

OVERVIEW

In preparation for the Malaysian Catholic Young People Assembly (MCYPA) slated to take place in 2025, the MCYMC Initiatives....

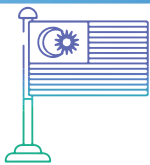


MCYMC INITIATIVES 2023 - 2024

MALAYSIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH MINISTERS COMMITTEE
JOURNEYING TOGETHER TOWARDS MPC 2026



engage young people and **communities at the peripheries** of our church / are not involved in the synodal process of the local church, in order **to better understand their needs and realities**.



nurture **improved national cooperation** between the (arch)diocesan youth offices as a national team under MCYMC.



aimed at **evaluating the current pastoral initiatives** in place for our young people. MCYMC will conduct **pastoral visits and grassroots engagements** through these initiatives among specific groups of young people.

PHASE 1

The respective offices for young people took on the role of Initiative Coordinator assisted by MCYMC as a body. Some key factors for these initiatives include:



Prioritising the **least accessible** young people as specific groups of young people:

- a. who did not partake in the synodal process;
- b. are members of Minority groups

INCLUSIVE OF ALL



Immersing into the realities of young people; **to listen and to learn.**



EXPERIENCE THE REALITIES



Investigating if **Jesus** is an **integral** part of the **lives of young people**

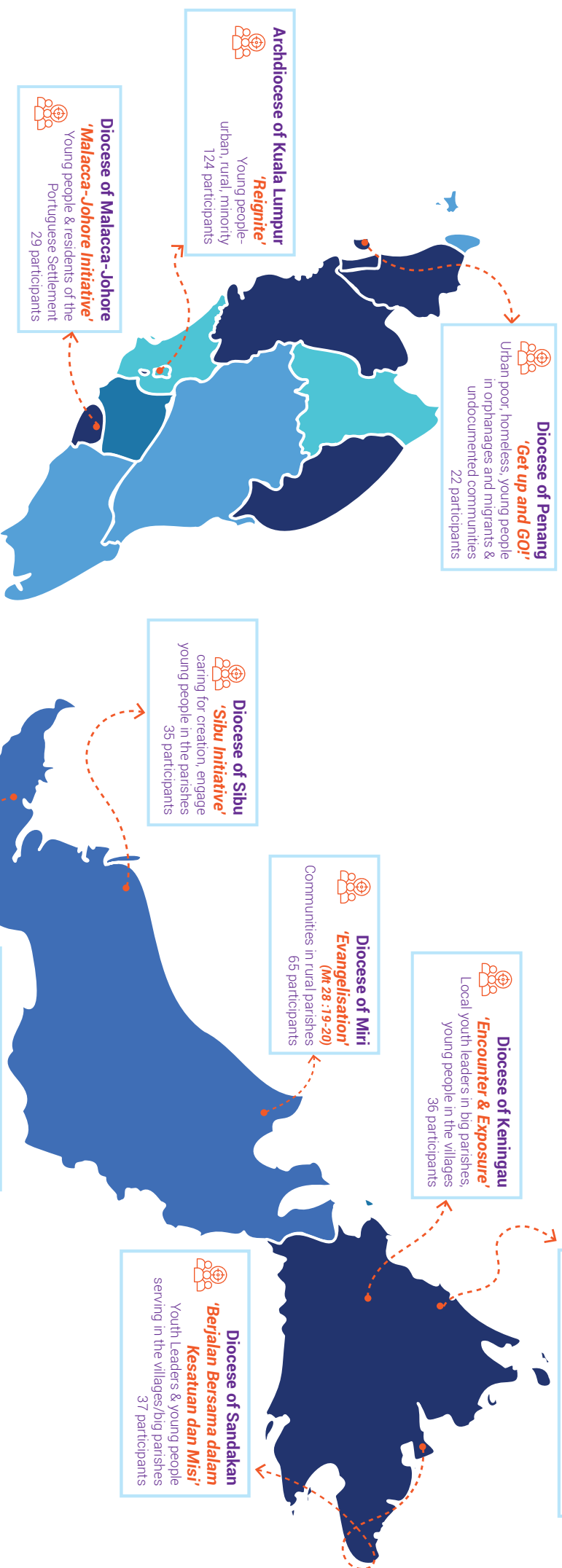


IS JESUS THE CENTRE?





