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**Rekindling Hope in Our Families and Parish
Life through Small Christian Communities**



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Editorial Message

Small Christian Communities: The Path to Renewed Hope in Our Families and Parish

As we welcome Issue 13 of *The Basilican*, we find ourselves standing at the threshold of a profound invitation, an invitation to rekindle hope in our families and parish life through the life-giving reality of Small Christian Communities (SCCs). This is not merely the theme of this edition; it is the heartbeat of our parish in this Jubilee Year of Hope, and a pastoral call echoed through the many stories, testimonies, teachings, and reflections captured in these pages.

Across these contributions, from the theological reflections of our Archbishop and Administrator, to the heartfelt stories of vocation, parenting, marriage, and communal solidarity, one truth emerges clearly: SCCs remain the living arteries through which faith flows from the Altar into our homes, neighbourhoods, and daily lives.

In his message, Most Rev. Philip Anyolo reminds us that the Church is, at its core, the Family of God, called together, bound in faith, and sent into the world as witnesses of hope. He invites us to see SCCs not as mere parish structures, but as “true schools of hope” where wounds are healed, families strengthened, and faith made tangible. His words echo the early Church model in Acts 2:42–47, small, committed gatherings where believers prayed, broke bread, shared the Word, and supported one another.

This same spirit flows through Fr. Michael Ndichu's reflection, where he describes SCCs as the concrete way of living out the Jubilee call to restoration and renewal. He reminds us that synodality, communion, and participation are not concepts reserved for Vatican documents, they are the daily

rhythm of our local communities when we meet weekly, reflect on Scripture, pray for one another, and discern how to serve our parish and neighbourhoods.

This issue also highlights how hope is embedded deeply in our domestic churches, our families. From Protas Moseki's rich reflection on marriage to Collete Namalwa's call to restore Christian parenting, we are reminded that the renewal of parish life begins at home.

When we accompany one another, whether in illness, grief, disability, or celebration, we proclaim Christ's hope in real, human acts.

As we read through this edition, one truth emerges with unmistakable clarity: *The future of our parish depends on the strength of our Small Christian Communities.*

If SCCs thrive, families will be supported, vocations will flourish, Scripture will be lived, and our parish will radiate the hope of Christ. If SCCs weaken, our sense of belonging, mission, and communal identity will fade.

Thus, we call every parishioner:

Belong. Participate. Journey. Pray. Serve.

Join an SCC. Renew your commitment. Let your home become a wellspring of hope.

With gratitude and blessing,

**Judith Gondi, Parish Pastoral Council
Secretary
for The Editorial Team
The Basilican, Issue 13 - 2025**





Pope Leo in 'Dilexi Te': Faith Cannot be separated from Love for the Poor

Pope Leo XIV issues his first Apostolic Exhortation, "Dilexi te," (I have loved you) as a call to Christ's disciples "to recognize him in the poor and the suffering."

Pope Leo XIV's first Apostolic Exhortation sees the love of Christ incarnated in love for the poor, in caring for the sick, opposing slavery, defending women who experience exclusion and violence, making education available to all, accompanying migrants, charitable giving, working for equality and more.

Dilexi te ("I have loved you", from Rev 3:9) unfolds in 121 numbered paragraphs spread throughout five chapters, and flows directly from the Gospel of the Son of God, Who in the very act of entering into our world through the Incarnation became poor for our sakes.

At the same time, it repurposes the Church's social teaching, especially that of the past 150 years, as "a veritable treasury of significant teachings" concerning the poor.

Following in the footsteps of his predecessors

With this document, signed on October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Leo situates himself firmly on the path laid out by his predecessors, including St. John XXIII, with his appeal, in *Mater et Magistra*, to wealthier countries not to remain indifferent to nations oppressed by hunger and extreme poverty (83).

St. Paul VI added his own voice with *Populorum progressio* and his appearance at the United Nations as an “advocate of the poor”; as did St. John Paul II, who consolidated the doctrinal foundations of the Church’s “preferential option for the poor”. More recently, Benedict XVI, in *Caritas in veritate*, offered a more markedly political take on the crises of the Third Millennium; while Francis made care for the poor and solidarity with the poor one of the key themes of his pontificate.

Like Francis, who completed the work of Benedict XVI on the encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, Pope Leo XIV took up the text of his immediate predecessor for his first major Magisterial document. *Dilexi te* builds on the teaching of Francis’ final encyclical – *Dilexit nos*, on the Sacred Heart of Jesus – highlighting the “close connection” between the love of God and love for the poor. “In the poor”, writes Pope Leo, God “continues to speak to us” (5).

The ‘faces’ of poverty

Pope Leo’s Exhortation offers numerous points for reflection and calls for action in its analysis of the many “faces of the poor and of poverty”, including “the poverty of those who lack material means of subsistence” or “who are socially marginalized and lack the means to give voice to their dignity and abilities” (9).

Pope Leo also notes the existence of moral, spiritual, and cultural poverty; the poverty

of “those who have no rights, no space, no freedom” (9).

Confronted with this reality, Pope Leo says that although “the commitment to the poor and to removing the social and structural causes of poverty has gained importance in recent decades... it remains insufficient” (10).

He warns of the emergence of new, sometimes “more subtle and dangerous” forms of poverty, and decries economic “rules” that increase wealth for a few but also increase inequality (10, 13).

“I can only state once more that inequality ‘is the root of social ills’” (94).

‘The dictatorship of an economy that kills’

“The claim that the modern world has reduced poverty is made by measuring poverty with criteria from the past that do not correspond to present-day realities”, Pope Leo writes. From this point of view, he welcomes the fact that “the United Nations has made the eradication of poverty one of its Millennium Goals” (13, 10).

However, he says, there is a long way to go, especially in an era in which the “dictatorship of an economy that kills” continues to prevail; the wealth of the few continues to grow “exponentially” while the gap between rich and poor increases; and “ideologies that defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation” remain widespread” (92).

The ‘throwaway culture’, market freedom, and pastoral care of the elites

All of this, Pope Leo says, indicates the continued existence of a “throwaway culture”, sometimes “well disguised”, that “tolerates with indifference that millions of people die of hunger or survive in conditions unfit for human beings” (96, 11).

The Holy Father condemns “pseudo-scientific data” used to support the claim “that a free-market economy will automatically solve the problem of poverty”, as well as the idea that “we should opt for pastoral work with the so called elite, since, rather than wasting time on the poor, it would be better to care for the rich” to gain their assistance in finding real-world solutions for poverty (114).

“Indeed, ‘it frequently becomes clear that, in practice, human rights are not equal for all’” (94).

A change in mentality

Pope Leo thus calls for a “change in mentality” that can free us from “the illusion of happiness derived from a comfortable life that pushes many people towards a vision of life centred on the accumulation of wealth and social success at all costs, even at the expense of others and by taking advantage of unjust social ideals and political-economic systems that favour the strongest” (11).

“The dignity of every human person must be respected today, not tomorrow” (92).

In every rejected migrant, it is Christ Himself who knocks. Pope Leo also devotes ample space to the theme of migration, illustrating his words with the image of Alan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian boy who in 2015 became a symbol of the European migrant crisis with the photo of his lifeless body on a beach.

“Unfortunately, apart from some momentary outcry, similar events are becoming increasingly irrelevant and seen as marginal news items”, the Pope observes (11).

At the same time, he recalls the Church's centuries-old work in favour of those forced to abandon their lands, seen in refugee reception centres, border missions, and the efforts of Caritas Internationalis and other institutions (75).

“The Church, like a mother, accompanies those who are walking. Where the world sees threats, she sees children; where walls are built, she builds bridges. She knows that her proclamation of the Gospel is credible only when it is translated into gestures of closeness and welcome. And she knows that in every rejected migrant, it is Christ himself who knocks at the door of the community” (75).

With regard to migration, the Pope adopts Francis' famous “four verbs”: “welcome, protect, promote, and integrate”. And he also borrows from his predecessor the description of the poor as “not only objects of our compassion, but teachers of the Gospel” (79).

Women, victims of violence and exclusion

The Holy Father likewise considers the current situation, recalling the countless people who die every day “due to lack of food and water” (12).

Similarly, we must not forget those women, the “doubly poor... who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights”, he adds, quoting Francis (12).

‘The poor are not there by chance’

Pope Leo XIV offers an in-depth reflection on the causes of poverty: “The poor are not there by chance or by blind and cruel fate. Nor, for most of them, is poverty a choice”, he says. “Yet, there are those who still presume to make this claim, thus revealing their own blindness and cruelty” (14).



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Fostering Hope and Renewal in Families and Parish Structures through the Ecclesial Model of Small Christian Communities

Message From Most Rev Philip A. Anyolo, Metropolitan Archbishop Of Nairobi

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of the enduring images of the Church in the New Testament is that of the Family of God (Eph. 2:19). In this image, we find both identity and mission: a people called together, bound by faith in Christ, and sent to witness to God's love. In our contemporary context, one of the most effective ways in which the Church realises this familial character is through Small Christian Communities (SCCs). These communities, rooted in the early Church (Acts 2:42–47), embody the living experience of communion, faith-sharing, and mutual support that keeps the flame of Christian hope alive in families and parishes.

Historically, SCCs arose as a pastoral response to the shortage of priests, the injustices of society, and the need for deeper lay involvement in evangelisation. Their growth in Africa, particularly through the vision of AMECEA bishops in the 1970s, responded to the challenges of independence, poverty, and social upheaval. By adopting the African traditional family and community model, the bishops affirmed that SCCs would provide “a suitable milieu to practise faith” (AMECEA Plenary, 1976). Pope John Paul II later emphasised that SCCs are “a tremendous source of bringing more life into a parish” and a way of renewing urban parishes by making them “communities of communities” (Ecclesia in America, 1999).

For us at Holy Family Minor Basilica, this pastoral vision acquires a particular



significance. Our cathedral parish stands as the mother church of the Archdiocese of Nairobi, a sanctuary of Catholic worship at the heart of the city. It is a spiritual home not only for parishioners but also for many who pass through Nairobi daily. To sustain this mission, we must embrace the ecclesial model of SCCs, for they enable us to live faith more personally, more communally, and more missionally.

Rekindling Hope through the Jubilee Spirit
We are presently journeying under the light of the Jubilee Year of Hope, which invites us to rediscover hope as a theological virtue rooted in Christ's Resurrection. St. Paul reminds us that "hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5). In this spirit, our SCCs must become true schools of hope—places where families are strengthened, where wounds of division are healed, and where our parish becomes ever more a beacon of welcome and renewal.

Journeying together (synodality) is not an optional extra but the very nature of the Church. Vatican II taught that "God's will is that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (cf. Lumen Gentium 1). This universal call to salvation is made tangible in SCCs, where every Christian, young or old, married or single, rich or poor, finds a place to belong, to contribute, and to grow.

Gratitude and Encouragement

At this point, I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the leaders of SCCs in the Basilica parish. Your tireless commitment, often under the weight of many responsibilities, is a true witness of faith. When you feel overburdened, I urge you to look to Christ who first called you: "Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). Your service ensures that the Church is not reduced to structures alone, but remains alive with relationships of love and solidarity. I also wish to encourage all parishioners: if you are not yet part of a Small Christian Community, I invite you to join one. It is in these small gatherings that the Word of God takes flesh in our daily lives, where we learn to pray together, to care for one another, and to serve the wider community. As African theologian Laurenti Magesa reminds us, "the Church in Africa is truly herself when she becomes a community, a family of God, in

which no one is excluded" (African Religion and Culture, 1997).

Towards a Renewed Parish

If our SCCs remain vibrant, Holy Family Minor Basilica will indeed become a sanctuary of Catholic worship and fellowship, where faith is nurtured not only in the liturgy but also in homes, workplaces, and neighbourhoods. This is the vision of a parish as "a community of communities," where anonymity gives way to belonging, and where evangelisation becomes personal, welcoming, and transformative.

A Blessing for the Parish Family Day and Season Ahead

As we look forward to our Parish Family Day, I pray that it may be a celebration of unity and renewal for every household in our parish. May the fellowship we experience there inspire us to continue building our parish as a true family of God. Looking ahead to the Christmas season and the New Year, I wish every family in the Basilica parish peace, joy, and renewed hope in Christ.

Let us together foster hope and renewal in our families and parish structures by living fully the ecclesial model of Small Christian Communities. May Mary, Mother of the Holy Family, intercede for us, that our Basilica may always shine as a sanctuary of worship, communion, and mission.

"The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24).

With prayerful best wishes, I remain,

Yours in Christ's Service,

**Most Rev. Philip A. Anyolo,
METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP OF NAIROBI**



Rekindling Hope in our Families and Parish Life through Small Christian Communities

By Rev. Fr. Dr. Michael Ndichu

“**T**hey devoted themselves to the apostles' instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

The story of the Catholic Church is, at its heart, the story of community. From the homes of Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:5) to the gatherings of the early disciples who “broke bread in their homes” (Acts 2:46), Christianity has always flourished when believers lived out their baptismal calling in communion with one another. In our own day, Small Christian Communities (SCCs) remain a privileged path through which families and parishes can rekindle hope, deepen faith, and bear witness to the Gospel.

A Jubilee Moment of Renewal

We are celebrating the Jubilee Year of Hope, proclaimed by the Late Holy Father-Pope Francis as a time of spiritual renewal and joyful expectation. A Jubilee, rooted in the biblical tradition (Leviticus 25), is a time for restoration, reconciliation, and new beginnings. It calls us to return to God's mercy, to heal what is broken, and to trust in the promise of Christ who declares, “See, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5).

In this sacred context, SCCs offer us the concrete means of living out the Jubilee call. They enable families and parishes to become places where hope is not merely spoken of, but experienced in daily acts of prayer, sharing, and solidarity.

To gather in SCCs is to proclaim that God is still at work in our midst, renewing his people and calling them to communion.

The Theological Foundation of SCCs

The Second Vatican Council reminded the Church of her original identity as the “People of God” (Lumen Gentium, 9). It reawakened the biblical vision of the Church as communion—rooted in the Trinity itself—where every baptised person shares in Christ’s mission. Within this vision, SCCs embody a “new way of being Church.” They decentralise parish life, making it possible for the faithful to encounter Christ in the Word, in prayer, and in mutual service at the level of the neighbourhood and family.

As Pope John Paul II affirmed, these communities are “a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelisation, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a civilisation of love” (Redemptoris Missio, 51). They are not parallel churches, but authentic expressions of ecclesial communion when they remain firmly united with their pastors and the wider parish. Pope Paul VI similarly insisted that such communities must remain rooted in Scripture, in communion with the bishop, and free from

political ideologies (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 58).

Hope for Families

Our families today face many pressures: economic hardship, moral relativism, rapid migration, and the erosion of traditional values. Many feel isolated, fractured, and overwhelmed. SCCs offer a practical response by becoming schools of faith and love within the domestic setting. They remind us of the Church’s teaching that the family is the “domestic Church” (Lumen Gentium, 11), the first place where children encounter Christ.

In SCCs, families pray together, share Scripture, and support each other in tangible ways. Parents are encouraged to reclaim their role as the primary educators of their children in faith (cf. Familiaris Consortio, 36). Spouses find strength in praying together daily, while children grow up surrounded by an extended family of faith. In this way, SCCs renew marriage, heal brokenness, and empower parents to raise future disciples of Christ. In the Jubilee Year of Hope, families rediscover that Christ is their anchor, and that no circumstance is beyond his redeeming power.



Hope for the Parish

The parish is “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters” (Christifideles Laici, 26). Yet in many places parishes risk becoming overly institutional, with faithful reduced to passive recipients of sacramental services. SCCs revitalise parish life by restoring active participation, fraternity, and shared responsibility.

Through SCCs, the parish becomes truly missionary. Members meet regularly to reflect on Scripture, discern social needs, and reach out to the poor and marginalised. They provide a structure where the gifts of every baptised person—whether married couples, single adults, youth, or elderly—are recognised and placed at the service of the community. Thus, the parish becomes a vibrant sign of hope in society, echoing the Jubilee spirit of renewal and solidarity.

The African Experience of SCCs

In Africa, the vision of SCCs has found deep resonance with the communal spirit of our cultures. The AMECEA bishops boldly declared SCCs the pastoral priority, recognising them as the most effective way of building self-sustaining local Churches. As John Mbiti noted with the African worldview, “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.” This spirit of ubuntu is at the heart of SCCs, where faith and life are shared, and no one is left behind.

Kenya today has tens of thousands of SCCs, making them the heartbeat of parish life. They are not projects or programmes, but a new way of living the Gospel. By gathering in homes to pray, share the Word, and support one another, believers become agents of evangelisation in their neighbourhoods. This living network reflects the early Church, where “day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

Rekindling Hope in Our Basilica Community
As we come to the close of this year of grace, I wish to encourage you, dear parishioners of Holy Family Minor Basilica, to remain steadfast in your SCCs. May these communities help us to live as a truly synodal Church—a Church that listens, journeys, and discerns together. Synodality is not an abstract concept; it is lived daily when we meet in our SCCs to pray, to dialogue, to support one another, and to plan our missionary outreach.

Through SCCs, let us strive to make Holy Family Minor Basilica not only the heart of Catholic worship in Nairobi, but also a genuine sanctuary of Catholic worship in Kenya. Our parish will be vibrant and missionary only if its life is rooted in these small communities of faith.

Therefore, I encourage those who are not yet part of a Small Christian Community to take this Jubilee Year of Hope as an opportunity to join one. By doing so, you will find companionship, renewal, and a deeper sense of belonging. Together we shall participate fully, journey faithfully, and commune joyfully as the Body of Christ.

May the Lord who promised to be present “where two or three are gathered in my name” (Matthew 18:20) continue to bless our families, renew our parish, and guide us into a future filled with hope.

Fr. Ndichu is the Executive Administrative Secretary of the Archdiocese of Nairobi, and the Administrator of the Holy Family Minor Basilica.

The Living Word – Use of Scripture in the Community

By Naomi Ndirangu

Across languages and continents, the Lectionary unites believers. Every Sunday, and every day, millions of Catholics around the world hear the same readings – the Word of God – proclaimed at Mass. From the Major Basilicas, Cathedrals, to small parish Chapels, the shared common Scripture binds the Universal Church in faith and in listening. Yet the story doesn't end with the dismissal "Go forth in peace the Mass is ended" or the final response "Thanks be to God." The Word of God continues its journey into our homes, our workplaces, our neighbourhoods, and civil responsibilities, through our conversations, in the charity we share, and in the kindness we extend to others in our communities. The Word of God permeates into every aspect of our lives. Listening to the Word of God together breaks barriers and creates communion, first in worship, and then in daily life. This way the community finds renewed spiritual energy and cohesion.

At Holy Family Minor Basilica, this shared encounter with the Word of God finds its most vibrant expression in our Small Christian Communities (SCCs), where the Sunday Word takes flesh in the everyday lives of parishioners.

Small Christian Communities: Bridge Between Altar and Neighbourhood

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) act as the bridge between the Altar and the neighbourhood as they carry the echo of the Sunday Word into homes, workplaces, markets, and the community. Through the SCCs, the Word of God proclaimed in the Liturgy becomes the Word lived in the daily

lives of all present.

The Church in Africa, in Kenya and in particular in our Parish, has embraced Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as pastoral models that bring the Gospel closer to the people. Born of the "Church of God" vision of Ecclesia in Africa, SCCs embody communion, participation, and mission at grassroots levels. These are the same tenets that synodality seeks to strengthen in the life of the Church.

Liturgical Guidelines of the Archdiocese of Nairobi recommend weekly SCC gatherings to reflect on Sunday's readings. This way, the Word proclaimed at Mass is transformed into conversation, prayer, and action. At Holy Family Minor Basilica, our SCCs—spread across various estates and neighbourhoods—gather weekly to break open the Word, reflect on it, and translate it into concrete acts of faith and service.

The Word in Action

In each SCC, the Bible is not only read but shared, allowing God's Word to echo through the community's real joys and struggles. Communities grounded in Scripture become places of reconciliation, as hurts are healed, divisions are bridged, and faith is deepened. This is because hearing the Word is translated into action through visiting the sick, supporting or assisting families in difficulties, or engaging in works of mercy. This way, the Word of God becomes a seed of action – the Gospel in Motion. At the Basilica, this Gospel in motion is seen when SCCs visit the sick in nearby hospitals, organize charity drives, or accompany families in need. The Word becomes incarnate again through the



ordinary acts of love and service.

Through the SCCs, the relationships founded on common faith grow as members celebrate and support each other and share experiences. They also find spiritual strength amidst common challenges that most SCCs experience; namely, irregular participation, fatigue, lack of formation or lack of commitment. To address these realities, the Parish continues to invest in ongoing formation for animators and promotes inter-SCC fellowship and joint liturgical celebrations. These efforts help renew commitment and energy—especially in a fast-changing world increasingly shaped by digital culture.

