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Remembering Fr Michael Chan : Brilliant Mind, Gentle Shepherd

Fr Michael Chan (1955–2025) was a priest of the Prelature of Opus Dei who served in Singapore and Malaysia. Known for his serenity, humility, and tireless dedication, he combined a brilliant mind with a gentle pastoral heart. Those who knew him remember his quiet humour, meticulous work, and deep concern for others, qualities that reflected a life

wholly given to God and to the people he served.

10/19/2025

On 15 October 2025, Rev Father Michael Chan Kok Vui of the Prelature of Opus Dei passed away.

Born in Tawau, Sabah, on 6 June 1955, Fr Michael's life was marked by quiet dedication, humility and fidelity to his priestly vocation.

He studied Mechanical Engineering in Canada and at Imperial College in England, and later completed a doctoral thesis in Theology at the University of Navarre in Spain. He joined Opus Dei in London in 1978 and was ordained a priest on 26 August 1990.

In 1983, Fr Michael came to Singapore to help begin Opus Dei's

apostolic work. For more than three decades, he offered spiritual formation to students, professionals and families. He also lectured at the Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore and travelled regularly to Johor, Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu to care for souls. He carried out his ministry in Singapore, within the Region of East and South Asia, where many came to know him as a wise and gentle pastor.

At nearly two metres tall, Fr Michael stood out physically, yet what left an impression on many was his kindness and serenity. He combined a brilliant mind with a heart deeply attuned to people. In conversation, he listened more than he spoke, and when he did, his words carried both clarity and peace.

In the confessional and in spiritual direction, he helped others find light and take the next faithful step.

Tributes poured in as news of his passing spread. Those who remembered him spoke of his gentleness, patience and love. His quiet guidance brought clarity to souls, even through the pandemic.

Many spoke of leaving with peace in their hearts and the courage to begin again. As Alison from Sabah, shared: “My monthly confessions with Fr Michael were such a gift of grace, giving me the strength to face life’s challenges with renewed hope. Every time I left the confessional, I carried with me a sense of lightness in my heart and the courage to persevere.”

He saw every encounter as an opportunity for grace. “Fr Chan taught me this: When someone disagrees with you, don’t fight – take notes. It’s a free upgrade in perspective,” recalled Ms Trisha Azcona Tan.

Fr Michael worked hard and was never seen wasting time. He was neither rigid nor a perfectionist, but meticulous, approaching every task with prudence and serenity, never leaving a detail unchecked. When others were exhausted or out of ideas, they turned to him for wisdom, and they always left enlightened.

At his funeral on 18 October, the church was filled, and amongst the crowd, many who had travelled from Malaysia to pay their last respects - a testament to the countless lives he had touched.

In his homily, Fr Ralph Valdes, Vicar of Opus Dei in the Region of East and South Asia, said: "How a man lives is how he leaves this earth." He recounted how, during a hospital visit, Fr Michael wanted for his laptop and asked if he should continue preparing the priests' schedule - one of his regular duties.

His sister Monica shared something similar in her eulogy, that on his final evening, as she sat by his bedside, Fr Michael was still worried about her well-being, concerned about her lack of sleep.

In another eulogy, Gerry, who had lived with Fr Michael since the early 1980s when Opus Dei's first centre opened in Singapore, described him as "quiet, reserved, frugal and a no-nonsense kind of guy." Yet behind that simplicity was great warmth and steadiness. Gerry recalled that Fr Michael was a keen badminton player, still joining friendly matches with other priests at St Ignatius Church until the week before he fell ill.

He went on to reflect that "the swiftness and simplicity with which he departed—leaving many of us like orphans was the way he always lived his life. He had a great capacity for

work and carried out each task with dedication and precision, finishing everything to the last detail. His was a life of silent, meticulous work. We hardly saw him anxious or worried. He was a happy and joyful person, sporting a gentle and simple smile. He had the joy of someone who always said 'yes' to what God asked of him, as well as the joy of never saying 'no' to others, of never complaining, of never saying 'enough is enough.' It was a joy that came from never losing hope, from never giving up on others. This is the one great life lesson he left us with."

Fr Michael's life reflected what he taught: to trust God, to be generous and to persevere. His priesthood touched many across Singapore and Malaysia. We commend him to the mercy of the Father and ask his prayers for all who were blessed to know him.

May he rest in peace.

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