



## **MERDEKA DAY AND MALAYSIA DAY MESSAGE 2021 FROM THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Every year, on August 31 and September 16, we celebrate our nationhood by giving thanks to God for the peace and harmony we enjoy in many different ways despite the challenges and obstacles that come before us. Our theme this year remains the same as it was last year *Malaysia Prihatin* (Malaysia Cares) and our celebrations will not only be on a moderate scale, but will also be held in the dark shadows of the health, economic and political crises that have weighed down the hearts of many Malaysians.

The never-ending COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the lives of all Malaysians, irrespective of economic and social status, race, religion, and age. Our lives have been impoverished in ways we could never have imagined - psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. Not only are we trying to find some level of equilibrium in this period of despair, but the reality of having lost loved ones to the pandemic has made life all the more difficult to bear for many.

The pandemic has also had a significant impact on the Malaysian economy. Businesses winding up, reduced incomes and loss of jobs are only some of the immediate impacts on the lives of ordinary citizens and the migrant work force.

The political crisis which started at the beginning of 2020 seems to have caused greater instability in the country, with the government changing twice since GE14. There is a general sense of frustration and helplessness in the country right now. It is our hope that the recently appointed Prime Minister, together with his cabinet, will lead us out of this three-fold crisis .... for the good of all. We call on the Honourable Prime Minister to honour the promises made in his inaugural address to the nation – to prioritise the recovery of Malaysia on all fronts with integrity, accountability and transparency, without fear or favour. We look towards the Honourable Prime Minister to lead Malaysians to appreciate the richness and diversity of each culture, religion and race.

*Malaysia Prihatin* (Malaysia Cares) must be founded on the principles of the *Rukun Negara* if we are to build a society that is united, respectful, inclusive and sustainable. We call on all political leaders, the government and opposition parties in the country, to put aside differences and personal ambition and work together to help all Malaysians who are in grave need of assistance to rebuild our lives. We also call on all Malaysians to be vaccinated so that a speedier recovery may be attained.

We take this opportunity to reflect in thanksgiving on the generosity, self-sacrifice and determination shown by so many in these most difficult of times - from the healthcare workers and frontliners to the equally important yet often unknown and unseen heroes such as food delivery persons, security guards, cleaners, garbage collectors and the many others who are also risking much to keep our essential services going.

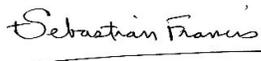
The building of a nation belongs neither to the elite nor to a select few. It belongs to all Malaysian citizens. While we must hold all leaders whom we elect accountable to the office they occupy, we too must work to promote unity and harmony at the grassroots. The politics of division must never be the narrative we perpetuate because each one of us has the opportunity to promote unity in our daily lives. Let not the sense of apathy, of not caring about the concerns of others, make us lose sight of our collective responsibility and duty as citizens. If we succumb to the temptation of being insular in our way of life, we only express selfishness and insensitivity.

Let us heed the exhortation of St Peter to the Church: “Each one of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards, responsible for all these varied graces of God, put it at the service of others” (1Pt 4:10). Indeed, the future of our country and the wellbeing of all its citizens, particularly the poor, the needy and those whose lives have become impoverished and been changed drastically by the pandemic, in more ways than one, depend on the commitment of each one of us today.

Together, let us join hands to build, with God’s help and under His guidance, a better future for Malaysia as we continue to be *Malaysia Prihatin*.

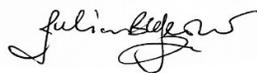
SELAMAT MENYAMBUT HARI MERDEKA DAN HARI MALAYSIA!

Devotedly in Christ,



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Rt. Rev. Sebastian Francis, D.D  
Bishop of Penang



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Most Rev. Julian Leow, D.D.  
Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur



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Rt. Rev. Bernard Paul, D.D.  
Bishop of Malacca-Johore

August 29, 2021