Young People engaged & encountered across Malaysia



Participation by category		2023		2024						
		16-20 February	20-26 April	24-29 May	28 June-2 July	6-12 July	18-23 January	21-26 February	1-7 March	14-16 June
		Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur	Diocese of Keningau	Diocese of Miri	Diocese of Sandakan	Diocese of Penang	Archdiocese of Kuching	Diocese of Malacca Johore	Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu	Diocese of Sibiu
MCYMC	23	9	9	7	9	13	12	16	8	3
Friends of MCYMC - leaders, animators	10	9	3	9	9	9	4	13	33	12
Local - young people, collaborators	91	18	53	21	21	21	59	59	59	20

The following are the fruits of evaluation and discernment process held after each **MCYMC Initiative** in the respective dioceses. We have used the Synod framework (thematic nuclei) to assist us in presenting the findings.



MCYMC the
INITIATIVES
2023 - 2024
MALAYSIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH MINISTERS COMMITTEE in
JOURNEYING TOGETHER TOWARDS MPC 2026

After each **Initiative**, MCYMC members as well as the *Friends of MCYMC* were guided through a process of discernment using various methods and approaches; narrative, artistic (producing artwork, drama, songs, poetry), and scriptural reflection. The National Coordinating Office has reviewed all the data and fruits of reflection, upon consultation with members of MCYMC, this report is thus produced.

I. The Journeying Companions

The experience of the initiatives has helped us deepen our understanding of accompaniment. It must be admitted, that by virtue of our name, we have often denominated ourselves either as “Youth Ministers,” or as “Pastoral Workers.” The **Initiatives** have shown us a different side of our vocation and ministry, that of accompaniment. By accompaniment, we mean the exercise of “journeying together” with the young people we encountered in the nine dioceses of Malaysia.¹ **While this sample is but a small number of the total, the deliberate exercise of accompaniment has shown us that our pastoral endeavours go beyond the administrative, organisational and reporting model that we have employed in our ministry thus far.**

Accompanying young people allows us to encounter the young person as they are; not as an object of our programme or methodologies, but as subjects who also accompany us in our own journey. This is evident in our realisation that the traditional categories, boundaries, and schemas that we have used to classify young people are not as clear as we thought they were. There are young people within ecclesial perimeters, whether by area of parish jurisdiction or self-involvement that still feel they are outside ecclesial perimeters. Whether they are found in urban or rural areas, social and economic issues continue to affect them in various degrees and manners.

When looking at the four themes of discernment from the Malaysian Pastoral Convention 2026, namely, (1) Church, (2) family, (3) society, and (4) ecology, we now see that each young person is affected and interested in these themes in varied and different ways, i.e. these themes are not intellectual concepts up for debate or discussion, they are **realities** that the young live with a myriad of different joys and

¹ Francis, *Christus Vivit* [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God], The Holy See, March 25, 2019, sec. 29, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-a_p_20190325_christus-vivit.html.

hopes, griefs and anxieties. Of these realities and the experiences thereof, we have been tempted to propose solutions, programmes, and modules in order to fix or address any particular problem or dilemma that we might have noticed, something that Pope Francis notices as well.² **The practice of accompaniment has shown us the need to be comfortable with the uncomfortable; to not rush in diagnosing ills and drawing up prognoses; to recognize that both the accompanier and the accompanied are walking on the same road towards the same destination.** We affirm with Pope Francis that “realities are greater than ideas,” and accompaniment allows us to be in touch with these realities.³

II. Listening

Our first experience of listening is found in the summons of to be accompaniers and companions on a journey. The listening process among ourselves as youth ministers have deepened; we are more ready to listen with an open mind and heart to one another. We have also realised that our idea of a “listening Church” is understood as the process of being listened to by the hierarchy rather than the Church as the People of God. In this distinction, we have often excluded ourselves as the listening Church. **Among those we minister to, there seems to be a correlation between being listened to and participation, with those who feel that they are not heard being less likely to participate in the life of the Church, while those who do feel they are heard, participate more actively in various areas.**

Listening intently to our young people presupposes that they have something to say; a message to be communicated. We recognize that there are some young people who struggle to articulate themselves because of various reasons; language barriers, self-censorship, feelings of inadequacy or simply not having the capacity to express themselves. **This shows us that there is a need for a better understanding of listening, that of reading between the lines, observation, informal conversations and different experiences of prayer and spirituality.** Our experience confirms what the Holy Father talks about in *Christus Vivit* of the “charism of listening,” a charism that needs to be earnestly sought for in prayer and developed.⁴

