selling bibingka and puto bumbong, and families attending Mass together created a joyful and distinctly Filipino atmosphere that extended beyond the Church walls.

## SPIRITUALITY OF SIMBANG GABI

1. A Journey of Expectant Faith. The nine days symbolize a spiritual pilgrimage, a continuous preparation of the heart for the coming of Christ. It reflects the journey of Mary and Joseph, who traveled in faith and obedience as they awaited the birth of Jesus.
2. Sacrifice and Devotion. Waking up early or going late at night is not easy—but this sacrifice is at the core of the tradition. It becomes an offering



**Fr. Anthony Almazan, OFM.Cap**  
Asst. Priest of the SHC, Mamana

to God, a way to express love, faithfulness, and commitment.

3. The Spirit of Hope. Simbang Gabi is often linked with the belief that those who complete the nine Masses may receive a special grace. Whether or not one focuses on this, the deeper truth is that Simbang Gabi is an invitation to strengthen trust in God's promises.
4. Community and Unity. Filipinos all over the world celebrate Simbang Gabi—from local parishes in the Philippines to churches in the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas. It becomes a source of comfort for overseas Filipinos, reminding them that faith bridges distance and time.
5. Marian Devotion. Traditionally offered in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Simbang Gabi highlights Mary's humility, obedience, and joyful anticipation. She becomes the model of how to welcome Christ—with a heart ready to listen and follow.

## THE HEART OF SIMBANG GABI TODAY

Even in modern times, when life is fast-paced and busy, Simbang Gabi remains a powerful spiritual tradition. It is more than a custom—it is a celebration of light breaking through darkness, of community coming together in faith, and of preparing a home for Christ in our hearts.

For many Filipinos, Simbang Gabi is a reminder that God's love arrives gently—sometimes in the stillness of dawn, sometimes in the quiet of our own waiting—and that Christmas truly begins when we open our hearts to Him.

## The Feast of the Sto. Niño

A Celebration of Faith, History and Childlike Devotion



**The Feast of the Sto. Niño is one of the most vibrant and historically rich celebrations in the Philippines. Every January, millions of Filipinos honor the Holy Child Jesus, whose image has become a symbol of faith, identity, and resilience for the Filipino people. More than a cultural spectacle, the feast carries a deep spiritual message that continues to touch the hearts of generations.**

### HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE STO. NIÑO DEVOTION

1. A Gift of Friendship in 1521. The devotion to the Sto. Niño began in 1521, when Ferdinand Magellan arrived in Cebu and presented the image of the Holy Child Jesus to Queen Juana (Hara Amihan) as a baptismal gift. This moment marked the beginning of Christianity in the Philippines.
2. The Miraculous Rediscovery in 1565. Forty-four years later, during Miguel López de Legazpi's expedition in 1565, the image was found miraculously intact inside a burned house in Cebu. This rediscovery was seen as a sign of God's protection, and a church—the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño—was built on that very spot.
3. Oldest Christian Relic in the Philippines. The Sto. Niño image is considered the oldest Catholic relic in the country. Through centuries of change—colonization, wars, natural disasters—the devotion has remained steadfast, becoming deeply woven into Filipino identity.
4. Growth of a National Celebration. What began in Cebu has grown into national festivities such as: Sinulog (Cebu); Ati-Atihan (Aklan); Dinagyang (Iloilo). Each festival combines indigenous traditions, Spanish influences, and Christian rituals, expressing both gratitude and joyful worship.

### SPIRITUALITY OF THE STO. NIÑO

1. Embracing Childlike Faith. The Sto. Niño reminds the faithful of Jesus' words: "Unless you become like little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of God."

This does not refer to immaturity but to trust, simplicity, humility, openness to God. The devotion encourages believers to approach God with a pure, joyful, and obedient heart.

2. Symbol of God's Presence in Every Filipino Home. Many Filipino families keep an image of the Sto. Niño, believing that He brings: protection, guidance and blessing. The image standing as a child but dressed like a king reflects Jesus' divine power expressed through gentle love.
3. A Call to Renewal. The feasts and processions symbolize a spiritual journey—walking with Christ, renewing one's commitment, and allowing Jesus to reign in one's life. The Sto. Niño invites the faithful to grow in discipline, charity, compassion and forgiveness. It is a reminder that becoming like Christ starts with having a docile, teachable heart.
4. Joy in Worship. The vibrant dances and chants of "Viva Pit Señor!" express overflowing joy for God's goodness. This joyful spirit reflects the Filipino soul—resilient in trials, hopeful in darkness, celebrating even through difficulties because God remains faithful.
5. Unity in Diversity. The Feast of the Sto. Niño brings together people from all walks of life—rich and poor, young and old, locals and OFWs. It is a celebration that transcends differences and unites everyone under the loving kingship of the Child Jesus.