The Many Roles of SCCs

SCCs serve various purposes including enabling Christians to live and grow their Catholic faith; addressing spiritual, moral, and socio-economic needs of their members;

enhancing the sense of belonging of their members; promoting the spirit of ecumenism and interfaith dialogue; nurturing vocations; offering ongoing catechesis; supporting and promoting family unity; and serving as support systems for children, youth, the aged, and the vulnerable. This way, SCCs follow the call to “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

SCCs in a Digital Age

Traditionally, SCCs have been based on gathering in a physical space, in a common neighbourhood. However, the Church today finds itself living out the Gospel in a technologically transformed world. From livestreamed Masses, parish WhatsApp groups, digital formation programs and prayer sessions, technology has presented the Church—and more so the SCCs—with both exciting possibilities and new spiritual challenges.

Technology is a means to an end. It is not the end itself. Therefore, it is to be used with abundance of caution if SCCs are to retain their essence. Digital initiatives should serve to deepen, and not replace, the community sense of belonging. A parish community is more than a collection of digital profiles and online groups; rather, it is built on sacramental encounters, shared Scripture, hospitality, and service to one another.

How, then, can SCCs use technology and digital channels to evangelize and grow in faith within our parish setting? At Holy Family Basilica, digital platforms such as parish WhatsApp groups, YouTube livestreams, and online Lenten reflections have helped many parishioners stay connected and nourished by the Word.

In a digital age, while the sacred Liturgy remains the source and summit of parish life, SCCs also embrace new forms of communication to nurture fellowship throughout the week—through prayer requests, encouragement, and event reminders—supplementing traditional community practices. Many Christians have found deep fellowship online, sharing experiences of hardship, offering support, and overcoming physical or social barriers that might limit participation in person.

Additionally, the opportunity to connect with the wider Church across nations deepens the sense of the universal Church (*communio*) and enriches individual faith journeys. While this may present mental health challenges, just like any relationship, online community building demands intentionality, reflecting virtues and habits necessary for thriving relationships.

Catholic faithful today often belong to multiple communities that provide spiritual nourishment: their local parish, diocesan groups, online ministries, global Catholic networks, amongst other online forums.

This networked approach offers spiritual nourishment from diverse sources but also risks fostering a consumeristic mindset, where people pick and choose communities according to preference with little accountability.

However, these diverse involvements can be a source of rich spiritual growth, as believers engage with a variety of worship styles and spiritualities. SCCs are called to deeper commitment and accountability so that their faith does not become a matter of personal preference but a genuine sharing of Christ's love.

In embracing technology, SCCs are invited to pray for wisdom to foster strong, faith-filled communities both in person and online, bearing witness to God's love. SCCs are therefore encouraged to use social network channels to encourage physical gatherings at Mass, in their community meetings, and for parish-related activities. Additionally, SCCs can hold virtual Bible studies and prayer groups which focus on leading members to deeper understanding of Scripture, enhanced sacramental participation, and face-to-face community.

Ultimately, online initiatives should lead parishioners to tangible acts of love: worshipping together, sharing a meal, serving the vulnerable, and sharing the Word of God in daily lives. Whether shared online or around a kitchen table, the Living Word continues to unite us as one body in Christ. May our SCCs remain true bearers of this Word—rooted in Scripture, strengthened by Sacraments, and radiant in service.

Naomi is the Parish Pastoral Council Vice Moderator, Moderator of Lector Society & Liturgy Group



My Vocation to Religious Life

The Call of Love: Embracing a Life of Divine Service

By Sr. Mary Amelia, CSSF

“Where there is love, there is God.”
Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska

From the quiet village of Nguluni in Makueni County, where I was born to my present life as a Felician Sister, my journey towards a religious vocation has been one of faith, discovery, and steadfast commitment to God's will. My childhood was filled with love, learning, and the gentle yet persistent whisper of God's call echoing deep within my heart.

Even as a young girl, I experienced profound moments of connection with God, though I did not yet grasp the depth of His invitation. My early education began in 2006 at Nguluni Primary School, followed by secondary studies at Kasunguni Secondary School, where I completed my education in 2019. Like many young people, I found myself at a crossroads after finishing school. For nine months, I remained at home, engaging in parish life and serving as a Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) animator at St Austin's Msongari. It was a time of simple service and joy, yet one that quietly prepared me for the greater mission awaiting me.

A Meeting that Changed Everything

During this period, I encountered the Felician Sisters, the Congregation of the Sisters of St Felix of Cantalice. Their humility, simplicity, and profound sense of mission deeply moved me. I saw in them a living reflection of Christ's compassion—women who lived not for themselves, but for others. Their presence was a sermon of love without words. Through them,

I recognised a glimpse of the life to which Christ was calling me.

In their daily acts of charity, I felt the heartbeat of the Gospel: *“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me”* (Matthew 25:40). The sisters' joyful service to the poor and their prayerful dedication inspired me to discern my own call to consecrated life.

Surrendering to the Divine Will

In 2020, trusting in God's providence, I entered the Embu Formation House of the Felician Sisters. It was a bold step—a leap of faith into the unknown, yet filled with peace. My time as a candidate became a sacred season of listening and learning. Each day in prayer and community life drew me closer to understanding that a vocation is not a career one chooses but a divine invitation one receives.

After my candidacy, I entered a two-year postulancy, a period of prayer, discernment, and apostolic experience. I was introduced to the rich heritage of our congregation, catechism, and the rhythm of daily service—domestic work, gardening, and baking—all done with a spirit of love. In the ordinary tasks of the day, I found extraordinary grace. Mother Angela, our foundress, taught that *“Everything depends on love.”* Indeed, love became the motive and measure of every action.

A School of Love: The Novitiate

In 2022, I began my novitiate, a deeply transformative stage of spiritual formation. It was here that I came to understand that religious life is truly a *“school of love,”* where the heart learns to conform itself to the heart of Christ. The evangelical counsels—poverty, chastity, and obedience—became not burdens but beautiful expressions of love. Poverty taught me that my only treasure is

Christ Himself. Chastity opened my heart to universal love, freeing it for God and for His people. Obedience became a path of trust—believing that God's will is always a plan of love, even when hidden in mystery.

One of the most moving moments of my novitiate was receiving my religious habit. It was not merely a garment, but a visible sign of my consecration—a reminder that I belong wholly to Christ. I felt like the psalmist who proclaims, *“I will sing of the Lord's great love for ever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations”* (Psalm 89:1).

A Covenant of Love: First Profession of Vows

On 9 January 2024, my heart overflowed with indescribable joy as I made my first profession of vows. Standing before God, the Church, and my community, I uttered my *“yes”* to Christ—a covenant of love sealed in faith. It was a moment of deep surrender and renewal, echoing the words of the prophet: *“Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will”* (Psalm 40:8).

Following my profession, I was assigned to serve at the Holy Family Minor Basilica Parish in Nairobi as a sacristan. The basilica, alive with prayer and constant activity, became both a challenge and a blessing. Each day brought opportunities to serve the People of God—preparing liturgies, tending the altar, and ensuring the sacred space reflected the beauty of divine worship. In these hidden moments of service, I discovered the truth of Christ's words: *“Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant”* (Matthew 20:26).

I currently reside in the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Community, together with my sisters who serve in the archdiocesan and parish offices. Living in community has taught me patience, charity, and the joy of fraternity. The Holy Family Minor Basilica is indeed a demanding place of ministry, yet also a source of

immense grace. Every encounter—with priests, parishioners, and the poor—reminds me that Christ is present in the heart of the Church.

The Beauty of a Life Consecrated to Christ

Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, our foundress, used to say, “Where there is love, there is God.” These words have become my guiding principle. Our Felician mission—to bring the merciful love of Christ to all people through education, healthcare, social service, and pastoral ministry—flows directly from this spirit of love.

The Church teaches in *Gaudium et Spes* that “man cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.” Religious life, then, is this self-gift made visible—a total offering of one’s life to God for the service of others. It is a love that mirrors the self-emptying of Christ, who “though He was rich, became poor for our sake” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Yes, there are challenges—moments of doubt, weariness, and sacrifice—but God’s grace is always sufficient. In the silence of prayer, I often return to Mother Angela’s assurance: “Trust in God. He will never abandon you.” These words have strengthened me in times of uncertainty, reminding me that vocation is sustained not by human strength, but by divine grace.

A Call to Young Women: The Courage to Say Yes

To my dear young sisters in faith, I wish to say: do not be afraid to listen to the voice of God calling you. The Lord continues to speak to hearts today, just as He did to the first disciples who left everything to follow Him. When He calls, He does so not to take away your joy, but to fill your life with purpose and peace.

Pope Francis, in his Post-Synodal Apostolic

Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, reminds the youth: “The Lord’s call is not an intrusion into our freedom; it is the invitation to full life.” The world may tempt you with dreams of success, comfort, and recognition, but there is a deeper happiness in following Christ—a joy that the world cannot give.

Consecrated life is not simply a vocation—it is a divine romance, a covenant of love between the soul and Christ. It is to stand with Mary at the foot of the Cross, to serve with Martha, and to love with the heart of Jesus Himself. Each prayer, each act of service, becomes an offering—a small echo of Christ’s own gift of love on Calvary.

A Life Given to God is Never Wasted

The world today needs witnesses—men and women whose lives radiate the light of Christ. Our times may be marked by uncertainty, but love remains stronger than fear. A single life surrendered to God can illuminate countless others.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Francis of Assisi, St Felix of Cantalice, and our beloved Blessed Mary Angela intercede for all who seek to follow Christ more closely. May every young person who longs for meaning discover that the truest joy lies in serving God. May they allow God to continue shaping their hearts, calling them daily to deeper love and service.

If you are searching for your purpose, open your heart to Him. The call of Christ is the call of love itself—an invitation to belong wholly to the One who created you. And when you say “yes,” as I did, you will discover the greatest truth of all: **a life given to God is never lost—it is beautifully fulfilled.**

Sr. Mary Amelia is one of the Basilica parish sacristans

The Story of My Vocation

Rev. John Mburu Ndung'u

Receive greetings and blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ as I share my vocation journey with you. It is with gratitude and joy that I write about my priestly formation now that I am Deacon in the Roman Catholic Church. Vocation is both a gift and a mission, serving with humility and joy.

Growing in a Catholic family where we attended mass at 6:00am every Sunday with parents and my siblings was a great source of joy and a day out. It was resource for learning and admiration though I never knew what liturgy was before but only attending mass. I loved Fr. Hans Burgman (Fr. John R.I.P) for he loved what he did and loved Children. My parents made sure we went for catechism class every Saturday morning and for sure we took time in the church compound just being there.

For a long time, I Ignored this call and even resisted it for I did not know how to talk about it apart from saying it is good to be good (this second good was always "a priest") I kept this to self until I finished college. I thought only specific persons become priests.

The seed of my call was awakened when I sensed a desire to serve God in a deeper way. With admiration of a priest in mass I felt drawn to doing what I see him do. The desire to live a life of purpose and service to the people got hold of me.

The other time I felt drawn to become a priest was when a priest engaged me about his priesthood and how happy he talks about him being a priest yet I would not let anyone know how I felt about it. The inner voice was

so loud that I would not stop thinking about what this meant. We all need something to trigger us back to this desire.

Seeking God's will whether God is calling me was never easy until I met a priest and told him what I feel called to be. If you want to be a priest talk to priests, especially the vocation Director. Prayer deepens the desire.

After application and intake to the seminary my prayers changed from I want to be a priest to I am seriously preparing for this life. Here whole person is formed; Humanly, Spiritually, intellectually and pastorally. Today I am at peace knowing I chose the best gift for I only experience ordination and not explain it. Obedience and service to the people is a gift.

I started my priestly formation on 7th August, 2015 at St. Mary's Senior Seminary, Molo. This was a dream come true after reflection and prayers of wanting to become a priest. In Molo it was a time of deep reflection, prayer, and self-discovery that helped me to listen more attentively to the voice of God. It was during this foundational period that I learned the value of silence, community, and personal discipline, all essential elements in discerning God's call.

On 5th august, 2016 I joined St. Augustine Senior Seminary, Mabanga for philosophical and religious studies where I learned to integrate faith and reason in understanding the mysteries of God and the human person in order to serve in the church. I was promoted to St. Matthias Mulumba Senior Seminary, Tindinyo on 3rd May, 2019.

I started my theological studies and formation at St. Matthias Mulumba Senior Seminary on 2nd August, 2019, with lots of enthusiasm. I thank God for you who have always supported the formation of future priests.

The seminary was home from home for we had a whole new family. It is very exciting and humbling for the deepen of faith and service. May the Lord continue blessing and rewarding you for your generous support towards this great mission of the church in educating and praying for my priesthood formation.

This journey has been one of grace, patience, and deep trust in the Lord. I have done pastoral work in the following parishes; St. Peter the Apostle- Kikuyu, St. Dominic Savio- Mwiki, Our Lady of Annunciation – Gatitu, Assumption of Mary - Umoja, Holy Family- Githunguri, Our Lady of the Holy Rosary- Kamwangi and now at Holy Family Basilica.

We journey with Jesus as we move close to God. I have made it my responsibility to remember my spiritual milestones and celebrate them: date of Baptism on 17th April, 1991; First Holy Communion on 24th August 2003; Confirmation on 18th December 2003. Please mark yours as well.

The gift to deaconate is given by God and no one can strive for it because it is more than a function; it's who you are, allowing Christ to work through our weakness and the art of being present on the other side of the call or even door bell.



'Take a risk to dream, dare to dream. Do not dream and sleep, dream and wake up. It is good to work ahead with goal in mind. Our aim is to know why we are to live and we always get where we want to go.'

For me God has been like a coach who does not play the same game, He is concerned on the quality of the game, trains me and encourages me. Like in the past, through the biblical characters, God uses simple things to call people he wanted. The first voice you hear is God's voice, a call to choose the road less travelled. Our rivers have to flow always to have life and give life.

In these past few months after ordination I have spoken for Christ to inspire people. The main business is Christ and humility calls me to give of myself fully. Every baptism, homily and act of service reminds me that ministry begins and ends in love. Do not change life goal even if one changes the plan. I have learnt that having a vision enables us to live and plan today in a way that builds towards our future dreams.

If you aim at nothing you achieve at nothing and this is the secret of happiness. To achieve have a vision because a vision keeps us focused and less likely to be led off the path of destination. We are called to be trustworthy and faithful for it is in faith that we can please God.

Our attitude is expressed through behaviour and so positive attitude is key from the start. It is a choice.

The attitude of an effective person is to be abundance in this life because we have

received so much from God. "...I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. John 10:10" we all try to do something and like St. Peter the Apostle we walk on water. Our fear should not block us from doing great and especially rising and going to where God is calling us. Take a risk to dream, dare to dream. Do not dream and sleep, dream and wake up. It is good to work ahead with goal in mind. Our aim is to know why we are to live and we always get where we want to go. The big picture of our life gives us courage to take a stand on what we want. I thank you Fr. Francis Wanderi CM for encouraging me to be what I want to be. Love, and do all you will was the best gift phrase I have held on for you lose nothing for being good.

As I look ahead to the next step in my vocation, I remain deeply aware that this calling is not my own accomplishment but God's work unfolding in His time. I entrust my ministry to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that I may always serve with fidelity, humility, and joy.

Deacon John currently serves at Holy Family Minor Basilica.



Hope-Filled Marriages: **Building Strong Families** in the Jubilee Year

By **Protas Moseti**

Catholic couples are invited to rediscover marriage as a sacred calling: a daily “yes” to love, trust, and grace. Whether you’re preparing for your wedding or have been married for years, this is a timely reminder that marriage is not just a private relationship but a mission: to build holy families and hopeful homes, centred on Christ (Pope Francis, 2024).

As St. John Paul II wrote, “The future of humanity passes by way of the family” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 86). The family remains the smallest and most essential unit of society. It is where love is first taught, where faith is passed on, and where hope becomes visible. Yet families today face real challenges; even couples married in the Church are not immune to fatigue, miscommunication, or the silent drift of spiritual neglect. But there is a way forward. When couples return to the basics; prayer, forgiveness, communication, and sacramental life, their homes become places of joy and strength.

In this renewal of family life, it becomes clear that a flourishing household depends on shared commitment—where each person, from parent to child, embraces their unique

role in building up the family. Within this dynamic, the father is called to be the spiritual head of the home, providing not only protection and support but leading in prayer and moral guidance. Even if the mother holds a greater financial role, her vocation remains deeply complementary—nurturing, teaching, and sustaining the rhythm of family life with strength and grace. Neither role is diminished; both are essential. Together, spouses form a unified team, offering themselves in service to one another and to their children. According to Pope Leo XIV, “Marriage is not an ideal, but the measure of true love between a man and a woman—a love that is total, faithful, and fruitful” (*Homily for the Jubilee of Families*, 1 June 2025). Marriage invites a shift in focus: from self to service. A husband and wife must live for their family—not just providing materially, but being present. As St. Paul urges, “Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour” (Romans 12:10).

The foundation for this life of love is prayer, for Jesus promised, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20). The saying “The family that prays together, stays together”

(Venerable Patrick Peyton) contains a profound truth. Couple and family prayer is not a bonus activity—it is the foundation of unity and the lifeblood of the domestic church (*Lumen Gentium*, 11).

Prayer invites God into the center of the relationship, deepens intimacy, and provides strength for life's challenges. Couple prayer can begin simply: a blessing traced on a spouse's forehead, a shared prayer before meals, or holding hands before bed to offer thanks. Try "popcorn" prayer—taking turns offering quick, heartfelt lines to God. Even prayer-walking or prayer-driving together can be a surprisingly intimate way to reconnect. But prayer must grow beyond words. Scripture reading in the home brings Christ's voice into everyday life.

This life of prayer naturally leads the family to the fountains of grace and mercy*: **the sacraments**.* The sacraments are not only signs—they are sources of grace and how God strengthens marriages. St. John Paul II reminds us, "The Eucharist builds the Church, and the Church makes the Eucharist" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 26). Called the "source and summit of Christian life" (*Lumen Gentium*, 11), the Eucharist becomes the summit of* **married love**. Marriage life? Receiving* Holy Communion together unites spouses to Christ—and to each other. Alongside the Eucharist is the sacrament of Reconciliation.

"Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Reconciliation is more than healing—it trains couples in mercy. Regular Confession keeps hearts soft and relationships strong.

This sacramental grace must then be lived out daily through the art of communication and forgiveness. For as St. Ignatius of Loyola said, "Love is shown more in deeds than in words" (*Spiritual Exercises*, 230). A hopeful marriage

is not built on grand gestures but on daily acts of virtue and mercy. This requires virtuous communication: talk less, listen more, and speak with gentleness.

We are told, "Let your speech always be gracious" (Colossians 4:6) and "Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19). This dialogue includes children, too. Pope Leo XIV advises, "Educate in freedom through obedience... always see the good in children and find ways to nurture it" (Homily for the Jubilee of Families, 1 June 2025). This virtue is paired with the daily work of forgiveness. Forgiveness isn't a feeling—it's a decision. Small acts like "thank you," "I'm sorry," and "I forgive you" are the glue of daily family life.

A family built on forgiveness naturally becomes a place of happiness and celebration, which is a vital cell of society. (St. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 42). Celebrations are reminders of grace. Milestones—baptisms, anniversaries, promotions, first steps—should be celebrated with prayer and joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always... Let your gentleness be evident to all" (Philippians 4:4–5).

Renew your wedding vows. Bless your children. Light your baptism candles. These acts of faith keep hope alive.

In this journey of faith, Catholic couples can find strength by trusting in Mary and the Holy Family. The Holy Family—Jesus, Mary and Joseph—lived poverty, exile, and uncertainty, yet remained faithful. Mary's own words, "Let it be done unto me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), are a model of this faith. When your family struggles, remember: Nazareth was not perfect, but it was holy.

Protas is the Secretary of St. Jerome Bible Class

Education

By Collete Namalwa, Annete Atieno, and Virginia Atamba Khamete

Education encompasses several key aspects. It begins with the transmission of knowledge and skills imparting information, facts, theories, and practical abilities from one generation to the next or from educators to learners. Beyond instruction, education fosters reasoning and judgment, cultivating critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and informed decision-making by encouraging individuals to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. It also plays a vital role in character development and values, instilling moral principles, ethics, and a sense of responsibility. Education serves as a crucial tool for socialization, helping individuals integrate into society by teaching cultural norms, social customs, and the skills necessary for effective social interaction.

Different perspectives highlight the varied forms and philosophies of education. Formal education refers to structured, institutionalized learning environments such as schools,

colleges, and universities, characterized by defined curricula and often leading to credentials like degrees or diplomas. Non-formal education involves structured learning outside traditional schools for example, community workshops, online courses, and vocational training. Informal education is unstructured, lifelong learning that occurs through daily experiences, observations, and interactions within families, communities, and the broader environment.

Philosophical perspectives include Essentialism, emphasizing core skills and knowledge in traditional academic disciplines; Perennialism, focusing on universal truths through classic literature to develop well-rounded individuals; Progressivism, advocating experiential learning and a "whole child" approach via problem-solving and real-world projects; and Social Reconstructionism or Critical Pedagogy, which sees education as a means for social reform, empowering students to critically



analyze societal issues and pursue justice. Sociologically, Functionalism views education as essential for societal stability, socializing individuals, providing social placement, and transmitting cultural values. In contrast, Conflict Theory sees education as perpetuating social inequality through a - hidden curriculum that reinforces existing power structures. Symbolic Interactionism focuses on micro-level classroom interactions, examining how labels, expectations, and daily interactions between teachers and students shape learning experiences.

