



Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia (CBCM)

Message for 63rd Malaysia Day 2026

"A Call for Mutual Respect, Acceptance, Friendship & Harmony"

We celebrate our 63rd Malaysia Day with the theme "*Malaysia MADANI: Kesejahteraan Dinikmati*," which promotes a vision of building a progressive, inclusive and harmonious Malaysia, where prosperity is enjoyed by all. On this occasion, Kuching, Sarawak has the privilege of hosting this national-level Malaysia Day Celebration on 16th September 2026.

The Malaysia Pastoral Convention: A Fresh Start for Bridge Building

Just last week from 9th -13th September 2026, the Catholic Church in Malaysia held its national-level Malaysia Pastoral Convention in Sibu, Sarawak. This historic gathering brought together 1,000 Catholic delegates – including Cardinal, Archbishops, Bishops, priests, religious nuns and church leaders, coming from Sabah, Sarawak, & Semenanjung. After four days of prayers and discernment, the Catholic Church made a collective commitment to focus on these core areas:

- **Family Life & Youth:** Support for families & younger generations.
- **Environment & Ecology:** Caring for our common home and ecology.
- **Welfare Services:** Assisting the poor, marginalized, all persons in need.
- **Nation-Building:** Becoming bridge builders across our society.

The Catholic Church acknowledges that while Malaysia is geographically divided by the South China Sea - with visible discrepancies in wealth distribution, economic progress, education, and infrastructure - we are deeply enriched by the diverse gifts of our cultures, ethnicities, and languages. Held just before Malaysia Day, this Convention inspired us to embrace our shared responsibility in nation-building by living as good neighbours. It marks a fresh start to building genuine friendship between the regions of Peninsular Malaysia and Bornean Sabah & Sarawak.

Preserving Mutual Respect & Harmony in Malaysia

It is against this backdrop of promoting friendship and harmony that I am deeply saddened by a recent incident where Sepang UMNO division chief, Datuk Noorazli Said, shared an inappropriate "priest and nun joke" during a public gathering, which subsequently went viral on social media.

Malaysia has always been recognized as a multi-racial and multi-religious nation where people of all faiths strive to live in peace, harmony, and mutual respect. We are a people known for hospitality, kindness, and immense generosity during times of national disaster.

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In this spirit of mutual friendship, jokes of this nature have no place in any official assembly in Malaysia. This incident is especially hurtful as it demeans priests and nuns, who are held in high esteem by the public. For generations, dedicated nuns have given their entire lives to running hospitals, welfare institutions, schools that have served and educated Malaysians of all races and religions. It is entirely understandable that many citizens were offended and have called for legal action, a public apology, a retraction of the joke, and an adequate redress of this offense against public religious sensitivity.

A Call to Conversion and to Guard Our Hearts

Having been born a few months before the formation of Malaysia in 1963 and having lived my whole life in Sarawak, I know our home as a land of harmony, sincere friendship, and authentic mutual respect. Our recent Convention has re-inspired Malaysian Catholics to cherish our national identity, build bridges of goodwill, and collaborate with all Malaysians for the common good.

As fellow citizens, let us watch our words and guard our hearts against prejudice, hatred, and stereotyping when referring to one another's race, religion, or community. Let us reject all forms of political, and even religious rhetoric, divisive language that hurts religious communities and fractures our multiracial society.

May this Malaysia Day offer us all an opportunity to reflect on our identity as *anak-anak* Malaysia, to care for one another, and to experience a true conversion of heart - moving away from hostility and toward kindness and sincere friendship.

We are already blessed to live in a land that has been spared from catastrophic natural disasters, major earthquakes, or extreme climate devastation. Let us celebrate our blessings, be kind to each other, and offer true Malaysian hospitality to all living among us.

From the land of harmony in Sarawak, on behalf of my brother Bishops and the Catholic Community in Malaysia, I wish you a very blessed 63rd Malaysia Day.

Selamat Hari Malaysia



✠ Most Rev. Dato Dr. Simon Poh

Catholic Archbishop of Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia (CBCM)

16th September 2026

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