### THE HEART OF THE FEAST TODAY

Today, the Feast of the Sto. Niño continues to remind Filipinos that God meets His people with tenderness. Through the humble form of a child, He teaches trust, love, and simplicity in a world often filled with noise and complexity.

The Sto. Niño stands not only as a historical relic but as a living symbol of God's presence in Filipino life and culture. As believers celebrate His feast each year, they renew their commitment to let the Child Jesus reign in their homes, their families, and their hearts—bringing hope, joy, and peace to all. ■

## Sacred Heart Catholic Church Society of the Holy Childhood of Jesus



*Mrs. Aldita*

**Two joyful meetings were held, where children prayed, learned, and actively participated.**

### **September 29, 2025 – World Peace Day**

Fr. Victor shared a reflection on “Blessed are the peacemakers”.

Blessed are the peacemakers, a verse from Matthew 5:9, invites children to see themselves as everyone's helpers in building harmony. When we talk about peacemaking for children, we're describing a kind of active, daily kindness that reflects God's love and helps friendships, families, and communities grow stronger. Let us reflect on what peacemaking means, what it looks like in practice, and simple ways children can begin living it out.

#### **What does peacemaking mean for children?**

Peacemakers are people who try to fix things and make friends again. They help broken relationships become good again. Peace, or shalom, isn't just the absence of fighting. It means feeling safe, happy, and healthy with God, with other people, with nature, and with ourselves.

#### **What do peacemakers do?**

Peacemakers help heal hurt feelings and resolve disputes. They defend fairness and support those who need protection. They care for creation, plants, animals, and the environment. They cultivate inner peace, remaining calm, patient, and kind to better assist others.

#### **Where does real peace come from?**

Real peace comes from God. When we follow God's love, we can be like Him and help heal the world.

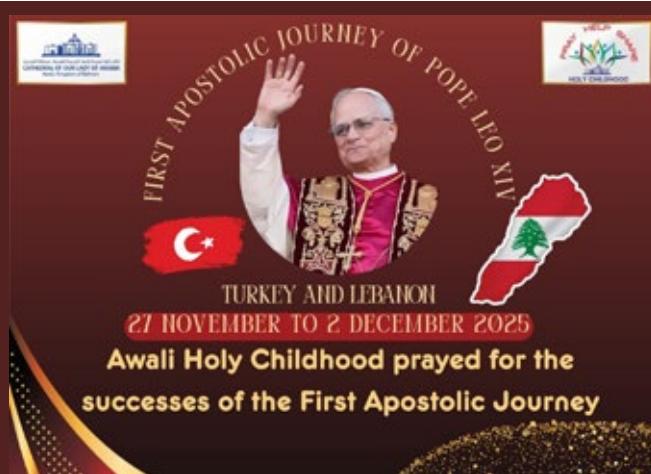
Children recited the Rosary, took part in a Bible quiz, and played Bible character games like identifying Jonah from a whale picture. A love offering was collected, and the meeting concluded with prayer.

### **November 22, 2025 – Monthly Meeting**

The meeting opened with a welcome by Ms. Cheryl and a prayer by Jerom.

Students gave short talks on topics like Jesus' love, helping others, and prayer.

Sr. Roselyn shared an inspiring message on God's love. Children enjoyed emoji-based Bible character games. Closing prayer was led by Briccio.



## The Holy Childhood Society: Preparing Hearts for Advent and Christmas

The Holy Childhood Society recently held a productive meeting to plan its upcoming events and to support the spiritual growth of its young members. With the Christmas season approaching, the committee focused on meaningful activities that encourage faith, friendship, and community spirit among the children.

One of the highlights discussed was the Carol Singing Competition, an exciting event that will form a joyful part of this year's Christmas celebrations. This competition aims to build confidence, teamwork, and festive enthusiasm among the children as they prepare to share the message of Christmas through song.

Another key point of discussion was the Day of the Holy Childhood, proposed for January 9th or 16th. The final date will be confirmed soon. The coordinators also agreed to provide snacks for the children during the celebration, making the day enjoyable and memorable for all.



**Mrs. Olga Fernandes**  
*Awali Holy Childhood  
coordinator*



### Holy Childhood Society: Advent Secret Friend Activity

During The Holy Childhood Society meeting, the children took part in a meaningful and heartfelt activity to begin the Advent season. Each child selected a secret friend—a peer they will pray for throughout this special time of preparation.