Informal Education: Christian Parenting and Its Effect on Youth

Parents are universally the first teachers of their children. Parenting is more than a social role it is a divine, lifelong calling. Just as the strength of a tree depends on its roots, a child's character is rooted in the foundation laid by parents. Traditionally, a child belonged to the community thus giving it the power to instill informal education to the children's growing phases to ensure that they were fashioned to the required behaviors. Without this firm grounding, children could be easily swayed by external pressures.

Some cultural examples used to educate them included fireside storytelling, initiation rites and harvest festivals among others. This was done by grandparents and peer groups. Today, we see a troubling rise in unnatural youth deaths, often linked to ungodly behaviors learned from peers and social media, which frequently replace parental guidance. The Church mourns and reflects—where did we falter in our parental journey?

Lessons from the Past: A Model That Worked

Historically, parents and grandparents shared clear, defined roles in education. Parents began teaching early, and grandparents continued with moral instruction and life skills based on:

- Reverence for God
- Respect for elders and community
- Responsibility and accountability
- Care for the environment

Tales, proverbs, and songs conveyed life lessons. Boys learned from grandfathers in farming and hunting, while girls accompanied grandmothers in domestic tasks. Even sexual education was given thoughtfully and healthily. This approach created a firm foundation with consistent role models involved at every stage.

The Present Crisis: Absentee Parenting and Confused Role Models

Today, many children spend only a few months with their parents before being entrusted to caregivers—often strangers with unknown moral backgrounds. Frequent caregiver changes leave children confused and emotionally disconnected. While schools and care institutions are important, they often lack the moral grounding children need. Social media stands as the biggest intruder, offering unguided education that can be destructive. Children grow up without consistent role models—and the consequences are evident.

A Message of Hope: We Are Pilgrims of Hope

Not all is lost. Hope remains. With God's grace, we can rebuild what has been broken. Having caregivers is not wrong—it supports both families and workers. However, it does not diminish parents' primary role. Parents must be present, intentional, and informed.

Christian Teaching on Parental Education for Modern Parents

Parenting today is vastly different from past generations. Work pressures, technology, cultural shifts, and mental health challenges overwhelm many Christian parents.

Yet Scripture offers timeless wisdom, blending compassion, practicality, and encouragement powerful tools for today's families.

True transformation begins with empathy. Christian teaching must acknowledge the fatigue, guilt, and fear many parents carry quietly. Compassion reassures parents that they are not alone and that God's grace covers their imperfections. Isaiah 40:11 promises, - He will tend his flock like a shepherd... He will gently lead those that are with young. Recognizing daily struggles makes advice more relatable and effective. Christian values live in everyday moments not just sermons or Sunday school. Parents need help bridging biblical truth and daily routines. Practical actions like praying with children before bed, sharing Bible verses at mealtime, or modeling confession and grace make faith tangible. These small, consistent practices nurture humility and restoration.

Parenting is sacred but cannot thrive if parents are emotionally depleted. Jesus modeled balance, often withdrawing to rest and pray. Scripture encourages rest and guarding one's heart: - Come to me, all who are weary and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28), and Above all else, guard your heart... (Proverbs 4:23). Healthy parenting starts with healthy parents. Prioritizing rest, mental health, community, and spiritual nourishment is an act of faithfulness, not selfishness.

Fathers play a vital role, yet many today are absent, passive, or uncertain. Christian teaching must uplift and challenge fathers to lead with love, wisdom, and intention. Ephesians 6:4 exhorts, Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Where biological fathers are absent, mentors, uncles, and pastors can fill the gap, profoundly shaping a child's identity, security, and faith.

Grandparents, too, remain influential though their roles have evolved. Distance and technology can separate families, but grandparents can still bless through video calls, letters, prayers, and virtual milestones. Psalm 145:4 reminds us, One generation shall praise Your works to another... Grandparents bridge generations with enduring blessings.

Conclusion: Reclaiming Our Responsibility

If parents make time amid busy schedules to educate and bond with their children, we can reverse troubling trends. The future of our youth depends on it.

Let us reclaim our divine calling. Let us plant strong roots. Let us be present, prayerful, and purposeful in the lives of our children. Christian parenting is not about perfection but faithful presence showing up, trusting God, and loving children as Christ loves us. Every moment sowing seeds of faith, however small, moves us toward a harvest of righteousness.

As 3John 1:4 states, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. Parents, you are not alone you are seen, equipped, and lovingly led by the one who gently leads those with young. Hope that does not fail will guide us. We are pilgrims of hope—together in prayer, together in action.

Collete, Annet, and Virginia are secretaries of Basilica Magnificat Choir, St. Gregory the Great Youth Choir, and St. Dominic SCC, respectively

A Miracle in Our Midst: Raising and Loving Baraka

By Joan Kamau

My name is Joan. I am a wife and mother of three boys. Two are adults now, and our youngest, Baraka, is 10 years old and lives with Down syndrome.

After my second child, I underwent a bilateral tubal ligation due to complications in my previous pregnancies. So, when I started experiencing pregnancy-like symptoms years later, it was both confusing and surprising. I went back to my gynecologist, the same one who had performed the procedure, and he assured me that pregnancy was impossible.

But, as God would have it, I was indeed pregnant. And what a smooth pregnancy it was, no complications at all.

When I delivered, the baby was declared healthy, but soon after, the pediatrician requested a family meeting. Since my husband wasn't available, I asked her to speak to me directly. That's when she gently broke the news: our baby had Down syndrome, along with the complications that often accompany the condition.

I was devastated. I felt betrayed by God. I cried deeply. It felt like the world stopped. How could I carry a baby to term only to face such a heavy reality? I didn't know much about the condition, and all I could see were the uncertainties ahead.



Would he walk? Would he talk? Would he go to school? Would he have friends? My heart was heavy with fear and grief for a life I had imagined but that had suddenly changed. Still, I composed myself enough to ask for every test possible before leaving the hospital. But that moment was also the beginning of an incredible journey. We named him Baraka, which means blessing, and true to his name, he has been nothing short of a miracle.



The first major concern was Baraka's heart. The cardiologist confirmed that he had a hole in the heart, though she expected it might close on its own. She scheduled us for a review after a year, which felt like an eternity, a silent message that there might be no hope.

Despite a few delays in developmental milestones, Baraka did well in his first year. But at his one-year review, the pediatrician could still hear a murmur, so we were referred to the cardiologist again. That's when we were sent to see additional specialists: an endocrinologist and an ENT.

The endocrinologist gave us the all-clear, but the ENT recommended surgery to remove Baraka's adenoids. What was supposed to be a one-day procedure turned into over a month in hospital. But God carried us through.

Next, we returned to address Baraka's heart. Fortunately, his condition was one of the least complicated types. A device closure procedure was scheduled, but it was unsuccessful. Eventually, Baraka underwent a closed-heart surgery, and this time, the issue was resolved.

During this challenging season, I met another mother who introduced me to a support group of mums with children living with Down syndrome. We began as a WhatsApp group, and one of the mums had already started a small center where we could meet, share, and support each other. This grew into the T21 Families Support Organization, now a registered CBO with over 400 members nationwide.



Baraka

Through T21 FSO, we support one another emotionally, financially, and most importantly, through sharing information so that no parent feels alone or uninformed. In T21 FSO, we have also experienced the heartbreaking loss of children under the age of five, mainly due to lack of timely medical attention, often caused by financial constraints or limited access to accurate information. This reality strengthens our resolve to stand in the gap for new families and advocate for early intervention and accessible care.

Disclosure is also a key part of this journey. It's important to inform close family members and, where possible, involve them in your child's care, whether it's therapy programs, milestone achievements, or doctor's appointments. For Baraka's siblings, I shared the news after a few months when they started noticing developmental delays. Their response brought me such peace; they told me not to worry and assured me of their full support.

With my extended family, I took time to prepare them, especially because of the delays and Baraka's frequent hospitalizations, and they have been very supportive.

At work and in church, I also had to create awareness of Baraka's condition. I included my colleagues and church family in the journey, and they have shown incredible support. They marvel at his achievements and constantly thank God for his progress.

Studies have shown that women over 35 years are at a higher risk of having children with Down syndrome. However, within our support group, more than 75% of the mothers had their children before the age of 25. This challenges the stereotype and highlights the need for increased awareness and early screening, regardless of age.

We are hopeful that the bill introduced by Senator Asige, seeking to ease the burden on families raising children with disabilities, will gain traction. We also dream of a time when all children with disabilities can access therapy and medical care affordably, if not freely. T21 FSO envisions establishing fully equipped resource centers across the country spaces where children like Baraka can receive support from birth through adulthood.

Baraka is a very jolly and friendly person, like most children living with Down Syndrome. He loves small children and is happiest when

surrounded by them. Football is his favourite game. Everyone who visits our home must kick the ball, and it's almost a ritual! He is affectionate and intuitive, and he senses rejection. If someone is not receptive, he will not go near them. But when he feels accepted, he responds with pure, uninhibited love.

His classmates have been with him since playgroup. They love him deeply, and he knows all their names. They even know his medicine schedule! The school has provided an inclusive environment where he thrives.

This consistency and community have given him a strong sense of belonging.

Today, Baraka is in Grade Four. Because his school struggled to support him independently, we had to hire a shadow teacher. Thankfully, he has achieved most age-appropriate milestones. He is truly God-sent, a child who has held our family together. We cannot imagine life without him.

I chose a shadow teacher who is trained in special education to walk closely with Baraka in his learning journey. She sits with him in class every day, helping him stay focused, follow instructions, and keep up with his classmates.

Even during school holidays, we continue with learning, because children with Down Syndrome often take a little more time to be at par with their peers. This consistent support has made a huge difference in Baraka's progress and confidence.

It is, however, an additional cost that many parents may not be prepared for, but one I found necessary to give Baraka the best chance at thriving in a mainstream environment.

I remember an incident that happened when Baraka was still a baby. We were at the

Coast, and a tourist just stopped us. She told us how lucky we were to have a baby like Baraka. She said that in the future we would be amazed at how much he would achieve. She then turned to Baraka's dad and elder brother and said: "If you walked into a showroom and were told to choose between a mass-production car and a special-edition one, which would you choose?" They both said, "Special edition." She smiled and added, "Baraka is your special edition." I have never forgotten those words.

Our other children are now adults. From the very beginning, they embraced their brother with so much love. They have grown up to become his champions, not just at home but also in their schools and circles.

They have introduced their friends to Baraka, invited them to events, and spoken up in spaces that matter. This has also helped create a positive ripple effect and build awareness among their peers. One of them is now a medic and participates in our medical camps, while the other helps in selling merchandise and organizing events.

The nuclear family has truly been a pillar of support. But what has made a significant difference is our decision to involve the extended family and community early on. Many parents keep the diagnosis to themselves, either out of fear, shame, or simply not knowing how to start the conversation. But this journey can be extremely draining if carried alone. We made a deliberate choice to inform and include our loved ones, and their response was overwhelming. Their presence, prayers, and practical help have carried us through many difficult seasons.

Today, I can confidently say that we are better people because of Baraka. He has taught us patience, compassion, and unconditional love. He has slowed us down to see life through a different lens — one that

values presence over performance, and connection over competition.

We have also become advocates. From organizing awareness walks to starting support groups, we now walk alongside other families. We understand the fear that comes with the diagnosis. We also know the joy that follows when you embrace the journey with faith and openness.

In conclusion, I want to say that the journey is tough—but it is also filled with beautiful moments. We celebrate every small milestone: neck firming, swallowing food, walking, speech—things many parents take for granted. These children truly portray the love of God—pure, unconditional love.

To any parent who has just received the news that their child has Down Syndrome: take heart. It may feel like the end of the road, but it's actually the beginning of a beautiful, miraculous path. Your child is not a burden — they are a special edition, full of promise and purpose. Love your child and give them the best you can. When you accept them wholeheartedly, others—including your family and community—will follow your lead.

And to the wider society: open your hearts and arms to children and persons who are differently abled. As Jesus told His disciples in John 9:3, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned...but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him." These children are among us to reveal God's glory.

Joan is a member of Trisomy 21 Families Support Organization (T21 FSO). You can find more information at <https://t21familieske.org>



Understanding Down Syndrome: A Lifelong Journey of **Love** and **Support**

By **Dr. Bob A. K'Opere**

“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born I set you apart...” – Jeremiah 1:5

Down Syndrome, medically known as Trisomy 21, is a genetic condition that occurs when a person is born with three copies of chromosome 21 instead of the usual two. Chromosomes are the microscopic structures in each cell that carry the instructions (genes) necessary for growth, development, and functioning. Typically, we each have 46 chromosomes in 23 pairs. In people with Down syndrome, that number becomes 47 due to the extra chromosome 21.

This additional genetic material affects the way the body and brain develop, leading to a range of physical, cognitive, and health-related features. Though Down syndrome is a lifelong condition, many individuals lead

fulfilling lives with proper care, support, and love.

How Does Down Syndrome Occur?

The condition usually occurs spontaneously during cell division or fertilisation. It is not caused by anything the parents did or didn't do, and in over 99% of cases, both parents have normal chromosomes. This means anyone, regardless of background or health status, can have a child with Down syndrome. Previously, Down syndrome was attributed to advanced maternal age

There are three main types:

- Full Trisomy 21 (95% of cases): Every cell has an extra chromosome.
- Translocation: part of chromosome 21

attaches to another chromosome. (This has a hereditary component.)

- Mosaic: Only some cells have the extra chromosome.

Recognising the Features

Physical and developmental traits vary widely, but commonly observed features include:

- Facial traits: upward-slanting eyes, epicanthal folds, hypertelorism (widely spaced eyes) a flat nasal bridge, small, low-set ears, a small mouth with a protruding tongue.
- Body characteristics: short stature, a transverse crease across the palm, umbilical or inguinal hernias and a gap between the big and second toes.
- Organ involvement: Congenital heart defects are common, especially septal wall defects, which may require surgery. Undescended testes, reduced fertility in men, obstructive sleep apnea and hypothyroidism

Children with Down syndrome often experience hypotonia (muscle weakness), leading to delayed milestones such as sitting or walking. Speech development and learning abilities may be affected, with varying levels of intellectual disability. Co-existing conditions such as ADHD or autism spectrum disorders may also occur. As they grow older, individuals may face thyroid disorders, diabetes, early-onset Alzheimer's disease, or an increased risk of leukaemia. Ongoing medical follow-up is therefore essential.

Diagnosis: Before and After Birth

Down syndrome can be detected during pregnancy using screening tests and later confirmed with diagnostic procedures:

- First trimester: blood tests and ultrasound.
- Second trimester: "quadruple test" analysing hormone levels associated with the condition in pregnancy.
- Non-invasive prenatal testing: an advanced blood test detecting fetal DNA.
- Confirmatory tests (like amniocentesis, chorionic villus sampling and umbilical blood sampling): provide a definitive diagnosis but carry some risks.

After birth, doctors may suspect Down syndrome based on physical traits and confirm it with chromosomal analysis.

Care and Support: A Lifelong Commitment

There is no cure for Down syndrome due to its nature as a genetic condition and not a single disease, but timely, holistic care can dramatically improve quality of life. This includes:

- Medical screenings: especially for the heart, the thyroid, eyesight and hearing.
- Therapies: speech therapy, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy from an early age.
- Inclusive education: tailored to each child's abilities.
- Psychosocial support: for both the individual and the family.

In Kenya, organisations such as the Down Syndrome Society of Kenya and the T21 Families Support Organisation raise awareness on the condition, build a community, and mobilise care resources in their capacities.

The PPC Moderator's Report for the Year 2025

By Bernard Linus Owuor

Dear Parishioners,

We are grateful to God for His graces and generosity to us as a Parish in this Jubilee Year of Hope 2025, which we acknowledge has been concluded with His blessings. That we have come this far is in itself an affirmation that indeed God has been our refuge from generation to generation, as stated in Psalms 90:1.

The year ending 31st December 2025 marked the first year of implementation of the Strategic Plan 2025-2030.

The plan called on the leaders to Inspire and Influence the people of God through active participation and communion for the mission of God in all their activities. It also marked the universal church's Jubilee Year of Hope in which Holy Family Minor Basilica was privileged to have one of the designated Holy Doors for divine graces of the Jubilee.

The Jubilee Year launched by the then Holy Father Pope Francis (now late) invited all the faithful and people of goodwill to be pilgrims of hope walking together in prayer.

In summary, the following milestones were made during the year:

1. Jubilee Year of Hope Seminars

In line with the guidelines on activities to be carried out in meeting the requirements of the Jubilee Year of Hope, the Parish carried out four seminars. The focus of the four seminars was;

- 1) The role of faith in sustaining hope;
- 2) Hope in moments of adversity
- 3) Cultivating hope through the practice of prayer
- 4) Called and sent to be signs and agents of true hope in the wounded world

The seminars, which benefitted 554 participants, offered attendees an opportunity to undertake the rite of passage through the Holy Door and experience all the elements of the Jubilee Year of Hope as Pilgrims of Hope.





2. Liturgical Celebration through Cultural Diversity

In an effort to ensure no one is left behind and to promote full communion, the Parish celebrated the cultural diversity as a gift from God and clustered the various Small Christian Communities, Ecclesia groups and Devotional groups into Zones covering the entire country. These Zones were:

- a) Zone A- Covering the Coastal region
- b) Zone B- Covering Rift Valley and Upper Eastern part of Kenya
- c) Zone C- Covering Western Kenya; Western and Nyanza provinces and
- d) Zone D- Covering Central Province and Lower Eastern part of Kenya

In this way, the beauty of each region and tribes of Kenya was celebrated with each Zone assigned specific Sundays to animate Mass and showcase the cultural richness of their Zones in the liturgical celebrations. Through this platform, parishioners were given

an opportunity to appreciate cultural diversity including dress codes, as a way of enriching liturgical celebration and unity of purpose as a Christian family. This is depicted in the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, where the parish draws its name.

3. Youth Walk

The walk organised by the Youth Board under the Theme: Bridging Generations: Believe, Belong, Become, was intended to empower the youth to financial independence by creating the HFB B-Fund, A fund that will be used to finance youth programs. The walk brought together parishioners and people of goodwill from all walks of life for a common cause in support of the youth.

4. Pilgrimages to Europe and Namugongo

The Parish successfully organized pilgrimages to Europe, covering Italy, France, Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal, and to Namugongo, Uganda, and Kibeho in Rwanda in line with the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025. The events offered participants an opportunity to deepen their faith through these initiatives.

5. The Jumuiya Festivals

The church in Kenya marked The Golden Jubilee for Small Christian Communities (SCC) as envisioned by the AMECEA College of Bishops. To actualize this dream, the parish under the Theme; 'Rekindling Hope in our families and parish life through SCCs organized the Jumuiya Festivals for the very first time in the Basilica. The festival was mainly intended to enhance active participation in liturgy, promote communion and bonding among Jumuiya members by ensuring no one is left behind. Further, the festival was to provide an enabling environment for members to encourage and know each other better and walk together in faith as pilgrims of hope.

The event attracted 15 Jumuiyas in both the Set Piece and Own Composition categories. St. Augustine SCC was declared the overall winner, with St. Dominic and St. Michael the Archangel taking 1st and 2nd runner-up positions, respectively.

Way Forward

As we reflect on the past year and look forward to the future, the Parish is focused on fulfilling the strategies enumerated in the Strategic Plan. The main areas of focus for the next year are as follows:

1. Construction of a new Ultra-modern multi-purpose hall to expand the physical infrastructure for meetings, a chapel, and the establishment of a Youth Resource Centre.
2. Purchase a modern bus to support long-distance pilgrimages and benevolent activities of the parishioners.
3. Set up and roll out a monthly candlelit Rosary procession within the church compound with specific intentions.
4. Set up and roll out a monthly Eucharistic adoration and catechises on adoration and Mass
5. Undertake themed Jumuiya festivals, Bible Trivia, and Jumuiya Sunday as a way of promoting active participation and communion.
6. Empower the parishioners by establishing a Basilica sign language interpreter team through training and capacity building for the benefit of Persons With Disability.
7. Official launch and operationalization of the Parish Website.
8. Facilitate a smooth transition to the new

administration after the election of new leaders, as guided by the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

As I conclude, I wish to sincerely thank all the leaders for their relentless support in making Basilica a true Sanctuary of Catholic Worship and for supporting our administration throughout its term. I particularly want to recognise and appreciate the PPC Executives to whom the execution of decisions and programs was vested.

We commend the Youth Board for a job well done and encourage them to continue with their strategies of bringing young people back to God, since they are the backbone of the church. We equally encourage more parishioners to offer themselves as candidates for the various leadership positions within the church during the forthcoming elections. This will increase the pool of skills, expertise, and knowledge of leaders serving at Basilica and, as a result, enrich the quality of decisions made and actions taken.

We wish you all a merry Christmas, a happy festive season, and a prosperous, happy New Year 2026. May God grant journey mercies to those travelling.

