

Caribbean bishops bring climate, migration, family realities to Rome

By **Kaelanne Jordan**
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President of the Antilles Episcopal Conference (AEC), Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon, said Caribbean realities such as climate vulnerability, migration, and family life were central to discussions during the bishops' recent *Ad Limina Apostolorum Petri et Pauli* visit to Rome, April 27 to May 3.

"In our region, we are the second most vulnerable region to climate change, and that is always a major issue," Archbishop Gordon said. He added that migration has also significantly impacted the region, noting that Trinidad and Tobago "received thousands and thousands of migrants" during the Venezuelan crisis, alongside movements of people from Haiti, Cuba, and other parts of the Caribbean.

He pointed to the Caribbean's unique historical experience, particularly the legacy of the plantation system, which has shaped family structures over centuries.

"We've had a 400-year structure of families disrupted through the plantation system, so a structure that is different from what you see everywhere else in the world," he said. "The hope is to bring this particularity to the universal conversation... to see the challenges not just as challenges but also as grace and opportunities for evangelisation."

Reflecting on the visit itself, Archbishop Gordon described it as "a very special moment in the life of a bishop and the life of a conference of bishops."

"It's a moment where we come together in the holy city... to find

communion, to listen deeply to the heartbeat of the Church, but also to share the particularity of the mission in our context," he said.

He noted that the exchange between the universal Church and local realities brings "great riches," allowing the wider Church to reflect more deeply through different perspectives.

The Archbishop also highlighted discussions on digital evangelisation, following meetings with Vatican communications officials.

"Social media is vital in the mission and ministry of the Church," he said, acknowledging its risks but stressing they should not deter outreach.

"Those dangers can't stop us from bringing the Gospel into all creation... what Pope Benedict XVI called the 'digital continent' is a place where we have to be missionaries also."

He added that the Church must help shape online interaction so that it becomes "more human... a better light for those who are there to find their way."

The *Ad Limina* visit, usually held every five years, is an "important pilgrimage" that allows bishops to pray at the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul, submit reports on their dioceses, and strengthen ties with the Holy Father, according to AEC Communications.

The schedule began with meetings at several Vatican dicasteries, the main administrative departments of the Vatican, similar to government ministries, as well as the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. These included dicasteries responsible for Laity, Family and Life; Causes of Saints; Communication; and Interreligious Dialogue.

In a video message shared April 27, Bishop Robert Llanos of St John's-

Basseterre, Antigua and Barbuda, said the bishops had just concluded their first meeting with the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, describing "some important discussions" with Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery and his team.

He said the "main" focus was the region's history and culture of family life, including "the experience of slavery and the experience of the various cultures of the different islands, and how cohabitating and families are being structured as a result of that."

He added that discussions also explored formation for young people and relationships.

"From that time on we should be preparing persons for good human relationships which will eventually lead to a more sound marriage experience."

The bishops celebrated Mass at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran on April 28 before meetings on culture, education, and divine worship.

Midweek sessions included discussions on religious life, doctrine, evangelisation, clergy, and Christian unity.

A key highlight came April 30 when the bishops celebrated Mass at Saint Peter's Basilica and were received in audience with Pope Leo XIV.

Additional meetings were held on safeguarding, human development, and Church governance, before the day concluded with Mass at St Paul Outside the Walls "and a fraternal gathering".

The visit wrapped up May 2 with final sessions involving the Church's highest judicial authority and the Synod of Bishops, "marking a renewed commitment to serving the Church in the Caribbean."

Archbishop Gordon also called on clergy to support the initiative within their parishes, reinforcing the importance of Eucharistic devotion as a unifying and transformative force within the Church.

The Archbishop expressed hope that this collective spiritual effort will renew faith communities and draw more people into a meaningful relationship with Christ, especially in the lead-up to Corpus Christi celebrations.

The initiative is also being promoted by the Archdiocese of Port of Spain as part of its ongoing mission to deepen faith and inspire active discipleship among the faithful.

To learn more follow @catholicct on social media or visit: <https://catholicct.org/how-to-be-his/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, May 4

Holy Mass. 6.30-8 p.m.
Celebrant: Fr Robert Christo.
Emmanuel Community, 46 Rosalino Street, Woodbrook.

Saturday, May 9

The Catholic News Steps for Hope 5K and 1K. Race start and Village: St Mary's College grounds, Serpentine Road, St Clair.

Monday, May 11 to Wednesday 13

Pentecost Triduum. 12 noon.
Eternal Light Community Agape House, Diego Martin Main Road.
Preacher: Fr Mathias Mulumba Ssajjabbji.



Mental Health Initiative

THE POWER OF LISTENING IN RELATIONSHIPS

Have you ever expressed the phrase to someone "You don't listen." Yes, I am sure you have at least once. But what does it really mean to listen?

Listening is more than just hearing words but rather paying attention to what is being said and trying to understand before responding.

When listening, the goal isn't to listen to respond but rather listening to understand and then respond appropriately.

When communicating in relationships, persons must also practice active listening.

Active listening is where the listener is fully present and engaged with the intention of understanding what is being said through words, body language and facial expressions before providing a response.

—MHI Team Member Aveen

Archbishop endorses '33-day Eucharistic Dedication'

Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon has issued a strong call for renewed Eucharistic devotion across the Archdiocese of Port of Spain, endorsing a spiritual initiative in preparation for Corpus Christi 2026.

In a letter addressed to clergy and the faithful dated April 21, the Archbishop highlighted the significance of deepening reverence for the Eucharist, describing it as central to the life of the Church. The initiative forms part of a broader effort to spiritually prepare the faithful through prayer, reflection, and intentional engagement.

Referencing the Gospel account of the multiplication of loaves, the Archbishop encouraged believers to "give Jesus what you have," emphasising trust in Christ's ability to transform and multiply even the smallest offering. He urged the faithful to participate actively in the journey, which includes daily reflections and communal practices designed to foster a deeper encounter with Christ.

How to Be His written by Frs Jesse Maingot OP and Ignatius John Schweitzer OP, invites participants to walk with Jesus through structured daily devotions and spiritual exercises. Parishes and individuals are encouraged to use digital platforms to access the content and share the experience widely, particularly among young people.

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Appointments

Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon has made the following appointments:

Fr Augustine Kintu – a priest within the Cluster of Scarborough/Delaforde, Tobago with effect from May 1, 2026, for a three-year term.

Fr Mathias Mulumba Ssajjabbji – a priest within the Cluster of Sangre Grande/Coryal with effect from May 1, 2026, for a three-year term.



Parish teams ready for *The Catholic News* Steps for Hope 5K challenge trophy

Community Engagement Officer at Catholic Media Services Ltd, Matthew Pierre (centre) was joined by parishioners of St Paul's, Couva on April 11 to hold *The Catholic News* Steps for Hope 5K parish challenge trophy, currently held by St Paul's, Couva. The race will be run next Saturday, May 9 with over 1,000 participants expected. **See you there! Come out and support!**