To guide them in this activity, every child received an Advent card. They have been encouraged to write a short message or prayer on it for their secret friend. On Christmas Day, the children may add a handmade greeting card and present it together with the Advent card, sharing kind

The theme of this year's Advent activity encourages children to:

Pray daily for their secret friend.

Write a thoughtful message or prayer on the Advent card.

Learn more about their friend's family and keep the entire family in prayer.

This simple yet heartfelt tradition nurtures compassion, strengthens friendships, and deepens the children's understanding of prayer and community.

With these enriching activities planned for both Advent and the New Year, the Holy Childhood Society looks forward to a season filled with faith, joy, and togetherness.

# Report on the World Mission Sunday 2025

*Reported by: Fr. Marcus Fernandes*

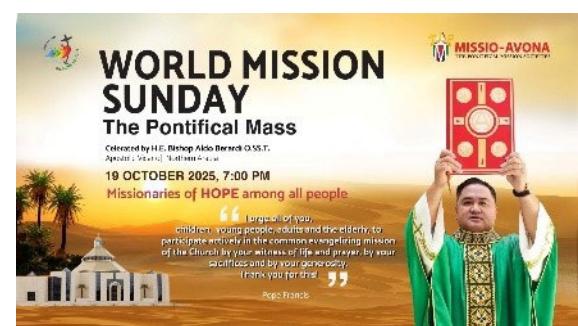
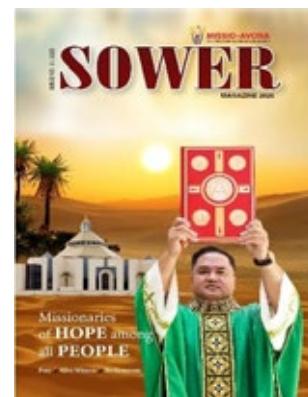
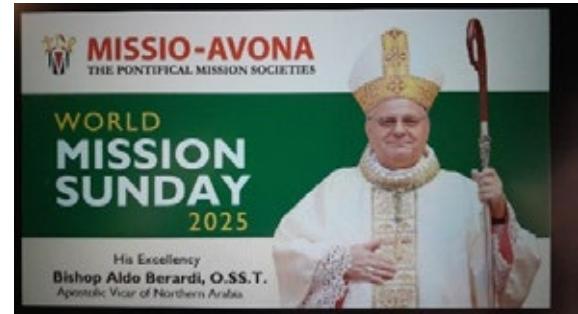
Missionaries of Hope among all people was the theme of the Ninety-ninth World Mission Sunday 2025.

The preparation of the Mission month was done under the guidance of our Bishop Aldo Berardi. The following activities were planned and implemented: The theme and message of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, were shared with the priests of Avona (Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia) through e-Letters. The World Mission Sunday poster was designed and distributed to all the parishes in Avona. A special article on the life and activities of Blessed Pauline Marie Jaricot was circulated, along with an action plan titled Missio-Avona G-20 group of faithful for the Missio-Ad Gentes, which was made available to all and proposed for implementation. Video messages from Pope Leo XIV <https://youtu.be/eEwDtbZxt4c> and Cardinal Tagle, the pro-prefect for the section for the first evangelization and new particular churches, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxzQ0fBC6pk> were also shared. All parishes and communities were asked to promote and report their Mission Month activities.

The Apostolic Vicar H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi, O.S.S.T., understanding his important role and responsibility in promoting the church's missions, fully supported, encouraged, and promoted missionary zeal. He motivated the faithful through a video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBioWPJd-0U> and a written message, both uploaded on social media and published in Missio-Avona's digital magazine SOWER. He also presided over the Pontifical Mass on World Mission Sunday at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia, Awali, Bahrain.

The magazine was fully covered with various themes related to mission information. You can follow the link <https://sower-magazine.mita-apps.net/#p=1> to discover its value.

In Gulf (Avona), we have celebrated the World Mission Sunday 2025 for three consecutive days (October 17-19, Friday to Sunday). We thank the faithful for their generous prayers and support for the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith.



## Manama reports on the World Mission Sunday 2025

### WORLD MISSION SUNDAY 19th OCTOBER 2025

As we joyfully celebrated World Mission Sunday on 19th October 2025, our hearts were filled with gratitude and inspiration through the beautiful participation of our children from Grades 6 to 12. Embracing this year's theme, "Missionaries of Hope Among the People," our young students prepared collages, drawings, poems, and creative expressions on A3 paper, each reflecting their deep faith and their desire to bring Christ's hope to the world. All the charts were lovingly submitted on the 17th of October and gracefully displayed in the church compound on Mission Sunday. The children showcased remarkable creativity, originality, and a genuine missionary spirit. To honor their efforts, prizes were awarded for First, Second, and Third place, along with six consolation prizes among all the inspiring works presented. In addition, we joyfully organized a "Fun Day on 31st October", and we are delighted to share that a substantial contribution from this event will be offered to the mission land, supporting the work of the Missionaries of Hope who tirelessly bring the love of Christ to those most in need.