May the peace and love of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you, watch over you, and grant you the opportunity to see a new and more fruitful new year 2026.

The writer is the Moderator of Basilica Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), the Moderator of Central Deanery Pastoral Council (CDPC), and the moderator of Basilica Magnificat Choir.

"Belong, Believe, Become": The Basilica Youth Board's Bold Strategy to Empower a New Generation

By Peter Mwangi

In an increasingly fragmented world, where connection and direction can be hard to find, the Holy Family Minor Basilica is taking a powerful, proactive stance. Recognizing that the future of both the Church and the wider community rests squarely on the shoulders of its younger members, the Basilica Youth Board is pioneering an ambitious initiative to ensure the Youth are nurtured, equipped, and empowered.

Over the past year, the board has listened closely to the voices of our youth. Their longing is clear. They desire a place to belong, a faith that forms them, and opportunities that prepare them for meaningful lives.

A Roadmap for Youth Empowerment: "Bridging Generations"

The Youth Board is proudly launching a comprehensive initiative themed "Bridging Generations: Belong, Believe, Become." This isn't just another program; it's a roadmap designed by young people, for young people, and is directly aligned with the Parish's 2025–2030 Strategic Plan. It represents a profound commitment to reconnecting generations, strengthening faith, building community, and equipping youth with the skills and confidence necessary to lead fulfilling lives.

To ensure that this vision is sustainable and well-resourced, we are establishing the



Basilica Youth Fund (B-Fund), a dedicated parish investment that will power every part of this initiative.

The core challenge we have embraced is simple yet profound: How do we help young parishioners find their place and realize their potential within the Church and beyond?

The Three Pillars of Action

The "Bridging Generations" campaign is built on three actionable pillars designed to address the unique needs of the youth:

1. Belong: Fostering Community and Connection

The first step in empowerment is ensuring every young person feels they have a home, a place of unconditional acceptance and spiritual refuge.

- **Mentorship Programs:** Pairing youth with seasoned parish members and clergy for guidance in career, faith, and life decisions. This directly addresses the generational gap, creating meaningful two-way learning.
- **Social & Outreach Events:** Organizing regular events, from sports tournaments to community service projects, to build camaraderie and a strong sense of shared purpose.

These activities will be supported through the B-Fund, ensuring that mentorship, fellowship, and outreach remain consistent and impactful.

2. Believe: Deepening Spiritual Roots

True leadership, according to the Youth Board, begins with a strong spiritual foundation. This pillar focuses on making the faith relevant and practical in daily life.

- **Interactive Formation Sessions:** Moving

beyond traditional catechesis to host engaging forums, retreats, and workshops on topics like ethical leadership, Catholic social teaching, and modern moral dilemmas.

- **Liturgy Involvement:** Actively training and encouraging youth participation in various liturgical ministries, giving them ownership and visibility within the central acts of worship.
- **Faith and Technology:** Utilizing digital platforms and social media to share uplifting content, hold online prayer groups, and make resources accessible where young people spend their time.

The B-Fund will support retreats, digital evangelization, and ongoing formation designed to deepen the spiritual roots of our young people.

3. Become: Skill-Building for Life and Leadership

The ultimate goal is to equip the youth to step into leadership roles within the Church and society. The "Become" pillar focuses on practical skill development.

- **Leadership Training Workshops:** Providing practical training in critical areas like financial literacy, public speaking, project management, and conflict resolution.
- **Career and Entrepreneurship Expos:** Connecting youth with professionals and resources to inspire and facilitate their academic and vocational journeys.
- **Service & Advocacy Initiatives:** Giving the youth the platform to lead service projects, advocate for vulnerable members of the community, and develop a lasting commitment to social justice. Through the B-Fund, we will invest in leadership training, capacity-building, and opportunities that prepare young people to lead with courage and integrity.



A Milestone Already Achieved: The Basilica Youth Walk

Our journey toward the Basilica Youth Fund began on 15th November with the Basilica Youth Walk. We were deeply encouraged by the strong turnout of parishioners, families, and friends who walked, prayed, and gave generously. The Youth Walk was more than a fundraiser; it was a powerful statement of unity and belief in the potential of our young people.

The funds raised now form the foundation of the Basilica Youth Fund. We are committed to stewarding these resources with transparency, purpose, and accountability as we begin rolling out our "Bridging Generations" strategy.

The Challenge Taken

The Holy Family Minor Basilica Youth Board hasn't shied away from the challenge of an increasingly complex world. Instead, we have channeled our energy, creativity, and faith into a strategy that is both bold and grounded. By asking the youth what they need and then placing the resources and authority in their hands, the parish is not just preparing the next generation; it is actively

mobilizing them to become confident, ethical, and faith-driven leaders today. This work is deeply personal to us as young Catholics. We long for a Church where every youth finds a home, a voice, and a purpose.

The "Bridging Generations" initiative is a powerful testament to the fact that when a parish trusts its youth, the youth rise to the occasion, proving that they are not just the Church of tomorrow, but its vibrant, essential heart right now.

A Call from the Youth Board

Although the Basilica Youth Walk has already taken place, the Basilica Youth Fund remains open for contributions as we build this long-term vision. We invite every parishioner and friend of the Basilica to support this movement through prayer, mentorship, and generous giving. Together, we can help every young person belong, believe, and become all that God created them to be.

Peter is the moderator of Youth Board and the Vice Secretary of St. Simon Peter



PONTIFICAL MISSIONARY CHILDREN

My Bible Trivia Experience

My name is Azariah Blaise Wega Maina. I am 9 years old and a proud member of the Pontifical Missionary Children (PMC).

On the 28th of October 2024, our parish held a Bible Trivia for different church groups and Small Christian Communities. I represented the PMC together with three of my friends.

To prepare, we were asked to read 1st John, 2nd John, and 3rd John. I learnt that 1st John tells Christians to walk in the love and light of Christ and to be careful about false teachings. 2nd John reminds us to stay true to the Gospel, and 3rd John is a letter to a man named Gaius,

thanking him for being kind and helping missionaries who were spreading the Good News. On the big day, everyone came ready and excited to take part. The trivia had six sections, and we all joined in. My favorite parts were the quick-fire and mime sections—they were so much fun!

I learned a lot from the questions and from my fellow Christians. At the end of the day, St. Perpetua and Felicity SCC won first place, the Lectors Society came second, and PMC came third.

It was such a happy and memorable day! I can't wait to take part in more church



activities.
Azariah is in Grade 3 at Parklands Primary School.

Gifts in Motion: How PMC's Arts and Sports Ministries Are Building the Kingdom

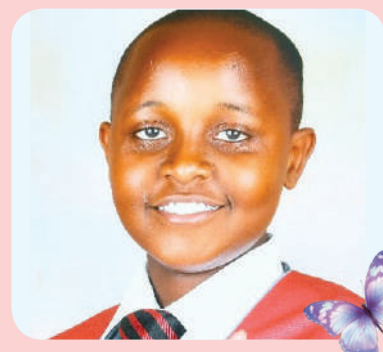
My name is Bernard Gitau Wairegi and I'm 13 years old. I am a member of PMC.

The Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) which was founded to inspire children to pray, learn the spirit of mission, and support evangelization, has grown into a movement that goes beyond catechesis. Through Music and Art Festivals and Sports activities, PMC offers children creative, social, and spiritual platforms that shape them into responsible, faith-filled global citizens.

PMC uses music, art, and sports to develop children's talents

and faith in a fun and holistic way. Through festivals featuring song, dance, drama, drawing, and crafts, children express messages of faith, unity, and compassion while celebrating cultural diversity. These events build confidence, leadership, and teamwork, and allow mentors to guide children in discovering their gifts. Sports like football, athletics, and volleyball promote health, discipline, inclusion, and friendship, while teaching values such as respect, fair play, and perseverance.

Combined, these activities help children grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically,



inspiring them to live out Christian values and understand their role as young missionaries.

Bernard is in Grade 8 at St. Bakhita Eagle Plains School

PMC Role Models

My name is Chantel Kerubo, (and) I'm 13 years old. I am a member of the PMC Role Models.

A PMC Role Model is someone in the PMC who has undergone formation classes and has been commissioned. To be a role model, you have to be between 11 and 13 years old.

We usually start in PMC when we are about 4 years old, and later, some of us join a smaller group called the PMC Role Models. This group started in 2024 at the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

Parents, kindly encourage children who are 11 years and above, and who have received Holy Communion and

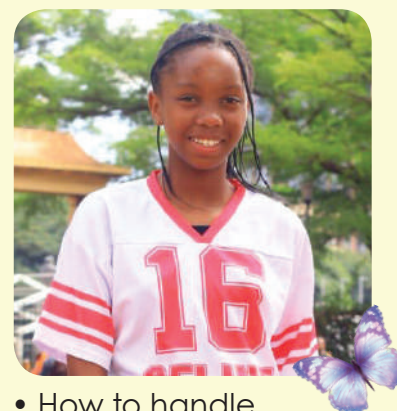
Confirmation, to join the PMC Role Models group. To be a good role model, you need to respect others, set a good example for younger children, obey, and follow all the PMC rules.

What Role Models Do:

- Help the animators take care of the little PMC kids.
- Solve small conflicts and make sure there is peace.
- Lead prayers and help prepare for the Children's Mass.
- Serve during Mass.
- Lead songs in the Children's Mass choir.

What We Learn in Our Classes:

- Life skills
- Adolescence
- Christian friendships



- How to handle yourself as a teen in a Christian way
 - Preparing to join MYM at the age of 13
- In general, a PMC Role Model should always try to be a good example to the younger PMC children.

Chantel Kerubo is in Grade 8 at Carmel Catholic Utawala.

Pilgrims of Hope, Together in Prayer... Together in Prayer, Pilgrims of Hope.

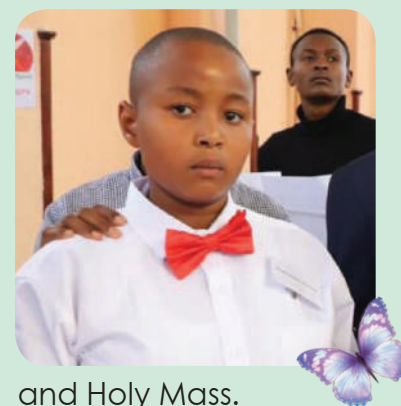
My name is Dylan Nduati Njuguna. I am 12 years old and a member of the Pontifical Missionary Children (PMC).

The Jubilee Year is a special time in the Roman Catholic Church that happens every 25 years. It is announced by the Pope and lasts for a whole year. Last year, Pope Francis declared the next one as the Jubilee Year of Hope, with the theme "Pilgrims of Hope." It is a time for prayer, pilgrimage, mercy, hope, and spiritual renewal.

A Holy Door is a symbolic and physical door opened during Jubilee Years at special churches across different Archdioceses.

During this Jubilee Year of Hope, there are various Holy Doors where pilgrims can obtain the Jubilee indulgence granted by the Holy Father when they make a prayerful pilgrimage to any of these locations.

During this Year of Hope, I was privileged to be among many PMC members from Holy Family Minor Basilica who went on a pilgrimage to the Resurrection Garden in Karen, where we passed through the Holy Door of Hope. It was such a great experience, full of spiritual renewal through prayers such as the Rosary, the Way of the Cross, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, the Sacrament of Reconciliation,



and Holy Mass.

I pray and encourage my fellow PMC members and all Christians to keep growing in faith and trust in the Lord.

Dylan is in Grade 6 at St. Stephen Catholic Academy (SSCA).

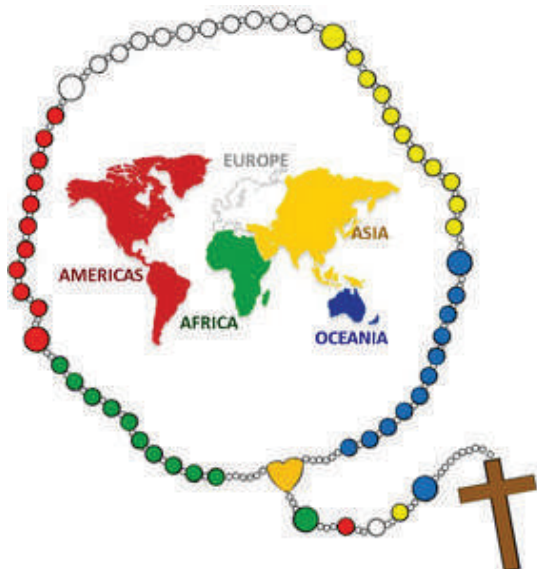
The PMC Missionary Rosary

My name is Tasha Taraji, and I'm 9 years old. I am a member of PMC. PMC stands for Pontifical Missionary Childhood. It is a society established by the Holy Father to form children in the Catholic faith and inspire them to act as missionaries and help others. The PMC motto is Children Helping Children.

PMC activities include praying together as children, doing works of charity, and sharing the Word of God to assist less fortunate children around the world, especially during this Jubilee Year, when the Church calls us to be pilgrims of hope through prayer.

We as children are always taught to pray the Rosary because it deepens our love for Jesus, helps us meditate on Scripture, builds spiritual discipline, and strengthens our Catholic faith. It also helps us, as kids, to love Jesus and Mother Mary. This love helps us understand our faith and grow in a personal relationship with them and with God.

The PMC Rosary has different colors with special meanings. The children pray for other children all over the world. There are five symbolic colors in the PMC Rosary — green, blue, white, red, and yellow. Each color represents something and different parts of the world:



• **Green:** Represents Africa; it symbolizes the forests and grasslands of Africa.
Prayer intention: Life and hope, and the growth of the Church in Africa.

• **White:** Represents Europe, it symbolizes purity and light, representing the Pope as head of the Catholic Church.
Prayer intention: Purity of faith, the Pope's leadership, and prayers for all children in Europe.

• **Blue:** Represents Oceania, it symbolizes the oceans and islands of the Pacific.
Prayer intention: Faith and trust in God for the island nations.

• **Red:** Represents America, it symbolizes blood and sacrifice, remembering the many martyrs and missions in the Americas.
Prayer intention: The fire of faith and strength in witness.

• **Yellow:** Represents Asia, it symbolizes light, where many still await the Gospel.
Prayer intention: That more children in Asia may receive the Word of God.

The colors remind children to pray not just for themselves, but for all children and people around the world, making the Rosary both spiritual and missionary.

The PMC Missionary Rosary at The Holy Family Minor Basilica

In May, the Diocese began the Rotation of the Missionary Rosary to all the deaneries. I am excited to share that I took part as a PMC member from the Holy Family Minor Basilica, where we received the Missionary Rosary on 10th May 2025 at South B Church.

It was so exciting! We prayed together, celebrated Mass, and danced. It was a fun and faith-filled experience that made me proud to be part of the PMC.

We were taught about the importance of praying the Rosary, for ourselves, our families, and for the whole world, especially for needy children and people.

Praying together as children nurtures spiritual growth, emotional health, and strong friendships. It helps us build a lifelong foundation of faith, empathy, and good character.

At the Holy Family Minor Basilica, the PMC animated the Mass and led the Rosary at the second Mass. This was so encouraging because we felt our faith growing stronger, and it was a way of evangelizing to the world.

We kept the Missionary Rosary at our church for one month before handing it over to St. Peter Claver's Parish on 7th September 2025. The handover was crowned with a beautiful Mass celebration, praying the Rosary, and having lunch together. Indeed, it was a wonderful journey of faith!

Why should we, as PMC children, pray the Rosary?

1. In the prayer of the Rosary, we turn to the Virgin Mary so that she may bring us ever closer to her Son, Jesus, to know Him and love Him more and more.

2. Praying the Rosary allows us to encounter Mary and enter the mysteries of Jesus Christ. From His Incarnation, to the Cross, to the Resurrection, we understand that God has revealed Himself and saved us. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary, continue to inspire us to a life of discipleship.

3. Early spiritual habits: Group prayer helps children develop a consistent and personal relationship with God from a young age.

4. Understanding faith: Praying together helps children explore and understand their beliefs in a supportive environment.

In summary, I am pleased to say that the journey of faith through praying the Rosary is a uniting factor. Praying the Rosary allows us to express our fears, hopes, and gratitude openly.

Finally, I thank the Holy Family Minor Basilica, the administration, and the PMC leadership, together with our Lectors for guiding us in faith. I feel so blessed. May our prayers through Mother Mary be answered.

Tasha is in Grade 4 at Citam Schools, Woodley.

Singing for Jesus in the PMC Choir



My name is Vanetta Kasera and I'm 10 years old and belong to the PMC choir at the holy family catholic basilica Nairobi.

PMC means Pontifical Missionary Childhood. It is a parish activity that helps to foster faith and charity in children.

Motto: Children Helping Children.

PMC was established in 1843 by French Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson. It helps nurture the Catholic faith in children and inspires them to help other children in need. The PMC Choir has over 60 members, and it is a big source of inspiration! We are encouraged to be young missionaries, sharing the love of Jesus with our friends, families, and even people we don't know.

We sing lovely songs such as "Tuingie kwa Yahweh Bwana." The PMC Choir usually sings boldly and joyfully when animating Mass.

Our instrumental teacher is Teacher Allan, and our lead singing teacher is Teacher Dennis. I am very happy that my sister is in the PMC Choir.

I am also happy to be part of this beautiful group of children who remind everyone that even the young ones have an important role in the Church.

Vanetta Kasera is in Grade 5 at Good Testimony Junior

The Spirit at Work in the PMC

By Dennis Ndege

"In the same way, the Spirit also comes to help us, weak as we are. For we do not know how we ought to pray; the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express." — Romans 8:26

The Pontifical Missionary Children (PMC) is a vibrant and active group in our parish. Every Sunday during Mass and in all our activities, I can truly testify that the Spirit of God is at work among the children, the animators, our priests, Sisters, and even our beloved parents.

A few years ago, the PMC group was quite small. Filling a 33-seater bus for an activity was a challenge! But when we, as animators, began to pray together and dedicate our work to God, everything began to change. The Spirit of God truly moved among us, and today, our numbers have grown from fewer than 30 children to over 120 registered members.

This growth has also been made possible by the commitment of our priests, Sisters, and parents who continue to support and nurture the faith of our children.

Being an Animator: A Life-Giver

An animator is a life-giver. This means that the children watch what we do closely and tend to imitate us. Our words, our dress, our behavior, all of these should reflect the values we teach.

Imagine an animator guiding children to receive Holy Communion, yet not receiving it themselves! Children learn best through what they see, not just what they are told. As they often say, you cannot give what you do not have.

Working with children has taught me a lot and deepened my own faith. I used to struggle with humility, simplicity, and



patience. But through serving in PMC, God has granted me these virtues, together with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gift of love. It's impossible to serve children without learning to love them all equally.

Our Mission as Animators

As PMC animators, our role goes beyond teaching songs, dances, or encouraging good grades. Our greater mission is to help children grow in faith and safeguard their souls.

At Holy Family Minor Basilica, our animators are well-formed through six formation classes and are officially commissioned. We are also trained in child protection, ensuring that we create a safe and nurturing environment for every child.

A Call to Parents and Guardians

We encourage all parents and guardians who may not yet understand the importance of the PMC to visit us. Join us every Sunday at the Large Hall to learn more about this noble group whose motto is: "Children Helping Children."

Together, we can help our children grow in faith, love, and missionary spirit.

"See that you do not despise any of these little ones, for their angels in heaven are always in the presence of my Father in heaven." — Matthew 18:10

Dennis is one of the PMC Animators

MISSIONARY YOUTH MOVEMENT

Empowering Teenagers in Faith and Leadership

By **Didacus Peace Nandi**

The Missionary Youth Movement (MYM) at Basilica is a vibrant and growing community of teenagers who are passionate about their Catholic faith and eager to serve both the Church and the wider community.

In today's world, the role of youth in the Church is more important than ever. Everyone has expectations for young people - how they should behave, who they should look up to, and the kind of relationships they should build. For many parents, there is a deep desire to see their children surrounded by strong Christian values, positive mentors, and a firm foundation in faith. That's exactly what MYM provides.

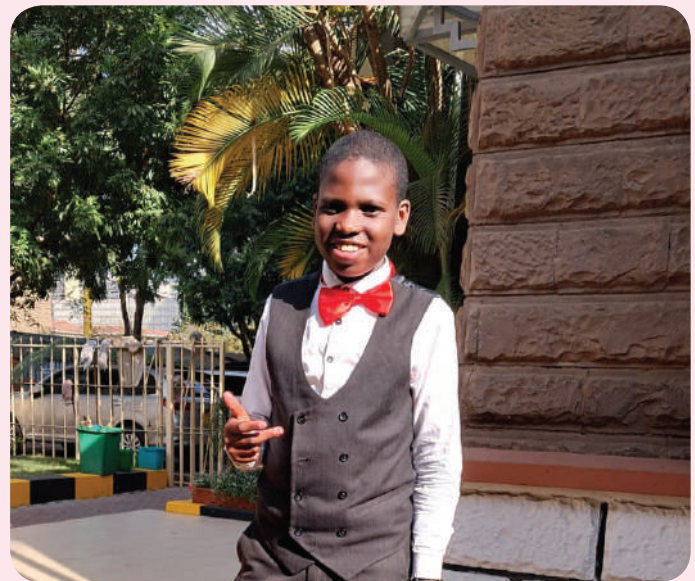
At Basilica, our church leadership has played a significant role in shaping us into responsible young leaders. Through consistent guidance and spiritual support, they've helped us grow with a clear direction rooted in the Word of God.