There is also this reality where the process of listening is included to “check boxes” rather than for authentic or intentional listening. In this reality, listening is merely a “step” that needs to be taken in order to progress to the next step or a mere formality rather than for attentive and active listening. Sometimes, there is a pushback on this process of listening; we often hear that reports are not read and so there is no need to present them in a lengthy manner, or that we should only present key points and summaries, a sort of *key performance indicator* (KPI)

² Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God], The Holy See, March 25, 2019, sec. 184, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-a_p_20190325_christus-vivit.html.

³ Ibid., sec. 231.

⁴ Francis, *Christus Vivit* [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God], The Holy See, March 25, 2019, sec. 244, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-a_p_20190325_christus-vivit.html.

checklist for the ease of reading. While we admit that there is a need to articulate in a manner that is succinct and straightforward, **our experience of accompaniment in the initiatives tells us that there is a need for context, for elaboration, and for the patient exercise of holding space on the road for those who journey with us.** Much is lost, diluted, or left out when we yield to the demand to summarise, be short or overly concise. Here we note that the different forms of listening allow us to listen to those who communicate differently like those who are differently abled, those who bear the crosses of mental health issues, and those who do not communicate in the way that we are comfortable with.

III. Speaking Out

In our context, there does not seem to be a culture or tendency of speaking out with *parrhesia*. While this could be related to the Asian culture that we find ourselves in, it is also directly related to the lack of listening as presented in nuclei (II). The more dominant response is that of action or non-action, this is also true among the members of the *Malaysian Catholic Youth Ministers Committee* (henceforth denoted as **MCYMC**). When decisions or priorities are taken, there is no culture of questioning or clarifying it, rather it is received as it is and acted upon. The result of actions normally shows the questions and clarifications that needed to be brought forward before actions were taken.

We recognize also that MCYMC along with the *Offices for Young People* (henceforth denoted as **OYP**) of the different dioceses must speak collectively or individually on behalf of young people. **When young people are able to hear their own voices in the voice of MCYMC/OYPs, they are emboldened to speak out for themselves and others who lack a voice.**

Another sad or critical reality is the fear or expectation of an answer or reaction to what is brought forward in *parrhesia*. Sometimes what is brought forward or spoken out for does not need a reaction, but rather, space to be articulated and heard. **Young people, along with their youth ministers and pastoral workers often hold back from speaking because they have already predicted a reaction. We also have to admit to the reality that speaking out is sometimes not welcomed in hierarchical structures.**

IV. Celebrating

The different OYPs allocated ample time for liturgical celebrations throughout the **Initiatives**. The celebration of the Eucharist especially was a priority in all the programmes. In addition to this, many OYPs find value in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and in Eucharistic Adoration. In all these liturgical celebrations, the ministering roles were given out as much as possible to the members of MYCMC and the *friends of MYCMC*⁵, these include, but are not limited to the choir, readers, and acolytes. In some cases, the members of MCYMC and friends of MCYMC are

⁵ NB. *Friends of MCYMC*. Young people who are not pastoral workers or members of MYCMC but share in our values and work, these young people may or may not be official leaders in their parochial or campus structures.

encouraged to take time in preparing the liturgy; from the choice of hymns, readings, the appropriate prayers to be used, etc. This exercise is formative and enriching of personal and communal spirituality.

For lack of a better term, some OYPs also conducted “para-liturgical” celebrations. While we admit that there is no such thing as a “para-liturgical” celebration, these prayer activities or creative devotional practices are of great value to both the MCYMC and their friends. They encourage ownership of their work and the express use of creativity in preparing and celebrating these prayer experiences. These prayer experiences themselves are rooted in Scripture and are often done in response to or as a conclusion to the preparatory spiritual input before undertaking a mission or pastoral work.

In every diocese, the presence of the diocesan Bishop to celebrate the Eucharist and commission the MYCMC and friends elevated our sense of ownership towards the mission. The commissioning of lay leaders, along with the religious in our midst, to celebrate forms of blessings that do not require ordained ministers adds to the richness of the Church. It also provides an opportunity for a young person to foster a closer relationship with Jesus through the accompaniment they receive.