**Fr. Francis Joseph  
Padavupurackal**  
Parish Priest & Rector  
Sacred Heart Church,  
Manama



### Report



Fr. Joseph shares the joy of his community's participation in the missionary work in his own community by the faithful. A special Holy Hour was conducted to pray for the mission. The faithful, too, had gathered to prepare the World Mission Rosary (created by Archbishop Fulton Sheen in 1951 to unite the faithful in prayer for the missions). Their zeal and passion for the mission through prayers, contributions, and activities have awakened the missionary zeal. God bless you!

*Mark your date in advance:  
Organize in your own Country WCD 2026*

**Pope Leo XIV has declared the  
2nd edition of World Children's Day 2026,  
which will take place on September 25-27 in Rome.  
Logo World Children's Day**



The impression of human hands dots the earliest of inhabited caves. The history of art and civilisation, all of it, begins with this simple gesture, immediate and primordial. In the infancy of humanity, our ancestors longed to leave a sign as a legacy to future generations. Thus did those men and women begin to write their story—and ours.

Our children, in turn, relive that gesture when they start drawing. It's their act of ingress in the community, every time unique: one of the first marks of self-awareness and opportunity to leave a trace. Thus does the story of the entire species and the possibility of a new beginning begin anew in every child: "I make all things new"—this enlightening verse of the final book of the Bible—shall be the main theme of the inaugural World Children's Day.

The hand imprints in this logo hark back to those very gestures characteristic of the childhood of the human race. The different colors represent the multiplicity of cultures that make up a oneness, embracing and valorizing the diversities. Ex pluribus unum.

The Church is the custodian of the hope and the future of the new generations. Thus has the Holy Father ordained that the place of Christianity's most ancient basilica be the permanent seat of WCD. The logo could not, therefore, overlook the identifying reference: minimalist graphic lines portray the stylized shape of St. Peter's Dome, topped by the cross and the lantern. The dome is stretching itself out to embrace, welcome, and protect the little ones, the smallest of the small. The lantern is a metaphor for Christians, 'bringers of light'. And the Cross, perennial symbol of the Passion and Resurrection, stands as once stood the Son of God made man for our sake.



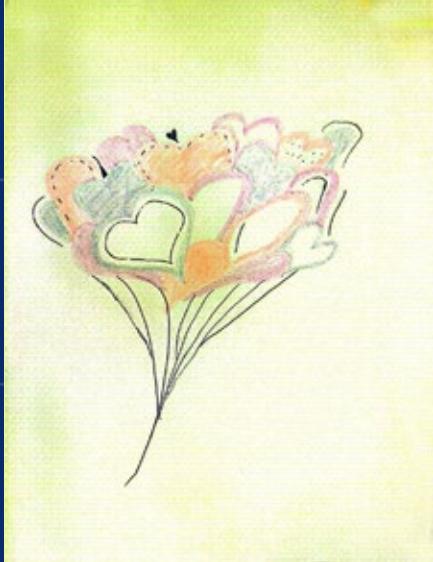
# CHILDREN PRAYING FOR GAZA SUFFERING CHURCH



*“We pray for you and support you.  
We pray for peace and protection.  
May the Lord give you strength and blessings.  
You can count on my prayers and communion.”*