Every meeting begins with prayer and the Rosary, grounding us spiritually before we dive into discussions, planning, and activities that help us grow in faith and fellowship.

We are grateful that the Church has embraced our needs and made youth ministry a priority. As MYM members, we've benefited from an expanded list of Church-led programs which have helped us grow in every area of life — spiritually, socially, emotionally, and intellectually.

One of our most fulfilling roles is our active participation in Church animation. Whether we are singing in the choir, reading during Mass, or assisting in liturgical duties, our involvement not only strengthens our

'For many parents, there is a deep desire to see their children surrounded by strong Christian values, positive mentors, and a firm foundation in faith. That's exactly what MYM provides.'



connection to the Church but also inspires other young people to join us.

Many new members say they were drawn to MYM because they saw our energy, unity, and joy in serving. That's the impact we hope to continue making.

Join Us!

If you are a teenager looking to grow in your faith, make meaningful friendships, and serve your community, MYM at Basilica welcomes you.

Didacus is in a Form 3 student at H.G.M Secondary School

MYM Magazine Writeup

By Bernice Grace Njoki

MYM is the official group for teenagers in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. The MYM group consists of teenagers from the age of 13/14 years to 18 years. The Basilica MYM group is actively involved in the parish, deanery, and Archdiocese, with a membership of 128 registered and active teenagers.

At Basilica, the MYM group receives great support from the Administrator, the MYM Chaplain, the Youth Board and the Parish Council.

Basilica MYM activities

Our MYM activities include:

Liturgy Participation: The teenagers animate mass fully with the Basilica MYM Teens Choir, and the MYM Brass Band at the parish. They also participate in deanery and Archdiocese liturgy celebrations. (photos attached separately)

Active and consistent formation: Our teenagers go through consistent formation covering the different aspects of human development. MYM formation is tackled by MYM animators, the clergy, and other facilitators. The parish also ensures that the clergy and mental health professionals are available for mental health support when teenagers need them. (photos attached separately)

Annual retreat/camp: Basilica MYM teens go for camp/retreat every year. This is a major spiritual and social activity for them. The camp/retreat includes activities such as Eucharistic adoration, holy mass, meditation, formation sessions, outdoor excursions, bonfire nights, movie nights, games and more. (photos attached separately)

Bible Study Clubs: Our parish MYM teens have bible clubs which bear saints' names. The bible clubs/groups run like book clubs where the teens read, discuss, and review different books and stories in the bible. (photos attached separately)

Music and Cultural Festival: Our teens participated in the Central Deanery Music and Cultural Festival this year and emerged position one overall. (photos attached separately)

Charity Work: This year, the Basilica Teens are happy to launch a parish environmental upgrade project that will see them upgrade the parish dustbins in a big way.

Fun Activities: Guided by the Youth F-Pillars, our teens also enjoy fun activities that help them in social bonding, physical health and mental wellbeing. (photos attached separately)

Bernice Grace Njoki – MYM Moderator



MYM during their quarterly birthday celebrations

My Experience in MYM

By Kevin Thuita

The Basilica MYM teens group is very well guided and supported. It offers a non-judgemental and very accommodative environment for teenagers in the church. I personally like how our animators embrace each one of us on our individual levels. It is not easy yet they remain so accepting, loving and patient with each one of us.

MYM provides us with a sense

of belonging and social support, which are essential for our emotional well-being. MYM are able to share their experiences, thoughts, and feelings with their peers, who understand what they're going through.

The immense formation we receive is also very helpful especially from our MYM animators and CMA as Beacon Boys.



Kevin is a Grade 9 Student at Hospital Hill School

Growing with Purpose

By Serena Anyango Wambua

My MYM journey, which I began late last year under the guidance of my animator, Tr. Bernice has helped me discover who I am and what's expected of me as a teenager. I've learned the importance of living with good morals and making wise choices.

One key lesson that has

really shaped me is learning to stay off social media, because there's a time for everything. In today's world, we're surrounded by numerous distractions, and it's up to us to protect ourselves, remain respectful, and heed the guidance of our parents, teachers, and church leaders.



Serena is in Grade 9 at Madaraka Primary School

My Experience in Basilica MYM

By Trina Muthoni

MYM is such a vibrant and joyful group, full of positive energy and amazing people. It offers a calm and welcoming space where we can grow spiritually and as individuals. It truly feels like a family that helps us become the best versions of ourselves. I'm so grateful to be a teenager in MYM!

Being part of MYM has

really strengthened me - mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It has helped me understand my purpose and set healthy boundaries in life. I deeply appreciate our MYM animators, who guide us with so much love and understanding. They truly know what we go through as teenagers and always make us feel seen and supported. Their care shows



the true heart of the Church - full of love, acceptance, and encouragement.

Trina is in Grade 8 at Grandstar Junior School



Kibeho Pilgrimage

By Veronica Ndegwa

Central Deanery MYM animators had the honour of visiting the Shrine of Our Lady of Kibeho for their 2025 pilgrimage. Kibeho is a small village located south of Rwanda, which became known outside Rwanda because of reported apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ occurring between 1981 and 1989.

The Kibeho apparitions refer to a series of appearances of the Virgin Mary to several school children in Kibeho, Rwanda, between 1981 and 1989.

The messages given to the visionaries focused on repentance, prayer, and a stark warning of a bloody civil conflict that was later understood to be a prophecy of the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

After decades of investigation, the local bishop and, subsequently, the Vatican

formally approved the Kibeho apparitions for the three original visionaries in 2001 making Kibeho an internationally recognized shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows, serving as a center for reconciliation, conversion, and peace.

Our Lady of Kibeho holds a seven-decade Rosary of Our Lady of Sorrows with her title of Nyina wa Jambo in her hallo..The word was made flesh. Although the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows regained popularity after Mary's apparitions in Kibeho, it dates back to the thirteenth century after our Blessed Mother appeared to St. Bridget of Sweden. Our visit to Kibeho as MYM Animators was life-changing especially during this year of the Jubilee of Hope.

Veronica Ndegwa – MYM Animator

YOUTH SERVING CHRIST

The Journey of Youth Serving Christ in 2025

By Ann Wangeci

The Youth Serving Christ (YSC) is a youth group comprised of young people aged 18 to 26. Based at the Holy Family Minor Basilica, the group provides a supportive environment for its members to navigate their faith journeys and personal growth. Inspired by Saint John Paul II, YSC offers a nurturing space where young people can grow both spiritually and personally. Saint John Paul II, known as a great friend to the youth of the world, called on young people to be "the light of the world" and "the hope of the future." His legacy of unwavering faith, hope, and courage resonates deeply with the mission of YSC.

Transitioning

A significant transition event unfolded on 7th January 2025. This milestone gathering marked the official launch of activities for the Youth Serving Christ (YSC) group, while formally welcoming dedicated members from the Missionary Youth Movement (MYM) into its fold.

The event represented more than just a change in affiliation; it symbolized a seamless continuation of the Church's commitment to nurturing young adults. For these individuals, YSC offers not only a vibrant new home but also a structured and inspiring path forward in their spiritual journey. As they step into this next chapter, the group provides opportunities for growth and deeper engagement with their faith, ensuring that the flame of youthful devotion burns brighter than ever.

Deanery Opening Mass and Recollection

On 1st February 2025, a spiritually enriching

gathering was held at Don Bosco Upperhill, which served as the host for a recollection and deanery opening Mass. The event drew the faithful from across the Central Deanery to kick off the year's pastoral activities. This meaningful celebration, infused with prayer and contemplation, set a tone of renewal and commitment. Participants engaged in the timeless devotion of the Way of the Cross, a meditative journey tracing Christ's Passion that invites Christians to reflect on His sacrifice.

Parish Hike

On 22nd February 2025, we held our hike at Gatamaiyu Forest, a challenging yet profoundly rewarding trek spanning 12–15 km of winding trails through lush expanses and babbling streams. As youths navigated rocky paths and gentle inclines, the air was filled with laughter and shared stories.

This hike wasn't just about the miles we covered; it was about the steps we took together toward a deeper connection with each other, with nature, and with the Creator. The day concluded with a cake-cutting ceremony celebrating members whose birthdays fell in January and February, a joyful moment that symbolized not just individual milestones but the collective joy of the community.





Formation Classes for New and Old Members

In March and April 2025, we wrapped up a transformative series of formation classes designed to equip young adults with tools for navigating faith, relationships, and society. The program explored eight key topics that resonated deeply with attendees.

Sessions began with insights on mental health management, offering strategies for resilience and self-care in a fast-paced world. Governance discussions explored ethical leadership and community stewardship, inspiring participants to envision their roles in both church and civic life.

Diving into the sacred, the Theology of the Body series unpacked St. John Paul II's teachings on human dignity, love, and sexuality, addressing real-world pressures and fostering a deeper appreciation for God's design in our bodies and souls. Career choice and progression workshops provided guidance on discerning vocations and advancing professionally with purpose, while reflections on the Jubilee Year of Hope tied our learning into global Church celebrations.

This formation journey was a lifeline, blending Scripture with practical wisdom to help us thrive as disciples.

Good Friday Enactment

On 18th April 2025, the streets of Nairobi came alive with solemn devotion as hundreds of Catholic faithful gathered for the annual Way of the Cross procession. This Good Friday event blended prayer and reflection to honour the Passion of Christ.

As YSC, we took on key acting roles, bringing the story to life and reminding everyone of Christ's enduring love. The procession began along Parliament Road, where participants carried a large wooden cross, stopping at each of the 14 Stations to meditate on Christ's suffering.

Our members portrayed key figures in the Passion story: Jesus, Roman soldiers, Mary, and the disciples. It was an honour to step into these roles, serving Christ through witness and action, and inspiring a new generation to embrace faith with courage.



Recollection at Kyumbi Shrine

On 3rd May 2025, we gathered at Kyumbi Shrine in Machakos for a profound recollection, drawing young adults eager to renew their commitment to faith amid life's demands. Through meditative talks and moments of silence, we reflected deeply on discipleship and knowing Christ in all circumstances. The recollection reignited our passion to serve Christ with renewed hearts.



Commissioning and Team Building

On 4th May 2025, 90 young hearts were formally commissioned into roles that embody the essence of serving Christ. Among them were 67 renewing members, recommitting themselves to their sacred duties with renewed resolve, and 23 new members officially welcomed into the YSC family.

The celebrations continued at St. Mary's Msongari, where members shared lunch and laughter during a vibrant team-building session filled with dancing and games. The day culminated in a celebratory cake-cutting, a joyful symbol of unity and shared purpose. This day wasn't just about us; it was about the lives we'll touch together.

Youth Sports

In the spirit of fostering physical fitness and teamwork among the youth, on 30th May 2025, the Deanery Sports Day was held at Don Bosco Kuwinda grounds, bringing together participants from parishes across the Central Deanery.

Football enthusiasts cheered as both ladies' and gents' squads battled it out. Netball lit up the courts, volleyball delivered fierce spikes and dives, and basketball brought fast-paced excitement. The day culminated in a thrilling series of athletics.

In June, we were invited for a friendly sports match at Ngarariga, featuring inter-



parish football games, a reminder that faith communities thrive through both play and prayer. On 28th June 2025, Don Bosco Kuwinda once again hosted the Zonal Sports, mirroring the deanery events.

At the Archdiocesan level, held in July 2025 at Thika Deanery, YSC Basilica's gents' track stars dominated the 100m and 4x100m relay. Reaching this level was a dream come true proof that the sweat on the field mirrors the sweat of discipleship. It's all about giving your best for something greater.

Launching YSC Choir

In June 2025, we proudly launched our YSC Choir, marking a new chapter in serving Christ through music. Our voices were entrusted with leading an entire Mass—a resounding vote of confidence in our talents. From the opening hymn to the tender strains of the Agnus Dei, our choir's poise and



passion shone through, transforming the liturgy into a living symphony of gratitude and unity.

Parish Concert

On 10th August 2025, we gathered for "Basilica's Got Talent 2.0", a vibrant parish concert celebrating hidden talents and joyful fellowship. Dressed in nostalgic school uniforms, participants and attendees relived memories of playground antics and classroom camaraderie.

The basilica's hall transformed into a lively stage, drawing families, youth, and friends for an evening of wholesome entertainment. Performances included high-energy dances, a modeling showcase, a hilarious Kupepeta challenge (a Kenyan twist on dancing and fun competition), and soul-stirring musical acts.



As the final applause faded, Mr. and Miss Basilica were crowned, an event that left an indelible mark, reminding us that talent thrives when nurtured within a community and faith. Plans are already underway for next year's edition, promising even more surprises.

Youth Festivals

This fun-filled event brought together youth groups from across the Central Deanery to share their talents, strengthen bonds, and celebrate their shared faith. The day sparked with creative performances, including:

- **Own Composition:** "Shukrani Zangu" – a heartfelt song of gratitude.
- **Spoken Word:** "The Kenya We Desire" – envisioning unity, justice, and progress.
- **Oral Narrative:** A tale on corruption, illustrating how greed leads to downfall.
- **Cultural Dance:** "Care for Our Common Home," celebrating environmental stewardship.

Anne is the Secretary of Youth Serving Christ.

YOUNG CATHOLIC ADULTS

Catholicity: The Heartbeat of Our YCA Family

By **Brian Muloni**

Every few months, something special happens at the Holy Family Minor Basilica; young people from all corners of the Archdiocese of Nairobi gather under one roof for a time of adoration, reflection, and Holy Mass. It's more than a meeting; it's a homecoming. A moment where hearts unite, voices rise in prayer, and faith comes alive in vibrant fellowship.

This is Catholicity in action, the beauty of being part of something universal yet deeply personal.

What is Catholicity?

The word Catholicity comes from the Greek *katholikos*, meaning "universal" or "according to the whole." It speaks of the Church's all-embracing nature, a faith that welcomes everyone, transcending tribes, languages, and boundaries. It's what makes us one body in Christ, no matter where we come from or what stage of life, we're in.

For the YCA family at Holy Family Basilica, Catholicity is more than just a definition; it's a lived reality. Every gathering reminds us that we belong to a global Church, united in faith, purpose, and mission.

A Family that reflects unity in diversity

Each quarterly gathering paints a beautiful picture of unity in diversity. Members from different parishes, professions, and walks of life come together, carrying their joys, struggles, and stories to the altar. We share laughter, testimonies, and prayers and in those moments, we realize that our differences don't divide us; they enrich us.

That's the spirit of Catholicity, one faith expressed in many ways, yet rooted in the same truth: Christ is at the center of it all.

Adoration, Worship, and Renewal

There's a quiet power in kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament during adoration.



Catholicity challenges us to carry this spirit beyond the Basilica walls into our homes, workplaces, and parishes.

It's where hearts are stilled, burdens are lifted, and faith is rekindled. The solemn silence, the gentle hymns, and the soft glow of candles remind us that Catholicity is not just about being many it's about being one before God.

And when we celebrate Mass afterward, with hundreds of young voices singing in harmony it's a reminder of the living Church we are part of. Each Mass becomes a celebration of God's love that transcends time, connecting us to Catholics across the world and the saints who have gone before us.

Living the Catholic Spirit

Catholicity challenges us to carry this spirit beyond the Basilica walls into our homes, workplaces, and parishes. It calls us to be Christ's hands and feet in a world that longs for compassion and truth. To be Catholic is to be universal in love, generous in service, and firm in faith.

In Closing

As we continue to gather every quarter at Holy Family Basilica for adoration, for Mass, for fellowship may we never lose sight of what Catholicity truly means: being one with Christ and one another.

In every prayer whispered, every song sung, and every act of service done, we live out the beautiful truth that we are one, holy, catholic, and apostolic together, as the YCA family of the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

Brian is the Treasurer of Young Catholic Adults (YCA)

Faith. Fire and Fellowship: YCA's Mbuzi Choma Moments

By Bellah Adhiambo

In Kenya, no celebration is complete without the sizzling aroma of mbuzi choma drifting from the grill, pulling everyone to the fire like moths to a flame.

There are few things that unite Kenyans, let alone YCA members from the Basilica—like the smoky, mouthwatering scent of roasted goat grilled to perfection over hot charcoal.

When the announcement came through about some mbuzi that had been offered to the group, it was more than just a celebration; it was a reminder that the best meals are the ones we share.

In the days leading up to the function, members were busy trying to find the perfect combination of accompaniments, spices, and drinks for the upcoming sherehe.



The process is as important as the taste itself. The men get a chance to outshine themselves as they slaughter the goat, draw blood, skin it, and cut the carcass into manageable pieces.



'When it was finally time to eat, the atmosphere was pure joy. Plates were filled with mbuzi choma, stew, kachumbari, and greens, a simple yet perfect combination.'

In my opinion, Kibet should invite all seventy-four (74) of us for a goat-slaughtering lesson, because that guy knows his way around the joints and his knife!

Everyone was running around at Ondari's, one person asking for milk, another trying to light the jiko, while yet another searched for the best playlist because Pauline was already warming up to show us dance moves for "Donjo Maber."

The fresh meat from the men's work is first boiled to make it tender, then marinated with garlic, ginger, and lemon before being placed over slow-burning coals. As the fat sizzled and the smoke rose, anticipation built. The result? Tender, juicy cuts bursting with flavor. The aroma alone was enough to draw people closer, sparking laughter and conversation as we waited for the first serving.

No mbuzi choma is complete without sides: a firm mound of ugali, a plate of kachumbari, stewed meat, and nicely cooked greens to

scoop every bite. Fun fact: you should have seen Emily asking for more flour to make the ugali! The team had budgeted for 10 kilograms, but mambo kwa ground became different. The mucene keeps the ladies entertained as the vegetables and fruits are chopped.

When it was finally time to eat, the atmosphere was pure joy. Plates were filled with mbuzi choma, stew, kachumbari, and greens, a simple yet perfect combination. The group shared bites, sat side by side, enjoying the food and great company.

In moments like these, mbuzi choma becomes more than just a dish. It is a symbol of unity and gratitude, a reminder that sharing a meal is one of the simplest yet most meaningful ways of strengthening bonds in the Body of Christ.

Bellah is a member of Young Catholic Adults (YCA)

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A Day of Light and Love at Thogoto Home for the Aged

By Vincent Mose

Introduction

On September 27, 2025, the Young Catholic Adults (YCA) set out on a mission that would forever leave a mark on our hearts and spirits. Our destination was Thogoto Home for the aged in Kikuyu, a place where many elderly men and women, who once carried the weight of society on their shoulders, now spend their sunset years. What we thought would simply be a day of charity turned out to be one of the most powerful lessons of life, an awakening to the true meaning of love, humanity, and compassion.

First Encounters

We arrived in large numbers, full of energy, joy, and the desire to touch lives. Yet as we walked into the compound, the reality of life hit us hard. The faces that greeted us were marked by age and time, some with warm smiles, others with silent stories of

abandonment and pain. In that moment, we realized that old age is a journey every one of us must walk one day. The bitter truth struck: some of these beautiful souls had been abandoned by their own families simply because they grew old, became nagging, or were considered a burden. Others had never known the joy of having children of their own, and so, in their final years, they walk a lonely path that pierces deeply into the soul.

Acts of Love and Service

The day unfolded beautifully as we immersed ourselves into their world. We split firewood, cleaned their rooms, prepared meals, and listened to their stories with open hearts. Our ladies worked in the kitchens, cooking hearty meals, while others engaged the elderly in conversations that reminded them that they are still valued, still loved, and still part of a bigger family.



Some of us sat quietly with the elderly mothers, holding their hands and simply being present. Others sang, danced, and shared laughter with the grandfathers whose eyes lit up like children once again. Every small act, be it sweeping the floors, cooking a meal, or sharing a song, was not just a duty but a gift of presence.

Lessons Learned

From this visit, we learned one of life's greatest truths: being a brother or sister to someone can mean the world. Many of the elderly we met carried the scars of abandonment, loneliness, and depression. Some had lived their entire lives without the blessing of children, and in their twilight years, the silence of loneliness was unbearable.

Yet, by simply being there, listening, laughing, working, and loving, we gave them something no money can buy: the gift of belonging. It became clear to us that life is fragile. One day, each of us may find ourselves in a similar situation old, weak, and in need of care. The way we treat our elders today is the same way society will treat us tomorrow.

A Call to Humanity

This experience was not just an event; it was a calling. The faces of those elderly men and women reminded us of our responsibility as young people, as children, and as citizens of humanity. We must learn to love beyond conditions, to serve without expectations,

"Humanity is not about what we keep, but about what we give."

and to see value in every life regardless of age, ability, or circumstance.

The elderly are not a burden, they are a treasure chest of wisdom, history, and resilience. They are the reason we stand where we are today, for they worked, sacrificed, and built the world we now enjoy. To abandon them is to abandon ourselves, for in their stories lie the foundations of who we are.