V. Co-Responsible in the Mission

It would be impossible for MYCMC and the respective OYPs to carry out the **Initiatives** without the commitment and generous support of those around us. Those who support us are not limited to the young people that we have accompanied, they extend to parishioners, residents of a mission area, catechists, facilitators or speakers from other ministries, and at times, the local government of a particular area. **Here we affirm the Holy Father who reminds us that ministry to the young, especially in the role of accompaniment is a collective responsibility of the entire community and not just a particular group of people, the OYP or the MCYMC.⁶ However, we have to admit that not all are ready to be in a position of co-responsibility with MCYMC.**

In many cases, the young people who are most committed to our mission and sharing of responsibility are a result of accompaniment and growth in maturity. They give of themselves, their time, their talents and their treasure freely. **Accompaniment, along with proper training and formation should be continued for these potential young people. In these young people, we see not only a heart for other young people, but a desire to respond to a vocation, we see that their “work stops being just about making money, keeping busy or pleasing others.”⁷**

Here, we affirm and speak of the vocation to pastoral ministry as a true and valid vocation that is worthy of proper discernment, proper formation that deals not only with the practicalities of ministry, but a pastoral spirituality and theology that goes

⁶ Francis, *Christus Vivit* [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God], The Holy See, March 25, 2019, sec. 243, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html.

⁷ Ibid., sec. 256.

beyond attending one-off formative events and a response to our baptismal promises. In our planning and interactions among ourselves and with the young, we see that our pastoral ministry is not a job or a career in a normative sense, it is not an interim job or a stepping stone to something else, but rather a true vocation that can be proposed and offered to others. Here we echo the call in the *Synthesis Report* of the XVI Ordinary Synod of Bishops to think about the mission of the laity in this context.⁸

Our experience of co-responsibility has also opened our eyes to the reality that the young person is multifaceted and MCYMC or the OYPs alone cannot provide holistically for them. MCYMC needs to develop certain parameters as to what the priorities are from the perspective of a Ministry for Young People. Certain areas which have surfaced for consideration include (1) the ministry of accompaniment, (2) the ministry of discernment and decision making, (3) the ministry of prayer, and (4) the ministry for outreach and service.

VI. Dialogue in Church and Society

MCYMC has been practising dialogue in the Malaysian Church for a quite a long time now. The initiatives and this report are a fruit of a long-standing dialogue among the ministers for young people, pastoral workers, and youth leaders not only across the OYPs but within the dioceses themselves. MCYMC is composed not only of lay leaders, but consecrated men and women, as well as diocesan clergy. It is our utmost desire that this dialogue and collaboration be emulated in all areas of our Church and in society.

While the cohesion among ourselves is at a stable level, we do recognize that we can and should engage more with civil society, all those of goodwill who share the same concern that we have for the common good when it pertains to the ministry of young people. Some of the areas for collaboration are obvious, like that of the care for the environment and engaging the digital environment. Others demand a form of training and practice like that of interreligious dialogue, collaboration with those in the political arena, care for the differently abled, and learning to be welcoming and inclusive of those who might not share the same views as us but still hold to the same human values that we desire to promote.

VII. With the Other Christian Denominations

Engagement in the kampungs during the **Initiatives** gave all in attendance the ability to learn and share with our Christians brothers and sisters. The mission and activities planned enabled us to see beyond the boundaries and categories we usually prescribe to. There was a greater need and purpose to come together- to share the love of Christ with one another. The message was clear, that when there is adversity and challenge, banding together as a community called by Christ, propels us to serve one another in selfless love.

⁸ XVI General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Synthesis Report*, The Holy See, October 28, 2023, sec. 8. I, <https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/assembly/synthesis/english/2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report.pdf>.

A particular opportunity presented itself in the Malacca Johore Diocese, where a visit to the Anglican parish was possible. The rector of the parish was very welcoming of MCYMC and the friends of MCYMC for a visit to the parish. This visit allowed us a glimpse and ability to reflect on the same calling to proclaim Christ by those who are united with us in the one Baptism that we have received.

We also admit that there is a need to strengthen our understanding on ecumenical relations, clarify any prejudice or biases that we have in ourselves, and educate ourselves properly on the nature of collaboration and dialogue that can take place in those who bear the name of Christ. There are many areas to be explored and we are not equipped to explore them on our own.