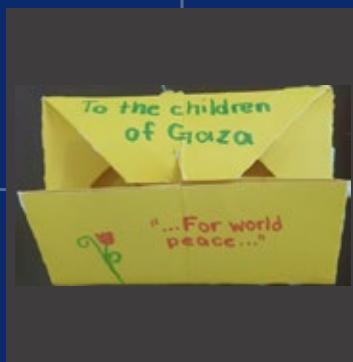
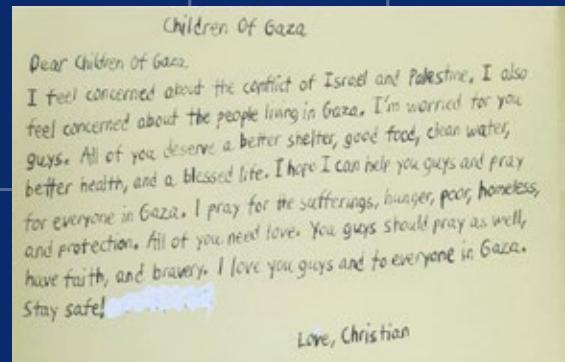
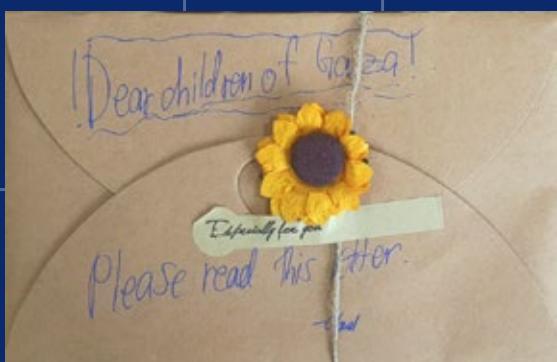
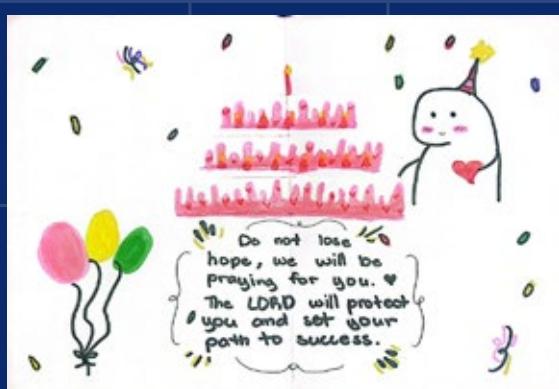
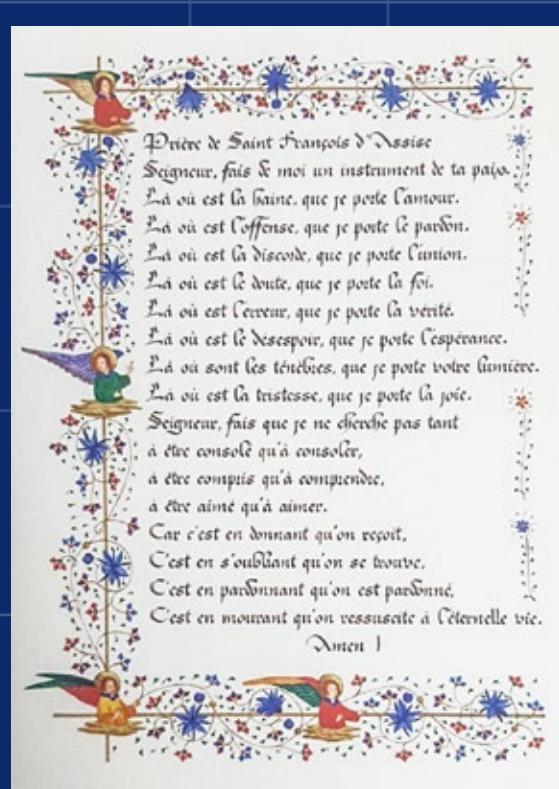
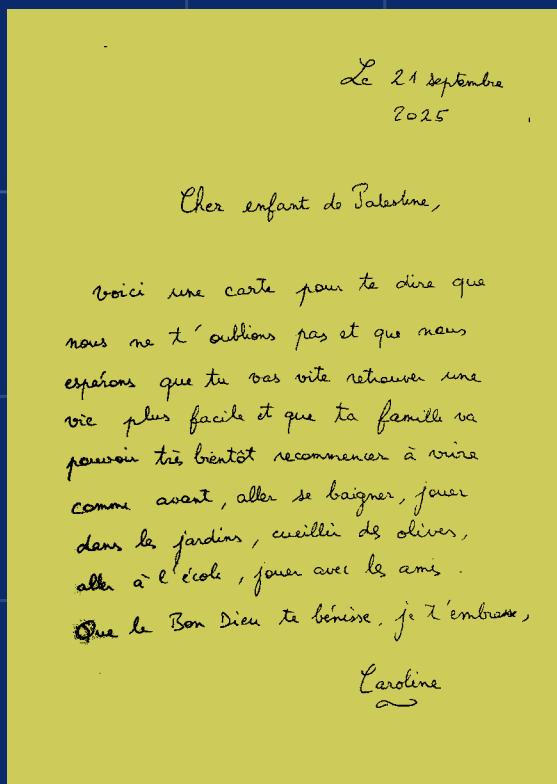
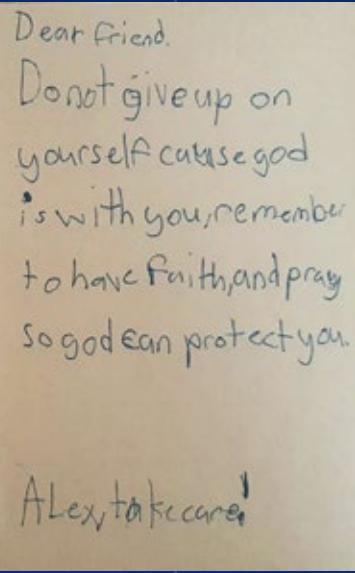
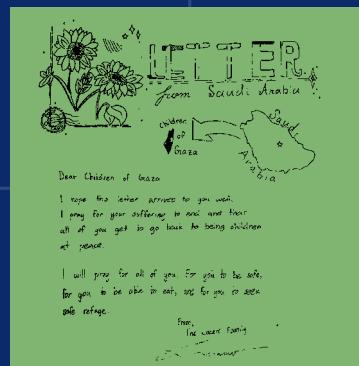
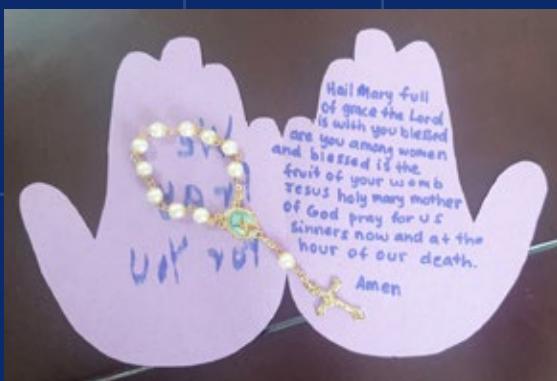
*+Bishop Aldo Beradi O.SS.T*