Conclusion

The visit to Thogoto Home for the Aged will remain one of the most informational experiences for the Young Catholic Adults. We did not just perform charity, we became family. We did not just share food, we shared love. We did not just spend a day, we gave a piece of ourselves.

In this life, let us remember: humanity is not about what we keep, but about what we give. And when we give love, we heal not just others, but also ourselves.

On that day, the old and the young became one. Together, we reminded each other that no one is ever truly alone as long as love still lives. May this act of kindness inspire more of us to rise, to serve, and to spread humanity wherever we go.

"Indeed, at Thogoto Home, we were reminded that love is the only thing that grows when shared—and on 27th September 2025, love grew abundantly."

Vincent is a member of Young Catholic Adults (YCA)

Catholic Women Association (CWA)

Rekindling **Hope** and **Faith** through **Prayer**, **Service & Sisterhood**, A Journey of **Love**, **Purpose**, and **Spiritual Renewal**

By Florence Wambua

In today's world, often marked by uncertainty, sorrow, and distraction, the Catholic Women Association (CWA) of Holy Family Minor Basilica (HFMB) stands as a beacon of hope. We are a fellowship of faith-filled women, rooted in love and mission. United in prayer and guided by Christ, 2025 has been a year of grace, a testimony to the quiet strength of women who walk with purpose, serve with compassion, and believe in God's transforming love.

Together, we have embraced our call: to inspire the young, comfort the grieving, and grow in prayerful presence, living as true disciples in our homes, parish, and beyond in the following ways:

Forming the Next Generation: St. Maria Goretti Feast Day

On **19th July 2025**, joy and grace filled the Holy Family Basilica Parochial School as we celebrated the feast of **St. Maria Goretti**, a young saint of purity, courage, and faith. Girls aged 11–15 joined us for a vibrant, spiritually enriching day that planted seeds of virtue and confidence. At a time when young girls face immense cultural pressures, this was a sacred opportunity to remind them of their identity in Christ, chosen, loved, and called to live boldly in faith.

Christ-centered activities such as the Clean Heart Balloon Toss, Forgiveness Freeze Tag, Kindness Musical Chairs, Faith Walk, and Humility Reflection Games brought values of

resilience, humility, and compassion to life. A highlight of the day was the **Bible Trivia** session, where the girls laughed, learned, and joyfully deepened their love for Scripture.

Each girl received a message card inspired by St. Maria Goretti, encouraging her to cling to Christ in all things: "Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not give up." – Galatians 6:9

This celebration reaffirmed our mission: to guide the next generation of Catholic women—rooted in virtue, bold in faith, and ready to shine as lights in the world.

United in Compassion: Walking with Grieving Families

This year, our sisterhood was deeply touched by the loss of three cherished members:

- **Dr. Christine Mugambi** – welcomed home on 1st April 2025. We celebrated a Requiem Mass for the repose of her soul at HFMB, after which she was laid to rest in Meru.
- **Dr. Elizabeth Mwita** – welcomed home on 11th June 2025. We celebrated a Requiem Mass for the repose of her soul at HFMB. She was laid to rest in Nyamuoso Village, Siaya County.
- **Ms. Domilla Okatch** – welcomed home on 5th September 2025. We celebrated a Requiem Mass for the repose of her soul at HFMB, after which she was laid to rest in Gem



Nyawara, Siaya County.

Though their passing left a void, God's love was revealed through the compassion of CWA. We walked with their families, praying, comforting, and accompanying them in their grief. These moments reminded us that healing comes when we carry one another in love, just as St. Monica, our patroness, interceded tirelessly in faith.

"Nothing is far from God." – St. Monica

May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed, rest in peace. Amen.

Strengthening the Church through Prayer and Representation

Prayer remains the heartbeat of CWA. In 2025, we recommitted ourselves to be not only women of action but also women of presence.

We expressed this through pastoral visits to the families of **His Grace Archbishop Philip Anyolo** and **His Lordship Bishop Kamomoe**, honoring the homes that nurtured our spiritual shepherds. These quiet acts of reverence remind us that the Church is built not only in sanctuaries but also in homes.

Across our parish, a gentle renewal is taking place:

- More women are joining CWA formation
- More families are returning to prayer and

sacramental life

- More hearts are awakening to God's call

Inspired by the Faith of St. Monica

Through joy and sorrow, we look to St. Monica, a woman of tears, strength, and tireless prayer. She teaches us that no heart is too far gone for God, and no prayer too small to be heard. Her example anchors us as we continue to build our families, communities, and Church on our knees in prayer, with hearts full of faith.

Women on Mission, Anchored in Christ

As we gather for Parish Family Day 2025, we look back with gratitude and forward with hope. We are more than members of an association; we are a living testimony to the power of faith, fellowship, and purpose.

We remain joyfully committed to the vision of the Catholic Women Association: **To seek and bear witness to Christ, committed to the holistic development of Catholic women and families in the Archdiocese of Nairobi.**

We are: **Strong in Faith. Rooted in Love. Bound in Hope.**

To God be all glory, now and forever.

Florence is the Moderator of Catholic Women Association (CWA)

Honouring A Dedicated Servant

A Tribute to Our Dearly Departed Vice Moderator, Mzee Simeon Nyamwaro

By Raymond Raymond Oduwo Owino

The Catholic Men Association (CMA) is not simply a parish group - it is a community of faith, brotherhood, and service where men are molded into spiritual leaders of both the family and the Church. In honoring the life of our dearly departed Vice Moderator, Mzee Simeon Nyamwaro, we are reminded of why every Catholic man should consider joining this fraternity of faith and service.

“ Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you besides” (Matthew 6:33).

Mzee Simeon was a man of deep spirituality. He never missed the first Mass every Sunday, setting an example to all CMA members and especially those in formation classes. His counsel was simple but profound: “ Start your day with God, and everything else will fall into place.” Truly, spiritual discipline was the foundation upon which his life was built. Discipline was another mark of his character. Like St. Paul, who wrote, “ Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one” (1 Corinthians 9:25), Mzee Simeon exercised spiritual discipline that shaped his life of prayer, service, and leadership. He kept time, honored his commitments, and encouraged other men to treat matters of faith with reverence, not casualness.

As a leader, he practiced servant leadership. Following the model of Christ, “ The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”



(Matthew 20:28). As Vice Moderator, he never belittled others or dismissed their opinions. Instead, he built consensus, guided with humility, and encouraged each member to use his gifts for the glory of God. His courage and generosity were equally striking. He never hesitated to speak truth when defending the faith or championing the needs of the less fortunate. Like the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33-34), he gave of himself - his time, counsel, and resources - to uplift others. Even in illness, he persevered in faith, continuing to attend Mass and participate in CMA activities. His perseverance mirrored St. Paul's exhortation: “ Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer” (Romans 12:12).

Beyond his witness, Mzee Simeon valued CMA activities as moments of fraternity and spiritual growth. On 14th June, the CMA held its Mbuzi Day social event in Kibiko along

Suswa, which he also attended. It was a day of joy, storytelling, and sharing meals where the elderly traded wisdom with the young. The tap of knowledge never ran dry, and members were enriched, strengthened in fraternity, and bonded more deeply in faith and friendship.

Equally important was the Commissioning of new CMA members on Pentecost Sunday, 8th June. This sacred event marked the formal entry of men into a fraternity of faith, service, and leadership within the Church and society. It was not merely a ceremony but a spiritual milestone - a visible reminder that men are called to be the pillars of both Church and family life.

Another significant moment was the Recollection at the Resurrection Garden, where members withdrew for reflection and prayer. This encounter provided a fervent spiritual renewal that reminded men of their mission as Catholic men: to be prayer warriors, faithful husbands, responsible fathers, and courageous leaders in society.

The CMA has also been blessed musically. The HFB CMA

Choir was crowned the Archdiocese of Nairobi Champions in 2024, a victory that filled the membership with pride and joy. Their songs have become a source of blessing, not only within CMA but to the entire parish. The choir's gift of music reflects Psalm 100:2 - "Serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful song." Through their voices, members and parishioners alike are reminded that worship is both duty and delight.

From the life of Mzee Simeon and the activities of CMA, we learn that membership is not just about wearing a uniform - it is about being molded spiritually to handle our roles as the head of the family and as leaders in the Church. CMA equips men with prayer, fraternity, and formation, so that they may embody St. Paul's words: "Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong.



Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).

For non-members, the CMA presents an opportunity to grow in faith, strengthen family life, and find fellowship in a supportive fraternity. For members, it is a constant reminder to live with discipline, humility, courage, and perseverance. In all this, the Church benefits, families grow stronger, and society finds authentic leaders rooted in faith. As we honor the legacy of Mzee Simeon Nyamwaro, may his life inspire every Catholic man to embrace this call to holiness and service through the CMA. For indeed, "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37). Let us rise as men of faith, strengthened by fraternity, service, and prayer.

May his soul rest in eternal peace, and may his legacy continue to draw more men into the vineyard of the Lord through CMA.

Raymond is the Vice Secretary of the Catholic Men Association (CMA).



Journey of Faith, Fellowship, and Formation

The Story of St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina SCC

By Lilian Mubangizi

1. Our Formation and Transition Journey

Our Small Christian Community (SCC) was born out of a profound journey of faith and intentional spiritual formation within our parish. We first gathered in early 2024 as adult catechumens, united by a shared desire to deepen our relationship with Christ and fully embrace the teachings of the Church.

Throughout this transformative season, we were nourished by catechism sessions, prayerful gatherings, including a memorable Way of the Cross pilgrimage to the Resurrection Garden in Karen, and the dedicated pastoral guidance of our catechists, especially Rev. Deacon Kevin Okeyo. Over time, we not only experienced personal spiritual growth but also formed a strong communal bond rooted in prayer, learning, and mutual support. Our initiation into full communion with the Church marked the new beginning.

2. Why We Chose the Name St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina

Our community's name reflects the spirit that carried us through formation. Amid trials and triumphs, the resilience and devotion displayed by our members echoed the life and witness of St. Padre Pio. His unwavering commitment to prayer, humility in service, and profound faith in divine providence made him a unanimous and natural choice as our patron.

St. Padre Pio is remembered for his extraordinary spiritual gifts, deep love for the Eucharist, and tireless hours in the confessional, drawing countless souls to Christ. He lived as a sign of God's mercy and bore suffering with joy and trust. His famous counsel, "Pray, hope, and don't worry," has become a spiritual anchor for our community. We strive to emulate his simplicity, compassion, and steadfast trust in God's will as we continue to support and uplift one another in our walk of faith.

3. Our Mission and Life as a Small Christian Community

Our SCC is a spiritual family, a sacred space where we encounter Christ in one another through prayer, Scripture, and shared life. We meet regularly, both physically and virtually, for activities such as Rosary evenings, Bible study, and celebrating members' milestones. Each gathering is an opportunity to deepen our bond in Christ and strengthen our witness in the world.

Our community was officially constituted during the Easter Vigil on 19th April 2025, within the Jubilee Year of Hope, golden jubilee celebrations of the Small Christian Community SCC, two significant milestones that affirm our mission and identity. Inspired by the Gospel call to serve, we have actively participated in parish activities, animated liturgies, supported charitable works, and journeyed with members through moments of both sorrow and joy.

Guided by the spirit of St. Padre Pio, we aim to be a beacon of hope within our parish—a reminder that God continues to speak, heal, and call His people today. We believe that every soul matters, and that through prayer and community, God draws many back to Himself.

A cherished highlight of our journey was witnessing the priestly ordination of Rev. Fr. Wilson Maina and Rev. Fr. Kevin Okeyo both of whom guided us through our formation classes. Seeing them transition from deacons to priests was a deep affirming moment, a living testimony to the spiritual fruits of our shared journey.

Each member contributes a unique gift to the community. Together, we have cultivated a safe, nurturing space where everyone is encouraged to share their joys, burdens, and faith stories. Our SCC is more than a prayer group; it is a spiritual home where Christ is

present in our love, service, and unity.

4. Looking Ahead: Our Vision and Commitment

As we look to the future, our commitment remains rooted in the Gospel values of faith, hope, and love. We aspire to expand our outreach, welcome new members, and continue active participation in the liturgical and social life of our parish.

Quotes by some members

"We hope more people will come to experience the joy and strength that comes from belonging to a Small Christian Community. It is truly a gift to journey together in Christ." — *Gidraph Waithaka*

"We are thankful for the guidance and support received we have received from the parish and our mentors. As we continue to grow, we find strength in the words of Romans 12:5: 'So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.'" — *Mary Kimani*

"Pray, hope, and don't worry." These words of St. Padre Pio continue to anchor our community. We gather not only to grow in faith, but to walk with one another each other in hope, healing, and love. In a world thirsting for meaning, we believe Christ still calls hearts to Himself—through prayer, through witness, and through small, faithful steps. May our community be a home of conversion, a wellspring of vocations, and a sign that God is still near. — *JP Matiko*

St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, pray for us.

Lilian is the Secretary of St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina SCC

The Holy Family Basilica Staff Small Christian Community

A Journey Toward Deeper Faith and Fellowship

By **Caroline Maina**

In the sacred halls of **The Holy Family Minor Basilica**, where prayers rise like incense and the faithful gather in reverence, a quiet but powerful movement is taking shape. The parish staff, guided by prayer, discernment, and pastoral care, has committed to forming a **Small Christian Community (SCC)**, The Holy Family Basilica Staff Small Christian Community, on **September 12, 2025**.

The parish staff's desire to gather for worship, nurture faith, love, and service inspired the formation of this Small Christian Community. This move is not just a program, but a pastoral vision rooted in the heart of the Gospel, the mission of the Church, and the call of Christ: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst." (Matthew 18:20). We believe that the Holy Spirit is calling us to something deeper, to make the Church more personal and more alive in the daily lives of our members.

The **Holy Family Minor Basilica** staff have been participating in parish events like quarterly Mass animations and joining Christians in celebrating major parish events such as the **Parish Family Day**. However, **we felt the need to be more intentionally aligned with the Holy Family Minor Basilica community and its strategic direction, so as to actively participate in all Church activities and contribute meaningfully to its mission.** This bold step will also help the staff move from attendance to belonging, from routine to relationship, and from isolation to communion.



Through regular meetings, members will reflect on Scripture, discuss its relevance to their lives, and encourage one another to live out their faith and foster spiritual maturity.

As the Holy Family Basilica Staff SCC, we are committed to walking together, to listen, to pray, and to serve. This is how we will help build a Church that truly reflects the heart of Christ, extending Christ's love beyond our walls and aligning our journey with the **strategic pillars** of the Basilica: Christian Formation, Promoting Active Participation in Liturgy, Youth Empowerment, Promotion of Vocations, Mission, Sustainability and Resource Mobilisation, Parish Administration and Service, and Infrastructure and Maintenance.

Caroline is the secretary of Holy Family Basilica Staff SCC and for Parish office

St. Peter The Rock

Discovering the Majesty of the Catholic Church

By Alex Ogutu, together with Sabrina Wanekaya, & Janet Njeri

On a warm sunny morning in 2014, I made my debut visit to the Holy Family Basilica compound. More specifically, I found my way to the Basilica Bookshop. The objective was to acquire for myself a copy of 'The Confession' by St. Augustine. The desire to acquire the book was not a random act. Early on, I had listened to speeches of the late Dr Martin Luther King. One particular speech, titled the 'Three Dimensions of a Complete Life' planted a seed. In justifying the role of spirituality in the life of human beings, Dr King quoted a phrase hitherto unknown to me: '.....may it be that St. Augustine was right; we were made for God, we will be restless, until we find rest in Him.'

As I later learnt, St Augustine was a great defender and advocate of Divine Law, as a worthy source of law. Law must align with fundamental moral principles to be considered law. A just law reflects moral principles while an unjust law deviates from them, potentially violating fundamental human rights.

Prior in 2009, and again through Dr King, I had heard about St. Thomas Aquinas and his explication of the difference between 'just' and 'unjust laws.' Reinforcing St Augustine's thought, St. Thomas Aquinas states that the law must be rooted in Divine and Natural Law. Man is born free and equal and has inherent rights that cannot be granted by the state. Among them are freedom to life, freedom of conscience, and freedom of will. Dr King relied heavily on their teaching.

My interest in the two Saints was greatly aroused. Hitherto, not much was known to me about them. The initial finding pointed to an interesting commonality between the two: Both are rooted in the Catholic Church. The finding was a seed. It was a seed of curiosity. The Catholic Church was certainly known to me from my early days. I had heard about the Church; I had been thrilled by their meticulously choreographed dances; I also had the privilege to attend a few masses upon invitation by Catholic friends. But it's the references to St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas that triggered a more than casual look at the Catholic Church.

The Confessions by St Augustine was an eye opener. Reading through in detail how St Augustine rose from a purposeless and deviant son to a towering figure of Christian theology was especially captivating and motivating. But something else was just as uplifting; the unyielding faith of a mother in her son. St Monica easily qualifies as St Augustine's ultimate earthly and human champion. She immediately reminded me of my own late mother; a tough spirit that *moulded me into who I have turned out to be. From the existential despair I faced, she hewed potent hope that guides me to this very day.

The more I read and synthesized the works of Saint Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, the more my admiration grew. Simply put, every word served as nutrient that nourished the planted seed. The attraction to Catholic Church grew steadily. Soon, it was clear

that it was no longer a matter of 'if' but 'when' I would join the Catholic Church. Something would catalyze the decision; the special place of Holy Mary in the Church. From my own mother, to reading *about St Monica's dogged determination, I more than readily related with Mother Mary's special recognition by the Catholic Church.

My life in Catholic Church thus far, since joining in July 2023, is nothing but fulfilling. I am forever a Catholic. With just about an year in, I can strongly testify to the grounding of the Catholic Church on Divine and Natural Laws as prescribed by the canon Law.

My sense of discovery is not unique. Excitedly, the timing of my taking of the leap of faith coincided with that of Sabrina Wanekaya. Like myself, she made a fully personal decision to join the Catholic Church. She and I shared the same Catechumen Class; the Holy Family Basilica (HFB) Catechumen Class of 2023/2024, that culminated in our baptism on March 30, 2024. Her testimony tells of the uplifting peace and tranquility she eventually encountered, one that allows her to optimally deepen her faith in God Almighty. In her own words:

When I first stepped into Holy Family Basilica, I felt an immediate sense of peace and belonging I had been searching for. The soulful beauty of the Mass, the sense of community, and the rich tradition of faith spoke deeply to me. It's not just the homily or the beautiful hymns from the choir, it's the genuine kindness I've experienced, the simple yet profound messages of hope and love, and the opportunity to grow closer to God alongside a supportive family of believers.

Sabrina and I continue our journey in the Small Christian Community (SCC) formed out of the 2023/2024 Catechumen Class. St Peter the Rock is the name of the SCC we belong to. It is named after St Peter, the Rock

upon which our Lord Jesus Christ committed to build His Church. St Peter is our Founding Pope. Nothing is as uplifting and rewarding as growing and nourishing our faith upon the Foundation himself. St Peter the Rock SCC reinforces our sense of belonging and discovery.

Since its formal formation, St Peter the Rock SCC has registered key milestones. Out of the Catechumen class of 57, 32 formally joined the newly formed St Peter the Rock SCC, becoming the founding members. Others went back to their respective SCCs within the Parish. St Peter the Rock SCC has since attracted 12 new members, including 3 couples. Additionally, members continue to seek complementary formations within the Parish for spiritual growth and nourishment.

For Janet Njeri, CWA's mission was an irresistible attraction. In her own words, she notes that: I joined the Catholic Women Association (CWA) because I was drawn to its mission of service, prayer, and sisterhood. I saw in this community a place where I could grow as a woman of faith, surrounded by other women who are committed to living out the Gospel in their daily lives. The CWA provides a space where we can encourage one another, serve the Church and our communities, and strengthen our spiritual walk together.

Like Sabrina and myself, Janet is a new entrant to the Catholic Church. We are glad that our one-year anniversary coincides with the Catholic church's Jubilee Year. Under the theme 'pilgrims of hope', we continue to experience the depths of the Catholic church; re-establishing relationship with God Almighty through forgiveness, service and charity. We are experiencing our best spiritual moments.

Alex is the Treasurer of St. Peter the Rock SCC



St. Augustine Small Christian Community: The Nyumba Kumi Spirit of Prayer

By Martin Ocholla

St. Augustine Small Christian Community (SCC) was formed in 2012 as one of the many SCCs at Holy Family Basilica Parish. The journey began with a group of 49 catechumens inspired by the life and teachings of St. Augustine of Hippo, after whom the community is named. Over the years, the group has grown steadily to a current membership of 78.

St. Augustine's core teachings emphasize God's ultimate sovereignty and the indispensable role of divine grace in human salvation, underscoring the reality of Original Sin and humanity's inability to overcome sin without God's gracious intervention. Among the chaplains who have walked with St. Augustine SCC on this journey of faith are His Lordship Bishop Simon Peter Kamomoe (then Fr. Kamomoe), Fr. Fredrick Chege, and Fr. David Kinyanjui. Our current chaplain is Fr. Michael Ndichu.