VIII. Authority and Participation

We recognize that not all young people necessarily participate in the life of their parish or in parish ministries as a result of formation or accompaniment. Some of them participate actively outside of the life of the Church, in society and in their family. The reasons for this reality are multifaceted and many. We do recognize, however, that everyone has a calling and they are called differently and for different reasons.

The **Initiatives** were a tool for the promotion of synodality among young people. The events and activities of the **Initiatives** created space for young people not only to participate, but to take up responsibility with us in the planning and execution of the programme. The “turun padang” method that was employed by MCYMC to engage the young people and their community in which they live in, overall improved both the quality and quantity of participation.

IX. Discerning and Deciding

Different OYPs employ differing methods and procedures in decision making, this is clearly seen in the different themes and lenses that were chosen by the individual OYPs in organising their local **Initiatives**. While some of these methods are borrowed from secular sources, like *SWOT* or *SOAR Analysis*, the element of communal discernment is always included in them. In preparing for the **Initiatives**, the different OYPs dialogued and collaborated, not only among themselves, but with their young people and different ministries and people outside of their office to determine what best to do.

The **Initiatives** themselves are tools that we have employed for our communal discernment and decision making. The findings that we have obtained from the different initiatives will enlighten our discernment process in preparing for the upcoming Malaysian Catholic Young People Assembly 2025. They have allowed us to contextualise the different themes that have been chosen by the Malaysian Pastoral Convention 2026 and put flesh to these ideas.

X. Forming Ourselves in Synodality

Synodality is still a new concept in our context, at times it is a buzzword and at other times it is misunderstood. We admit that our understanding needs to deepen. In our experience of ministry to young people, we have found that the peer-to-peer method is most effective in terms of formation and participation. Greater efforts need to be made in recognizing the need and value of “journeying together” with others, not just as young people, but as the People of God.

We have found that young people are often treated as an isolated group of individuals or a theoretical category that exists but that no one knows how to interact with. When this happens, young people are seen as something to invest in for the future rather than active agents that can be effective Christians in the here and now. In other areas, they are diagnosed with a myriad of social problems and are presented in an almost alien way with their own language, lingo, style and interests. **This is a reality that we have to acknowledge; throughout the Initiatives we have encountered many voices who claim to know what young people need along with a variety of solutions for these needs. Often the solutions are to be acted upon by others, rather than the voices themselves. This reality shows us that there still is a lack of understanding of “journeying together” and is a hindrance to a holistic ministry for young people and the life of the Church.**

A key theme arising from the above reality is the mode of relating to young people which brings along with it the value of listening and accompanying them. Young people are a protected group, we say this not only of those who have yet to have the age of maturity but also those who are differently abled, physically or mentally.

Conclusion

The MCYMC, through the **Initiatives** in all the nine dioceses have set out to discover if the person of Jesus Christ is an integral part of the life of the young person. Our experience gives us a two-fold answer: ***(1) for the young person who collaborates with us and has shared a substantial amount of time with us, this question is answered with a resounding “yes”. However, for those to whom this aforementioned group, which is the larger majority, (2) the person of Jesus does not appear to be an integral part of their lives. Jesus seems to be a by-product of community and parochial life, rather than the reason for it.***

We have also discovered that accompaniment and a strengthened prayer life are among factors that may lead to a conversion experience where Jesus becomes an integral part of the life of the young person, subsequently, their action and commitment flows from that relationship with the risen Lord. This discovery also reveals a reality that community and/or parochial life can often not be rooted in a relationship with the Living Christ.

MCYMC Initiatives (2023 - 2024)

as part of the Journey towards the Malaysian Catholic Young Peoples' Assembly (MCYPA)

In preparation for the MCYPA slated to take place in 2025, the MCYMC Initiatives function as a series of missions which seek to..

- engage **young people and communities** at the **peripheries of our church/are not involved in the synodal process** of the local church, in order to better understand their needs and realities at their level.
- nurture improved **national cooperation between the diocesan youth offices** as a national team under MCYMC.