**CHILDREN** praying for **CHILDREN**  
Children **HELPING** children  
Children **SHARING GOSPEL** with children  
**FROM MISSIO AVONA TO MISSIO AD-GENTES**



Everyday, I think about the children of Gaza. Learning more news about this situation makes my heart drop. I pray to God that this situation will someday stop and will soon be at peace. The hearts at the cover is a symbol of my love and thoughts in a balloon, meaning that I send them my love and thought in every way possible. may God always be with you.

Love,  
Danielle

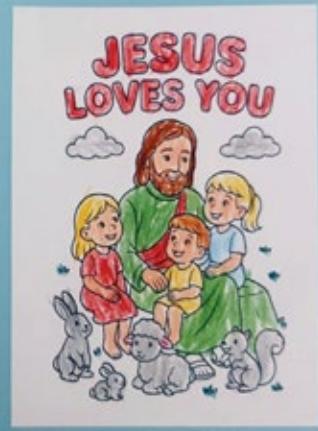


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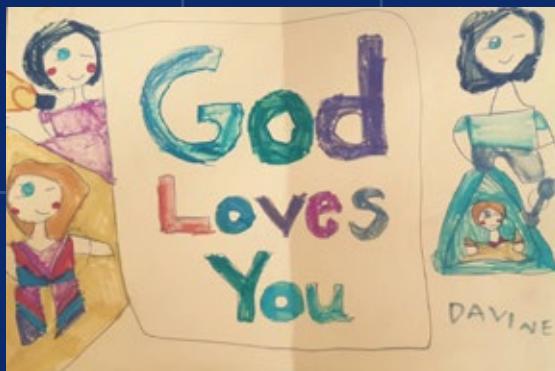


With Prayer & Love for You  
Dear friends in Gaza, brave and small  
We think of you and pray for all  
Though oceans keep us far away  
We daily think of you when we pray  
We pray that God hold you close  
And give comfort in your agony and fight  
May Mamma Mary's gentle heart  
Protect you and your homeland  
We pray your days are filled with peace  
Your nights are filled with quiet rest  
We pray your innocent smiles return  
And every broken heart is healed.  
You are children of our Lord, pure and bright  
The most precious as Jesus said.  
So tell your land is free from war  
We all will keep praying for y'all.  
With hearts full of love and prayers