Our jumuiya meets every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. at the Cardinal Otunga Annex. From the beginning, the resolve to strengthen St. Augustine SCC has been a guiding principle. To foster unity and care, we established a Welfare Office to oversee members' needs, including birthday celebrations, welcoming newborns, supporting weddings, and offering comfort during times of sickness or bereavement.

A major turning point in our journey was the decision to create smaller prayer groups

within the larger SCC—the nyumba kumi model. This simple yet profound initiative ensures we remain connected to God and to one another, no matter where we are.

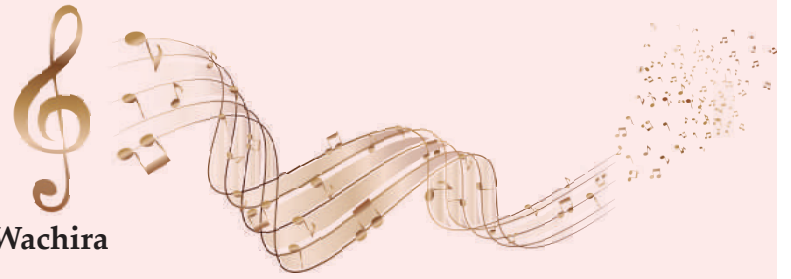
We currently have twelve prayer groups, each with an average of seven members. The groups identify themselves by the fruits of the holy spirit e.g Joy, Peace, Kindness etc. Each group elects leaders who serve a one-year term (renewable once). Their responsibilities include guiding new members during their probation period and recommending them for confirmation to the main jumuiya. They also mobilize members for charity work, team building, recollections, our feast day celebration and church cleaning; The five core activities undertaken by the Jumuiya annually since its formation thirteen years ago.

Each prayer group takes turns leading Sunday prayers, and a different group gathers virtually each day of the week to share prayers and reflections. This rhythm of daily devotion strengthens our spiritual bonds, deepens our faith, and fosters unity and accountability.

This far, our journey as a jumuiya has been purely by God's grace, and to Him we give all glory.

Martin is the Moderator of St. Augustine SCC

The Basilican Choir



By Annet Atieno, Collete Namalwa, and George Wachira

“**M**ultae manus laborem levem faciunt”(many hands make light work) is a befitting description of what the Basilican choir has achieved in the past couple of months. The year has been as eventful as it has been satisfying.

A CALL TO SOLEMN ADORATION WORSHIP SERVICE:-

An initiative by the Basilican choir has established a new tradition of Solemn Sacred Worship Service;

The Christmas Carols Worship Service-

The Advent season and The Nativity story were brought alive by the Basilican Choir through narration of the nativity story by the MYM and sacred music by the Choir. The Christmas Carols worship service aims to include all groups and families at our parish as active participants in this Holy and Glorious season. The commemoration of The Birth Of our lord Jesus Christ brings forth renewed Hope and Joy. In years to come, The Christmas Carols worship service will bring the Basilican family together as we all focus on THE REASON FOR THE SEASON, which is OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Solemnity of CORPUS CHRISTI Worship Service-

The Feast of THE BODY AND BLOOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST is a Feast that was born at a period when the Church was Faced by a Crisis of Faith. GOD in HIS INFINITE WISDOM ANSWERED Through BLOOD. The Miracle of Corpus Christi(Miracle of Bolsena),the Bleeding host and the Blood Stained Corporal .

The Miracle of Transubstantiation occurred at a very unlikely period in the Church where Fr Peter of Plague who weighed down by doubt and on his pilgrimage to Rome passed through the small town of Bolsena ,where the faith of St Christina of Bolsena boosted his failing faith but didn't cure his doubt, a vision by Sr Juliana of Liege Belgium only 600 kms away and the courage, devotion and wisdom of Pope Urban IV together, through Devine providence established The Feast of CORPUS CHRISTI. The first feast of CORPUS CHRISTI was held in the City Orvieto . Where Pope Urban IV led the faithful in humble adoration of the Relics Of Bolsena . St Thomas Aquinas wrote the LAUDA SION in 1264 to commemorate the First Feast of CORPUS CHRISTI.





In line with this rich heritage and tradition of the Church, The Basilica Choir organized the inaugural Solemn Worship Service during this year's feast of CORPUS CHRISTI. The Service was marked by Solemn Music, Benediction and Blessings by our Fr In Charge. In his homily Fr Ndichu urged us to spend time daily in The Presence of THE BODY AND BLOOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. We pray that we as a Parish can repeat the celebration at Orvieto and spend time in HIS PRESENCE at the Feast of CORPUS CHRISTI.

ONCE IN A LIFE TIME EXPERIENCES.

The Basilican Choir has been truly privileged this year to animate the sung liturgy in two once in a life time occasions mainly;

The Jubilee Year Launch and opening of the Holy door-

Pope Francis (RIP) declared 2025 a Jubilee year and the Apostolic Nuncio to Kenya proceeded with the official opening of the Holy Door in Kenya. On Sunday the 29/12/24), the Apostolic Nuncio led an

elaborate solemn celebration that ushered in the Jubilee year of Hope here in Kenya. The basilican choir provided the crucial foundation of the sung liturgy during the solemn procession and the subsequent Holy Mass. The Solemn Music provided a conducive environment where the contemplation and substance of the Jubilee year was assimilated by our parishioners.

The Papal Requiem Mass-

Easter Sunday was a bitter sweet Memory for the Universal Church in general and the Kenyan Church in particular at the passing on of Pope Francis (Gorge Bergoglio) .“ Papa Francisco” as Kenyans called him, was fondly remembered by the church in Kenya moreso because of the memories of his Papal visit to Kenya between 25th -27th November 2015.

April 25th 2025 was the day the Basilican Choir was charged with the duty of delivering the sung liturgy at the Requiem Mass for Pope Francis. The Basilican choir did deliver a memorable and befitting send off sung liturgy for our beloved departed Papa Francisco. The words of the Apostolic Nuncio “ We will miss his loving smile, and we will miss his tender care and words for refugees, prisoners, the poor, and yes, us poor sinners”, did ring so true for many of us. May the Soul of Pope Francis (Gorge Bergoglio) rest in eternal peace.

PARISH AND DEANERY OBLIGATIONS.

Parish Family Day 2024-

This past year's sung liturgy journey started with a successful anchoring of the parish family day by the Basilican choir whose main theme was “unity through diversity.” The Basilican choir presented diversity through a melodious presentation of the Sung liturgy capturing songs from diverse regions that were categorized in zones.

The melodies captured the different dialects and rhythms of diverse cultures of the Kenyan people.

The lantern season and the Easter Tridum-

The basilican choir tirelessly led the Christian community through the Lantern season and the Easter Tridum. The Animation of the way of the cross, leading processions during palm Sunday and Good Friday, as well as animating the The Lord Supper, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday Mases.

The central deanery family day –

The Basilican choir hosted the central deanery choirs at the Basilica during this year's Central Deanery family day celebration. The deanery choirs worked seamlessly and produced a vibrant, colorful and solemn sung liturgy to bring out a great celebration.

As members of the Basilican choir continue their Arch Diocesan choir Liturgical formation, it is imperative that they understand their crucial roles as ministers of the sung liturgy. Their focus has to be leading our Christians to a conscience, deliberate, voluntary and active participation in the liturgy of Mass.

The temptation of converting the Sung Liturgy into some form of entertainment has to be resisted at all cost. It is noteworthy therefore that choir singing has to meet the sole objective of helping our Christian focus on the Fountain of Life and The source of All good things, Our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Annet, Collete, and George are secretaries of St. Gregory the Great Youth Choir, Basilica Magnificat Choir, and Christ Centered Basilica Choir, respectively

Navigating Faith in the Era of AI and Cancel Culture

By Kennedy Isiaho

We're living in a time of rapid change. Artificial Intelligence, once just a science fiction idea, is now part of our everyday lives. Machines can write stories, create art, drive cars, and even offer advice. Tools like ChatGPT give answers in seconds, while platforms like Midjourney can generate realistic images with just a few clicks. As AI becomes more powerful, Christians are left asking an important question: What does this mean for our faith?

After the passing of Pope Francis, social media in Kenya was flooded with AI-generated images. Some showed local political leaders dressed in papal robes, others wearing mitres, and a few even lying in coffins. While many of these images were meant to be humorous or satirical, they also showed how easily AI can blur the line between truth and fiction.

There's no denying that AI brings many benefits. It helps doctors detect diseases earlier, supports farmers with better data, and allows businesses to reach their audiences more effectively. Even in ministry, some pastors are using AI to help prepare sermons. But alongside these advantages come real concerns such as job loss, privacy issues, and the spread of misinformation.

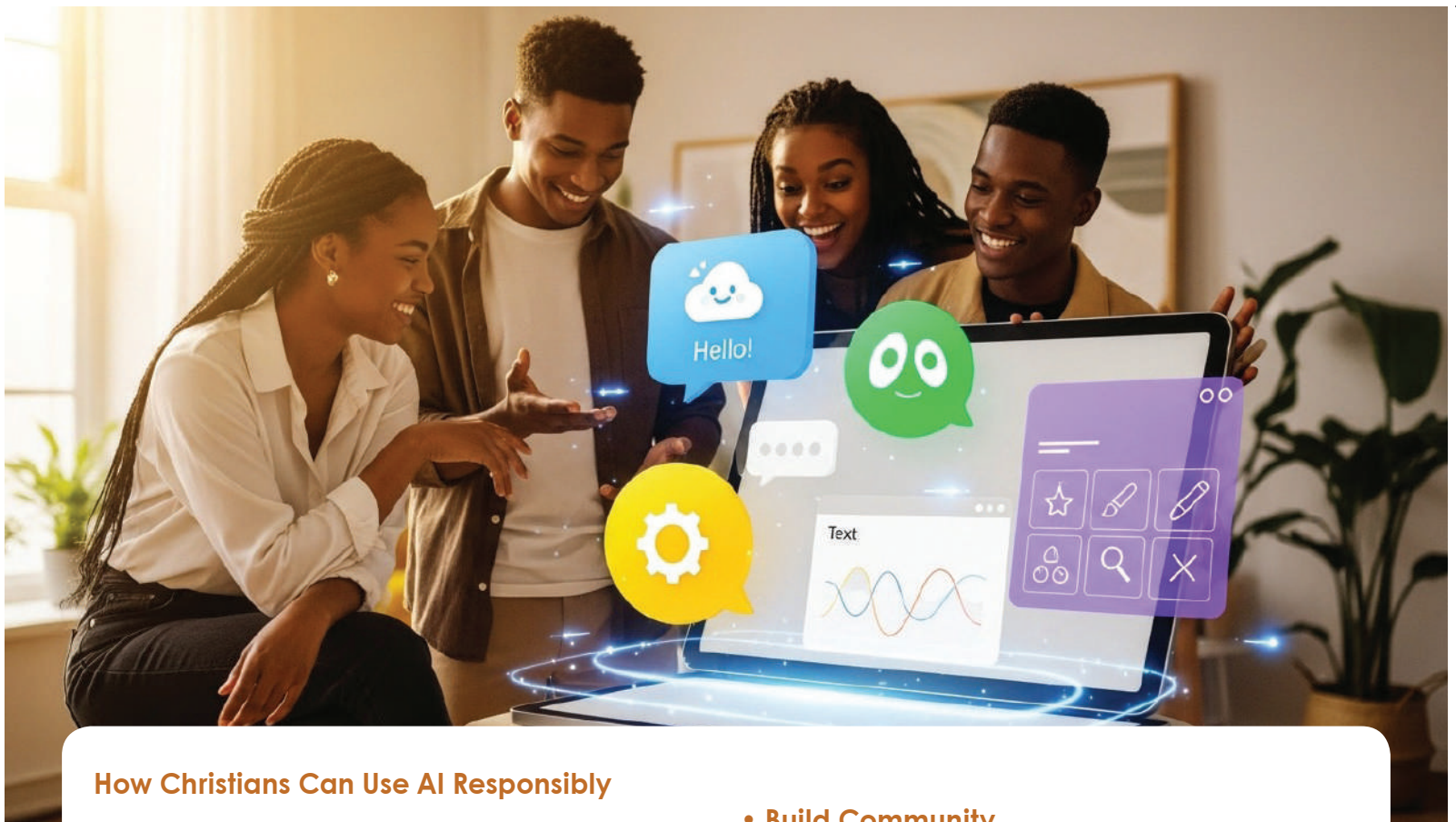
The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that "The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God" (CCC 1700). That means we need to ask ourselves: Is this technology helping people, or is it using them? Am I using AI to serve others and honor God, or am I using it for selfish reasons?

One example that sparked global debate happened in late 2024, when a church in Switzerland introduced an AI-powered chatbot that allowed people to "talk to Jesus." Instead of meeting a priest in the confessional, visitors found a screen with an AI-generated image of Christ responding to their confessions.

Many believers were deeply uncomfortable. Is this respectful or irreverent? Can a machine offer spiritual comfort? In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Or life? No machine, no matter how advanced, can replace Him. You cannot download the Mass. You cannot digitize the sacraments. Prayer and fellowship are not things you can replicate with a program.

This moment raised deeper questions about the role of technology in sacred spaces. It reminded Christians that while AI may simulate presence, it cannot embody grace. The spiritual life is not transactional or mechanical. It is relational, rooted in communion with God and others.

Another case that raised ethical concerns was the use of AI in judicial systems. In some countries, algorithms are being used to assist judges in evaluating cases and drafting decisions. While this promises efficiency, it also introduces serious risks. AI decisions are not always transparent, and they can carry embedded biases. Christians must ask: Can justice truly be served by a system that lacks compassion, discernment, and moral accountability? Scripture calls us to "act justly and love mercy" (Micah 6:8), and justice without humanity is not justice at all.



How Christians Can Use AI Responsibly

AI is not inherently good or bad. It is a tool. Like any other tool, it depends on how we use it. Christians can engage with AI in thoughtful and faithful ways by following these principles:

• Use Discernment

Just because AI can do something does not mean it should. Ask whether it aligns with your values and serves a good purpose. Let your faith guide your choices.

• Speak Truth

Avoid using AI to create or spread false or misleading content. Whether you are writing, designing, or sharing, stay committed to honesty and integrity.

• Respect Privacy

Be mindful of how AI uses personal data. Advocate for ethical practices and protect others' privacy, especially when using AI tools in ministry or communication.

• Stay Rooted in Scripture and Prayer

AI can help with research or inspiration, but it should never replace personal study, prayer, or spiritual guidance. Let technology support your walk with God, not replace it.

• Build Community

Use technology to connect with others, not isolate yourself. Let it enhance relationships and foster fellowship, especially in a digital age where loneliness is common.

Pope Leo XIV, in his first address to the cardinals, called AI one of the major challenges of our time. He warned that it touches on what it means to be human. He reminded the Church that while technology can serve society, it must never replace human dignity or our responsibility to one another. AI should be a tool for good, not a substitute for conscience, community, or our Creator.

Genesis 1:27 tells us that "God created mankind in His image." That means we are more than intelligent. We are spiritual. We can love, forgive, worship, and seek God. These are things AI will never be able to do.

Kennedy is the secretary of St. Simon Peter SCC

Spiritual Warfare: A Catholic Theological Reflection

Spiritual warfare denotes the ongoing conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness, particularly Satan and his fallen angels, for the control of souls and the world. Sacred Scripture reminds us that “we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). This struggle is not merely physical but profoundly spiritual, touching the mind, the heart, and the soul. St Paul exhorts the faithful: “Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm” (Eph. 6:13).

The Christian life is, by its nature, a battle. Yet it is not waged in despair but in hope, for Christ has already triumphed over sin and death. This reflection seeks to explore the biblical foundation of spiritual warfare, the Church’s teaching, the testimony of the saints, the practical means available to the faithful, and the reality of demonic attacks as understood in Catholic theology.

The Scriptural Basis of Spiritual Warfare

The Bible provides a profound theological foundation for understanding spiritual combat. St Peter warns believers: “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith” (1 Pet. 5:8–9). Similarly, James exhorts: “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7). This dynamic of vigilance and resistance runs throughout salvation history.

In the Old Testament, glimpses of this warfare appear in mysterious episodes such as Daniel’s vision, where an angel tells him that his prayer was delayed by the “prince of the kingdom of Persia” until the archangel Michael intervened (Dan. 10:13). Likewise, the Book of Job reveals Satan’s attempts to test the faithful, yet always within the limits permitted by God, who uses trials to purify and strengthen His servants.

In the New Testament, Jesus is portrayed as the definitive conqueror of Satan. His public ministry begins with forty days in the desert, where He confronts the devil directly (Matt. 4:1–11). Each temptation is repelled not by compromise but by the proclamation of Scripture, showing that God’s Word is the believer’s ultimate weapon.

The Book of Revelation presents the cosmic battle between the dragon and the woman clothed with the sun (Rev. 12:1–9), long interpreted as symbolising the struggle between Satan and the Church, with Mary as its preeminent witness of fidelity. The dragon’s defeat confirms that Christ’s victory is secure, even if the battle continues in history.

The Church’s Teaching on Spiritual Warfare

The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that while Satan is a creature, his power is real:

“The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing... his power is not infinite... he cannot prevent the building up of God’s reign” (CCC 395).

Thus, Christians live not in fear but in vigilance, rooted in Christ's triumph on the Cross.

Pope Paul VI in 1972 lamented that "one of the Church's greatest needs is to defend itself against that evil we call the Devil," warning against denial of his reality. Pope Leo XIII, after a terrifying vision of demonic assault, composed the Prayer to St Michael the Archangel, now beloved worldwide as a prayer of protection. The Church also retains the Rite of Exorcism, a sacramental reserved to authorised priests.

St Thomas Aquinas teaches that God permits demonic activity to purify the faithful and strengthen virtue. Demons, though fallen angels, cannot act beyond divine permission. Their hatred of humanity is ultimately powerless before Christ, who "has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col. 1:13).

Recognising Spiritual Attacks

Spiritual attacks are often subtle, manifesting in physical, psychological, or emotional ways. Scripture describes Satan as the thief who "comes only to steal and kill and destroy" (Jn. 10:10). His most common weapon remains temptation. James writes: "Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin" (Jas. 1:14–15).

Temptations of lust, envy, anger, and greed serve as snares. The saints themselves were not exempt. St Augustine confessed his struggles with lust; St Jerome, immersed in Scripture, fought similar temptations. Both demonstrate that temptation is not sin—yielding is. As St Peter Chrysologus taught, temptation is the "training ground of virtue."

Fr Gabriele Amorth, former chief exorcist of

Rome, observed: "The devil's ordinary action is temptation. His extraordinary actions, oppression, obsession, and possession, are rare, but temptation is daily."

Yet the faithful are not defenceless. Scripture, the sacraments, prayer, and sacramentals, such as the scapular or medal of St Benedict, equip believers for battle. Christ assures: "Take heart! I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

The Testimony of the Saints

Catholic tradition is rich with witnesses who endured spiritual combat.

- **St Anthony of the Desert** (251–356), father of monasticism, endured terrifying demonic assaults during his solitude. His victories came through clinging to Christ crucified.
- **St Augustine** (354–430) confessed his struggles with lust, but his conversion revealed God's power to break strongholds.
- **St Jerome** (347–420), though plagued with distractions, persevered to produce the Vulgate.
- **St Dominic** (1170–1221) promoted the Rosary as a weapon against heresy and temptation.
- **St Francis of Assisi** (1181–1226), through humility and poverty, overcame pride and greed.
- **St Padre Pio** (1887–1968) endured visible demonic attacks, yet taught that the devil is "like a rabid dog tied to a chain" who can only harm those who stray too close.

Their witness reveals a consistent truth: Satan is real, temptation is constant, but God's grace is greater. Victory flows not from human strength but from Christ's triumph on the Cross.

Practical Weapons in Spiritual Warfare

Jesus Himself showed the way: in the desert He repelled temptation by proclaiming Scripture (Matt. 4:1–11). St Paul reminds us that “the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:4).

Among the faithful, the following practices remain central:

- **Daily prayer**, especially the Rosary, which Our Lady at Fatima promised would bring peace.
- **Frequent reception of the sacraments**, above all the Eucharist and Reconciliation, which cleanse and strengthen the soul.
- **Use of sacramentals**, such as the scapular and Miraculous Medal.
- **Invocation of the Precious Blood of Christ** (Heb. 12:24) as protection.
- **Prayers to St Michael** and authorised exorcism prayers.
- **Eucharistic adoration**, which disperses demonic influence and deepens union with Christ.

Testimonies affirm their efficacy. Julia Kim of Najju reported her Rosary being cut by unseen forces before delivering a message. Padre Pio's beatings did not prevent him from celebrating Mass. Such experiences show that attacks may intensify as one grows closer to Christ, but His grace is sufficient.

What the Church Teaches About Demonic Attacks

The Church distinguishes between ordinary and extraordinary demonic actions.

Ordinary Attacks

These are temptations, the daily battle of the Christian life. The world entices with wealth, influence, or popularity; the flesh stirs cravings; the devil intensifies both, whispering discouragement or disobedience. Temptation

itself is not sin but yielding damages communion with God.