○ MCYMC Initiatives in 2023

i. Kuala Lumpur Initiative	
Dates	16 th - 20 th February
Theme	'REIGNITE' - A pilgrimage of faith and charity for young people of hope.
Objectives	To REIGNITE, RESTART, and RENEW our young people's journey with Jesus through a mission experience.
Target Group	Young people from various backgrounds (urban, rural, minority, mostly did not participate in the ArchKL Synodal process).
Participants	124 (23 MCYMC, 10 Friends of MCYMC, 91 young people)

ii. Keningau Initiative	
Dates	20 th - 26 th April
Theme	'Encounter & Exposure'
Objectives	To expose youth leaders to encounter young people in the peripheries (kampung) through community living and mission activities.
Target Group	Local youth leaders in big parishes, young people in the villages (kampung) - mostly individuals who did not participate in the local diocesan synod.
Participants	36 (9 MCYMC, 9 Friends of MCYMC, 18 young people/youth leaders)

iii. Miri Initiative	
Dates	24 th - 29 th May
Theme	'Evangelisation' (MT 28 :19-20)
Objectives	To journey with local young leaders in evangelising the good news to new disciples in rural communities.
Target Group	Communities in rural parishes
Participants	65 (9 MCYMC, 3 friends of MCYMC , 53 young people/youth leaders)

iv. Sandakan Initiative	
Dates	28 th June - 2 nd July
Theme	<i>Berjalan Bersama dalam Kesatuan dan Misi'</i>
Objectives	To help youth leaders to discover that there are diverse ways of service, in particular through community living and being an example of Christ in service to others.
Target Group	Local Youth Leaders serving in the villages/big parishes and young people in the villages (kampung) - mostly did not participate in the synod.
Participants	37 (7 MCYMC, 9 Friends of MCYMC, 21 youth leaders)

v. Penang Initiative	
Dates	6 th - 12 th July
Theme	'Get up and GO!'
Objectives	<p>To grow in missionary consciousness, fervour, commitment and zeal</p> <p>To encounter and experience the unconditional friendship that Jesus offers us</p> <p>To extend our circle of friends, recognising the worth of every human person</p>
Target Group	Urban poor, homeless, young people in orphanages and migrants and undocumented communities
Participants	22 (9 MCYMC, 13 Friends of MCYMC)

○ **MCYMC Initiatives in 2024**

vi. Kuching Initiative	
Dates	18 th - 23 rd January
Theme	BEYOND! "I ask young people to go beyond their small groups and to build "social friendship, where everyone works for the common good." CV169
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●To engage with (immersion) the young Catholics of Kuching, especially those who feel 'least', making them feel valued and accompanying them to make others (those in communities we go to) feel valued through a 'service program'. ●To discover the realities (giftedness and needs) of our Kuching young Catholics ●To appreciate how 'connected' the Kuching Catholic youth (both pilgrim guides and the pilgrims) are to Jesus. ●(for MCYMC YMs) To nurture improved national cooperation between the diocesan youth offices as a national team under MCYMC.
Target Group	Young people in outstation and migrant communities, the differently-abled, neophytes and those who are 'far or outside' the church.
Participants	75 (12 MCYMC, 4 Friends of MCYMC, 59 youth leaders and volunteers, **190 combined participants) *Approx 265

vii. Malacca Johore Initiative	
Dates	21st - 26th February
Theme	
Objectives	Provide the time and space to discover the fundamental needs of our young people and Explore if Jesus is an integral part of their lives by encountering the realities of the young people of MJD. Enlightened on how Salvation Hlstory is revealed in mjd's history, story and mission. Empowered with tools, methods, and means that expand freedom. Evangelized and Evangelizing as we build God's kingdom together.
Target Group	Young people and the residents of the Portuguese Settlement, Malacca.
Participants	29 (16 MCYMC, 13 Friends of MCYMC)

viii. Kota Kinabalu Initiative	
Dates	1 st -7 th March
Theme	YOUTH; Be steward of the Earth
Objectives	i) The youth to realise and appreciate God's Creation ii) " <i>Laudato Si</i> " becomes the culture of life for Catholic youth
Target Group	Local Youth Leaders serving in the villages/parishes and young people in the villages (kampung)
Participants	100 (8 MCYMC, 33 friends of MCYMC, 59 Youth Leader & Volunteer, participants)

ix. Sibul Initiative	
Dates	14 th -16 th June
Theme	"I ask young people to act justly (to KNOW), love tenderly (to LOVE); and walk humbly (to SERVE) God and their neighbours." Micah 6:8
Objectives	To raise awareness about caring for creation and to engage young people in the parish, especially those who have been far from church.
Target Group	Young people in the parishes.
Participants	35 (3 MCYMC, 12 Friends of MCYMC, 20 participants)