Copyrigh © Holy Childhood Society  
Amali, Bahrain



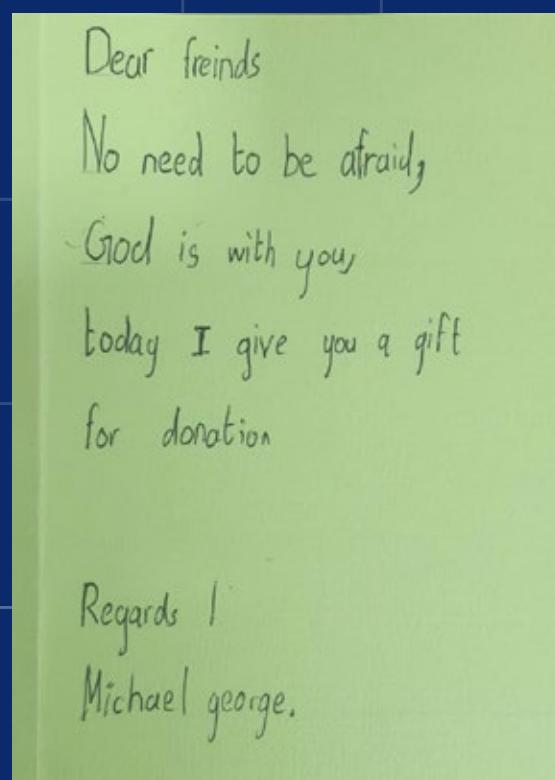
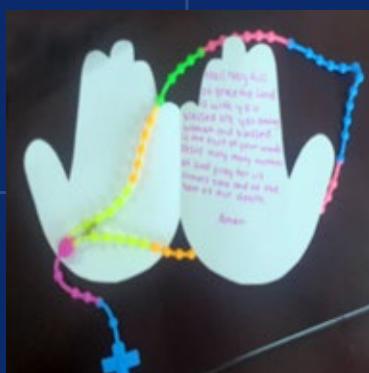
Thoughts  
Prayers and Love



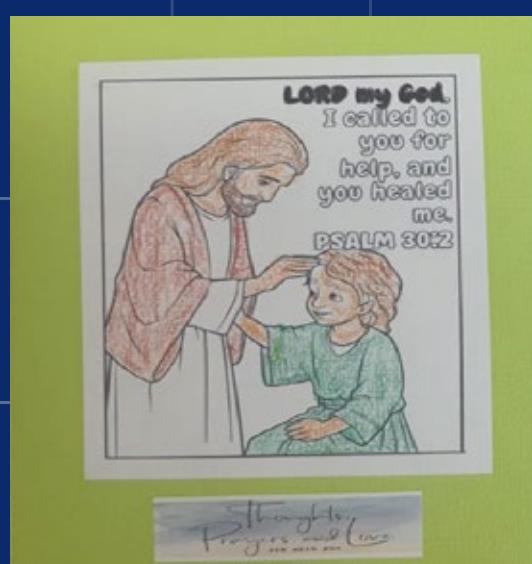
Jesús es mi fiel a



Thoughts  
Prayers and Love



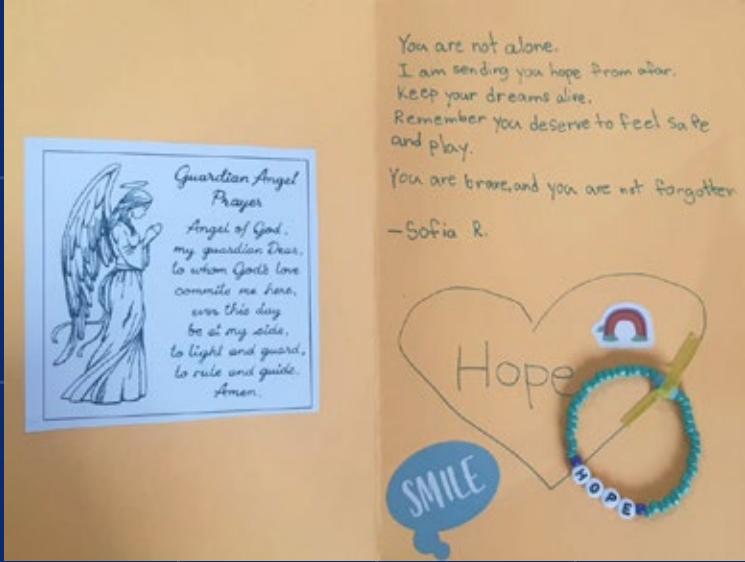
Dear Friends, I hope this brings you hope, joy  
and peace today  
From Bertu



Thoughts  
Prayers and Love

These children have better lives. The Lord will fight for you, and there is no need for you to do anything.