Extraordinary Attacks

1. Oppression – external afflictions, such as repeated misfortunes or strange disturbances. The Book of Job exemplifies this. Exorcists caution that natural causes must be ruled out before attributing difficulties to demonic interference.

2. Obsession – internal torment, such as intrusive thoughts or despair. St Paul's “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7) may reflect this. Though not possession, obsession can overwhelm mind and spirit.

3. Possession – when demons exert control over a person's faculties. The Gospels recount several exorcisms performed by Christ. Possession is rare and carefully discerned: signs include speaking unknown languages, hidden knowledge, or extraordinary strength. Before authorising an exorcism, the Church ensures medical and psychological causes are excluded.

Signs of Oppression

Pastoral experience suggests several warning signs:

1. Repeated misfortunes without cause.
2. Sudden resistance to prayer or the sacraments.
3. Disturbing dreams or nocturnal harassment.
4. Aversion to holy objects or the Eucharist.
5. Unexplained illnesses intensified during prayer.
6. Crushing despair resistant to remedies.
7. Addictions or compulsions beyond ordinary weakness.

These do not automatically prove demonic influence, but when clustered together, especially in spiritual contexts, they warrant careful discernment.

Causes and Gateways

Certain choices increase vulnerability: rebellion against God, persistent sin, pride, and especially occult practices such as fortune-telling, witchcraft, or séances. Even seemingly harmless dabbling in horoscopes or “energy healing” may open doors to the enemy.

Trauma, abuse, or generational sin may also provide footholds. Yet the Catechism insists Satan’s power is limited and subject to God’s providence: “In everything God works for good with those who love Him” (Rom. 8:28).

Responding to Spiritual Attacks

The Church’s response is pastoral and rooted in hope:

- **Do not fear** – fear strengthens the enemy.
- **Rely on the sacraments** – frequent Confession and Communion fortify the soul.
- **Pray and fast** – especially the Rosary and the Prayer to St Michael.
- **Seek pastoral help** – priests may pray prayers of deliverance; in grave cases, bishops authorise exorcism.

A Final Word of Hope

Spiritual warfare is real, but it should not dominate the Christian imagination. St Peter warns of the prowling lion (1 Pet. 5:8), yet Christ has conquered. The devil is defeated, and his power is limited.

The faithful can therefore live in confidence, echoing St Paul: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). The Cross of Christ is our assurance of victory.

Conclusion

Spiritual warfare is an unavoidable aspect of Christian life. Though Satan prowls and seeks to devour, his power is limited and already

broken by Christ. The task of the faithful is not to engage in sensationalism but to remain steadfast, sober, and vigilant, clothed in the armour of God.

Through Scripture, the sacraments, prayer, and the witness of the saints, Christians are equipped for this battle. As the Catechism reminds us, “God does not permit evil except that He would bring good from it” (CCC 412). Spiritual warfare, therefore, while real, is also an arena of hope, for it reveals that Christ has already conquered.

If you ever find yourself facing challenges that seem to stem from spiritual attacks, please feel free to visit the parish office and speak with any of the priests for spiritual guidance and support.

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Reviewed and coauthored by Rev. Fr. Dr. Michael Ndichu.**



A Jubilee Pilgrimage of Hope Through Europe

By Albertina Sachombe

In celebration of the Jubilee Year of Hope, the Holy Family Minor Basilica organized a deeply spiritual pilgrimage across Europe from May 23 to June 5, 2025. The journey, facilitated by Oriental Destinations and led by our administrator Rev. Fr. Michael Ndichu, took pilgrims through some of the most historically rich and spiritually significant Catholic shrines in Portugal, Spain, France, and Italy. The two-week pilgrimage offered participants the opportunity to deepen their faith, reflect on God's presence, and encounter the rich traditions of the universal Church.

Fatima, Portugal – Encounter with Our Lady of the Rosary

The journey began in Fatima, one of the world's most important Marian shrines and the national patronage of Portugal. Fatima is globally revered for the apparitions of Our Lady of the Rosary to three shepherd children—Lucia dos Santos and her cousins

Jacinta and Francisco Marto—in 1917. Between May and October of that year, Mary appeared monthly, culminating in the Miracle of the Sun on October 13, witnessed by over 60,000 people. Fatima continues to be a powerful symbol of prayer, repentance, and peace.

While in Fatima, the pilgrims participated in the nightly candlelight Rosary procession, an extraordinary experience where thousands gather to pray and walk around the shrine. The united atmosphere of prayer and devotion, with candles illuminating the sanctuary, felt like a foretaste of heaven and a profound communal expression of faith.

Avila, Spain – The Legacy of St. Teresa of Avila

Leaving Portugal, the group traveled to Avila, the birthplace of St. Teresa of Avila, one of the Church's greatest mystics and reformers. Born in 1515, Teresa pursued a life dedicated to God from an early age, especially after the



death of her mother when she was twelve. She joined the Carmelite Order at nineteen, and her spiritual enlightenment deepened after reading St. Augustine's Confessions. Motivated by a desire for deeper holiness, she undertook the reform of the Carmelite order.

St. Teresa is celebrated for her contributions to spiritual literature, especially *The Interior Castle*, which provides profound guidance on contemplative and mental prayer. Her work emphasized the importance of an intimate, personal relationship with God. The visit to Avila allowed the pilgrims to connect with her spiritual legacy and deepen their appreciation for contemplative prayer.

Loyola, Spain – Home of St. Ignatius, Founder of the Jesuits

The next significant stop was Loyola, birthplace of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). The pilgrims visited the Basilica built around the home of St. Ignatius, including the preserved "Room of Conversion," where he ultimately surrendered himself to God after a serious war injury. This moment marked the beginning of his spiritual transformation.

In Loyola, the pilgrims learned about central Ignatian values: simplicity, solidarity, spirituality, service, and social justice. They also reflected on the prayer *Anima Christi*, which is traditionally associated with St. Ignatius and often recited after Holy

Communion.

Lourdes, France – Healing and Hope

From Spain, the group journeyed to Lourdes, one of the most visited Catholic pilgrimage sites in the world. Here, in 1858, the Virgin Mary appeared to 14-year-old Bernadette Soubirous and identified herself as "the Immaculate Conception," confirming a recently declared dogma of the Church.

Lourdes is most associated with healing, both physical and spiritual. Pilgrims attended the afternoon blessing of the sick and the Blessed Sacrament procession—moments renowned for documented miraculous healings. We also attended Mass at the Grotto, where Mary appeared, and joined the evening candlelight Rosary procession, recited in many languages, symbolizing the universality of the Church.

Pilgrims participated in the traditional baths in the spring waters of Lourdes, a symbolic act tied to Mary's message: "Go and drink and wash at the fountain." Drinking the water and bathing in it served as a physical and spiritual gesture of surrender, trust, and renewal.

Turin, Italy – Encounter with the Shroud and St. John Bosco

The pilgrimage continued to Turin, where we visited the Chapel of the Holy Shroud, which houses the Shroud of Turin. This ancient linen cloth bears the mysterious image



of a crucified man, believed by many to be Jesus Christ. The group also visited the Basilica of Our Lady Help of Christians, closely connected to St. John Bosco and his ministry to poor and abandoned youth. Here, they viewed the tomb of St. Don Bosco and learned about his work in education and spiritual formation.

Padua – Devotion to St. Anthony

In Padua, the pilgrims visited the Basilica of St. Anthony, dedicated to the beloved saint known for his eloquent preaching, knowledge of Scripture, and love for the poor. Numerous miracles were attributed to him during his life and after his death. St. Anthony is especially venerated as the patron saint of lost items. The visit offered pilgrims an opportunity to meditate on his humility, charity, and unwavering trust in God.

Assisi – The Home of St. Francis and St. Clare

A key highlight of the pilgrimage was Assisi, birthplace of St. Francis and St. Clare. St. Francis, though never ordained a priest, transformed the Church through his radical embrace of poverty and devotion to Christ.

He was the first to receive the stigmata—the wounds of Christ—on September 17, 1224. The pilgrims visited his tomb in the Basilica of St. Francis, a powerful moment of reflection on humility, simplicity, and peace.

Nearby, the Basilica of St. Clare houses the saint's incorrupt body and the famous cross of San Damiano, from which Christ spoke to Francis, instructing him to “rebuild My Church.” Pilgrims also visited the tomb of Blessed Carlo Acutis, a young modern saint known for his love for the Eucharist and his skill in computer technology. His life is a powerful reminder that sanctity is possible even in today's digital world.

Cascia – St. Rita, Patron Saint of Impossible Causes

From Assisi, the journey continued to Cascia, home to St. Rita, patroness of impossible and desperate cases. In the Basilica, pilgrims viewed her incorrupt body, relics, and the rose miracle associated with her life. Her story of perseverance in suffering and unwavering hope in God resonated deeply with the pilgrims.

Lanciano – The Eucharistic Miracle

A profound spiritual moment awaited the group in Lanciano, site of one of the earliest recorded Eucharistic miracles. In the 8th century, a doubting priest witnessed the consecrated Host transform into actual flesh and the wine into real blood. The relics remain preserved and were scientifically tested in the 1970s, confirming that the flesh is human heart tissue and the blood type is AB—the same type found on the Shroud of Turin. Witnessing this miracle strengthened the pilgrims' devotion to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

San Giovanni Rotondo – The Shrine of St. Padre Pio

In San Giovanni Rotondo, pilgrims visited the shrine of St. Padre Pio, the modern mystic famous for his stigmata, miracles, and deep spiritual insight. The shrine preserves his room, personal belongings, vestments, and even medical instruments used during his lifetime. His incorrupt body is visible for veneration in the crypt. Pilgrims reflected on his example of suffering, humility, and tireless service to souls.

Vatican and Rome – The Heart of the Catholic Church

The pilgrimage culminated in Rome and the Vatican. The group attended the Papal Audience, witnessing the global unity of the Church. They toured the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel, significant especially as it had recently been used in the conclave that elected Pope Leo XIV. Pilgrims visited the four major basilicas—St. Peter's, St. John Lateran, St. Paul Outside the Walls, and St. Mary Major—entering through the Holy Doors opened for the Jubilee Year.

They also climbed the Holy Stairs (Scala Sancta) on their knees, praying on each of the 28 steps believed to have been climbed by Jesus before His trial under Pontius Pilate.

The pilgrimage concluded with Holy Mass at St. Mary Major and a visit to the tomb of Pope Francis.

Conclusion – A Journey of Faith, Renewal, and Hope

The pilgrimage across Europe during the Jubilee Year proved to be a transformative journey of grace, reflection, and renewal. Participants encountered the universal Church, deepened their understanding of Catholic tradition, and strengthened their faith through exposure to saints, miracles, and sacred holy sites. The experience served as an invitation for all parishioners to consider joining future pilgrimages, as they offer unparalleled opportunities to grow in faith, learn Church history, and renew one's spiritual life.

Albertina was one of the pilgrims to Europe. She is a member of the Youth Board and a leader at the St. Jude Laudato Si' Circle.





Being a Single Mother – Know our World

A Journey of Strength, Faith, and Silent Battles

By Anonymous

Are you a single mother?
Do you know one?
Is it your mother, sister, cousin, friend, or even your daughter?

What comes to mind when you hear the term single mother? Do you judge, pity, or admire her?

The questions are endless.

Single motherhood takes many forms. Some women become single mothers through the death of their spouses, widows who, though alone, often receive recognition and support from family. Their children inherit from their fathers, and society still sees them as "married women."

Others become single mothers through divorce. In such cases, the law provides for custody, alimony, and maintenance: organizations like FIDA step in to ensure that fathers take responsibility.

But there is another group often overlooked, women who have never been married but are raising their children alone. I know this world too well, because I am one of them.

We raise our children alone, carrying both the father's and the mother's roles. We shoulder a heavy burden without complaint, often with no help and no expectation of any. Our energy, focus, and resources go entirely to our children, leaving little for ourselves. The truth, though hard to admit, is that many of us were abandoned.

My Story

I am blessed with a daughter who is now all grown up. When I got her, I had just landed my first job. I was young, hopeful, and in love. I thought I had met my "Mr. Right." We had dated for three years, and I was certain marriage was the next step.

Then I became pregnant and everything changed. That's when he confessed that he had a wife, though they were separated at the time. He said she had returned, and he had chosen to go back to her.

Breaking the news to my mum wasn't easy. I told her I was expecting, but I wasn't going to get married. She was disappointed, I could see it in her eyes, but she never turned her back on me. My mother stood by me through thick and thin. I will forever thank God for giving me such a strong, loving woman.

My dad, on the other hand, never asked questions. But I knew he loved my daughter deeply. Before he passed on, he declared her the lastborn of the family, a gesture that meant the world to me. It gave both of us a place in the family.

Not all my siblings were kind. Some judged me. I was often left out of family decisions and only informed at the last minute. I felt unwanted, like a stain on the family name. But I kept my head high. I refused to ask for help because I felt I had disappointed my parents, though deep down, I knew they would have supported me if I had asked.

There's more than meets the eye. It's not easy to be a single mother, especially when the child grows up and starts asking the hard questions.

You search for suitable answers, make excuses, or even lie. As the child matures and begins to understand life better, it becomes harder for both of you. Adolescence can be

a storm. Your child starts fighting, faunting, and even judging you for putting them in that situation. It goes on until they mature and begin to see things differently.

Faith and Lessons Learned

Through it all, my faith kept me grounded. There were moments when I felt invisible and alone, but prayer reminded me that God never abandons His children. Whenever I lacked, He sent help in ways I couldn't have imagined. I truly believe that my daughter and I are living testimonies of His grace.

I remember when my daughter was old enough to start catechism. I didn't know what to do at first. It took courage to approach the catechist. I was also hesitant to join church groups, like CWA, because I thought they were only for married women. But taking that step reminded me that the Church welcomes all, and that faith and community are for everyone, regardless of marital status.

There were also a few friends, and even parish members, who quietly stood by me. They checked in, prayed with me, and reminded me that God's love is enough. Their kindness kept me going during the darkest nights.

Church & Moral Reflection

I know that in the eyes of the Church, bringing forth a child outside the Sacrament of Marriage is not the ideal path. It is something I have reflected deeply on and sought God's mercy for. But I also know that I was deceived; I did not know the man I loved was already married. It was a painful lesson.

To the young women reading this: please be careful. Do not take a man's words at face value. Ask questions, take time to know the person you're committing to, and if possible, involve your family and your Church in your journey. Love should never blind you to truth.



It is far better to wait and discern than to find out too late that you were misled.

Even when we make mistakes, God's mercy is greater than our shame. What matters is that we turn back to Him, walk uprightly, and raise our children in faith and love.

The Silent Struggles of Single Mothers

Then there's society. Some people applaud you; others judge you. Some wonder why you're still single, while a few even envy you, calling you a "heroine" because you've managed to raise a child or children on your own.

Some single mothers feel pressured to hide their status, even adding male surnames to their children, those of grandfathers or other relatives, just to avoid judgment. Others do so even when the father does not recognize or support the child. Sadly, many men desire companionship but fear responsibility.

The struggle is endless. There are many hurdles to jump before you reach the finish line.

To families and children of single mothers, love, appreciate, and celebrate your mothers. They fall, they rise, they drown, and they swim back to shore, all for the sake of their children.

May our Church, families, and our society continue to open their hearts to single mothers not with judgment, but with compassion.

The writer, a parishioner at Holy Family Minor Basilica



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A Tribute to Our Faithful Leaders of the Basilica Family

Their legacy of faith and service continues to inspire us.

We pause for a moment to honour our recently departed leaders of the Basilican family for their contributions and the impact they have had on our lives. The man and woman we remember today devoted their time, talent, treasure, and passion to the work of God, true leaders and shining examples for those of us left behind to emulate.

Dr. Christine Ncekei Mugambi

1st April 2025

Dr. Mugambi was a member of the Parish Pastoral Council, representing the Christ-Centered Basilica Choir as Vice Moderator from 2019 to 2023. She had been a dedicated member of the choir since 2010, choosing to sing Soprano.

May her soul rest in everlasting peace.

Amen.



Mzee Simeon Nyamwaro Nyamogoba

1st August 2025

Mr. Nyamwaro was a member of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), representing the Catholic Men's Association (CMA) as Vice Moderator from 2023 to 2025, having joined midway through the current PPC cycle. He also served as a member of the Parish Development Committee (PDC) from 2016 to 2019 and was part of the PDC Education Sub-Committee.

May his soul rest in everlasting peace.

Amen.



Entertainment



Memes



Father, I have not come to repent. Please help me with 5k.

Who is praying against fake friends? I've been collapsing all morning.

Abraham to Isaac: 'C'mon, did you really think I was going to kill you?

Wise man said:

A wise man once said: Don't be afraid to start over again. This time you're not starting from scratch—you're starting from experience.

Motivation words.

"Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will." – **Zig Ziglar**

"When you get into a tight place, and everything goes against you, till it seems as though you cannot hold on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn." – **Harriet Beecher Stowe**

"If you can't fly, then run. If you can't run, then walk. If you can't walk, then crawl. But whatever you do, you must keep moving forward." – **Martin Luther King Jr.**

"God will not allow you to be lost if you persist in your determination not to lose Him." – **St. Padre Pio**

"If you want to be successful, you must respect one rule: never lie to yourself." – **Paulo Coelho**

Sometimes it's not the devil, it's the decision.

People and time will teach you more the books.

"If you have to choose between being kind and being right, choose being kind — and you will always be right."

Beauty is never lost as we get older; it just moves from the face to the heart.

People will lie directly to your face and then get mad at you because you don't trust them.

Sometimes the best thing you can do is keep your mouth shut and your eyes open. The truth always comes out in the end.

By **Lucinda Aiko, the Secretary of the Lectors Society & PMC Animator, HFMB & Bernadetta Mehozi Nyakure, the secretary of St. Paul Youth Evangelizers**



Holy Family Basilica Parochial School

"Education is one thing no one can take away from you." —Elin Nordegren

Mission Statement

To offer education that enhances spiritual, intellectual and character formation of the pupils through mutual cooperation among pupils, parents, teachers and benefactors.

Vision

To be a model school that cultivates love for lifelong learning, spiritual growth and exemplary moral values.

School Motto

Strive for spiritual and academic excellence

Core Values

love, excellence, integrity, teamwork, hard work, respect, commitment.

Why HFB Parochial School

The school is established and founded on Christian values which are our daily moving and operating gear. Being built within the Holy Family Minor Basilica premises, the school changed its name from Catholic Parochial to Holy Family Basilica Parochial and enjoys a variety of privileges ranging from the weekly Eucharistic celebrations and spiritual guidance.

We also conduct catechesis classes which ensure that before learners' transit to high school, they have received all the sacraments giving them a firm foundation in faith.

Under the leadership of Sr. Caroline, the school has been able to partner with various schools around Nairobi and beyond not only in academic fields but also in the world of co-curricular activities.

The school has for long enjoyed and taken pride in various achievements and awards both in the world of music and sports. In the past years, the school has participated in music and drama festivals up to the national level.

Being administered by a team of expert facilitators/teachers, the school has been able to marvel in various clubs and associations/movements as clearly highlighted in the captions below.

The school has one of the most coveted pupils' choirs that has recorded its own art in studio and is still aiming higher.



The pupils have always enjoyed the frequent educational tours and travels all-round the country. Promotion of internal tourism is in the hearts and souls of these young ones.

As part of patriotism to our country, the school enrolls pupils from as low as Grade 1 in the school's leading and competitive scouts' movement and participating in voting in the school council.

When you land in the school environment, you will be amazed beyond words by the excellent works of the pupils and teachers in the bid to put Competency Based Education into practice. Indeed, we are a 2-6-6-3 conversant and practicing institution. Join us on our journey to educate and nurture future leaders grounded in faith, compassion and excellence.

We look forward to welcoming your child into our vibrant and supportive community.

Coding in our school

Electronic devices like cell phones, laptops, and tablets require code to function properly. Coding allows humans to communicate with these devices. Modern technology such as traffic lights, calculators, smart TVs, and cars uses internal coding systems.

Since computers do not communicate like humans, coding acts as a translator. Code converts human input into a language that computers understand. Once computers

receive these messages, they complete assigned tasks such as changing font colors or centering an image.etc

Why does it matter into our school

The world we are living now is not the same our learners will live tomorrow, the jobs we do now are not the same they will do. Many of tomorrows career – like drone engineers, AI doctors will need people who understand technology from a young age. That is why we are lucky to introduce our learners to this at an early age.

We have noticed with introduction of coding;

- Learners are not afraid to try and fail and try again until they get it and that's how innovators are.
- Learners are more confident in mathematics and science
- Learners have become creative even in their projects - Programming isn't just technical — it's creative. Learners can build games, animations, and stories. This empowers them to bring their ideas to life using digital tools, turning them into creators, not just consumers.

We are not just learning how to use technology, we are learning how to build it. To our learners, don't worry if it all sounds complicated, we did not understand it all at once either, but step by step you are learning. You don't need to be perfect you just need to be curious, keep trying and never give up.



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