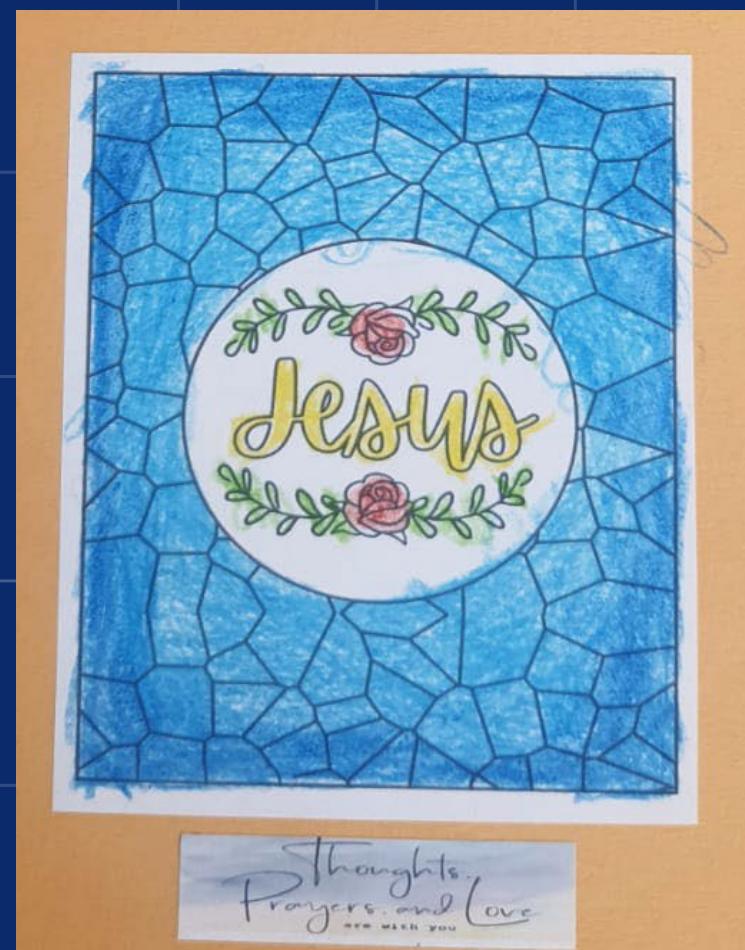
Dear friend,  
I am praying  
for you and  
your family.  
God bless you  
and your family.  
Your friend, Martin,



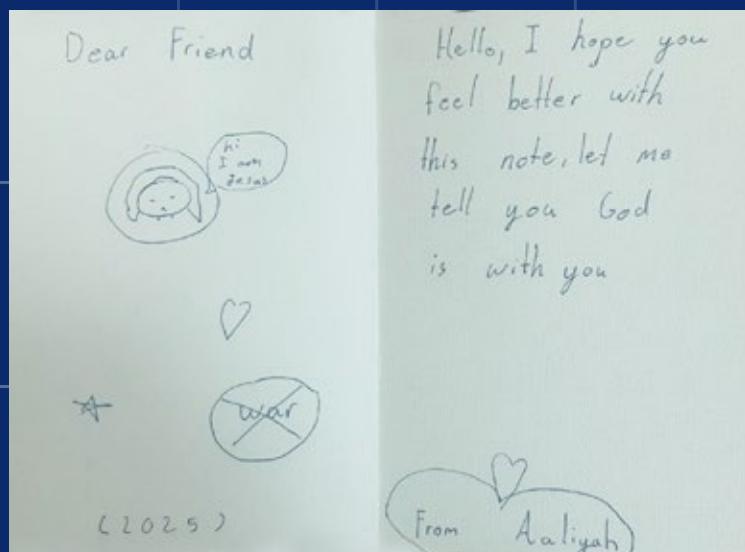
You are not alone.  
I am sending you hope from afar.  
Keep your dreams alive.  
Remember you deserve to feel safe  
and play.

You are brave, and you are not forgotten.

-Sofia R.



Dear Friends, We are praying for you  
please stay strong. God bless you!  
Calvin



Hello, I hope you  
feel better with  
this note, let me  
tell you God  
is with you

(2025)



1. Saint Nicholas Children's choir  
– Co-CathedralKuwait.
2. Marian Youth Choir
3. Sacred Heart Angels of Joy – Manama.
4. Divine Carolers- Cathedral, Awali.
5. Catechism Ministry Children Choir  
Cathedral, Awali.
6. Youth for El Shaddai- Qatar.
7. Pola St. Cecilia CCD Choir.
8. Our Lady of Rosary Church- Qatar.
9. Jubail Chirstmas Choir Group
10. Our Lady of Arabia



**'One in Christ, united in mission' theme of**



# **WORLD MISSION SUNDAY 2026**

The Vatican has announced the theme chosen by Pope Leo XIV for World Missions Day 2026: 'One in Christ, united in mission. The worldwide celebration in 2026 will mark the 100th anniversary of the Day's establishment by Pope Pius XI at the suggestion of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith.



**St. Nicholas Day 2025**  
Celebrated at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia  
by H. E. Bishop Aldo Berardi O.SS.T.



# **MISSIO-AVONA**

THE PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES

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