

**1 Devotion in Dance** For Tagata Pasifika's prayer, NAOMI FUATA '29, MELIA TUITAMA '29, CHELSEA DACE '29 and others hula danced to the gospel song "How We Worship." The group of dancers performed on a stage in the center of the gym. **2 Down the Aisle** Holding Vietnamese parasols, EVIE LAU '27 and MAYA WEN '26 walk through the middle of the gym for their prayer service. Vietnamese Student Association added fairy lights to their parasols to align with the theme for the mass. "It was really nice, actually, to show my culture during the interfaith prayer," Lau said. **3 Welcome Home, God** As part of Hindu Student Association's prayer, seniors MYRA THAKKER and SWARA SHAH held diyas and offerings for the aarthi, a ritual of worship in Hinduism. Shah said, "I'm a proud Hindu and I loved being able to spread light by doing the prayer and placing the diyas.

I'm so grateful for the chance to showcase parts of who I am in a diverse, welcoming environment." Many other pairs also came up on stage to offer aarthi while NEHA PANDYA '27 sang a bhajan on stage. **4 Crowning Moment** Kneeling on the stage, STELLA ROBIN '27 receives the blessing with Coroa do Espírito Santo, the Holy Spirit Crown, from FATHER UKEME BASSEY. This tradition is significant in the Azores archipelago in Portugal. "Most of our members are from the Azores in Portugal, so it's really significant to them," ROBIN said. **5 Light 'Em Up** Holding a tea light in both hands, ISAIA-ANGEL PORTER '26 crosses the gym at the end of the prayer service to join a circle of students all holding lights to symbolize hope during dark times. The end of the service featured a cover of Coldplay's song "Yellow" fused with South Asian melodies. photos by jude boitana and mollyann caulfield



## YOU KNOW CULTURAL COUTURE

Students share their ethnic outfits from the Interfaith Multicultural Prayer Service.



"I'm wearing a puletaha, I usually wear this during church and during formal days, or usually I would wear it for mass."

-AUDREY UNGA '28



"I'm currently wearing a kurta. It's culture attire from Pakistan. In Pakistan, you would wear a kurta and shalwar."

-MUSA ALI '28



"I'm wearing Polish cultural attire from the city of Krakow, specifically with a vest called 'krakovska.'"

-VERONIKA BOROWICZ '26



"I'm wearing a filipiniana. It's traditional Filipino wear. Usually it's worn by women and it has poofy sleeves."

-CHLOE LLAVORE '26

## YOU BET WE LIGHT THINGS UP

Various forms of light from different cultures brighten the service.

**Asian Student Association:** "It's called 'jibunori,' and it's usually played for parties and festivities. It represents getting rid of bad spirits. Usually, it would be a bucket that you put charcoal and straw in. Then you light it on fire and spin it."

-MINHA TRAN '27



**Japanese Student Union:** "We brought Japanese traditional lanterns, which are called 'chōchin,' because it went with the symbol of light and carrying hope."

-RYAN MATSUMOTO '26

**Hindu Student Association:** "In Hindu culture, the diya represents purity and light, and we wanted to bring that to the school community. It also represents unity because it's a big symbol throughout the entire religion."

-GAURI GOVIL '26



**Filipino-American Student Union:** "We did a procession using parols, which are lanterns used during our Christmas celebrations. The stars represent the Star of Bethlehem. The parols represent the light to Jesus and a symbol of home for people that live abroad, especially for Filipinos."

-JOSEPH CHRISTOPHER SANTOS '26

**Vietnamese Student Association:** "We used two parasols from the fan dance that we did last year, and we attached string lights to them to make them a little prettier."

-CAROLINE LUU '26



**Chinese Student Association:** "I was holding a lotus lantern made out paper. We were walking up to the stage during the CSA prayer, which was in Chinese."

-JOANNE LEE '27

For years, the Interfaith Prayer Service has been a means to honor the diverse faith traditions of the student and educator bodies.

Following the theme of "Light Beyond Borders," students intentionally planned their prayers to reflect light and unity past cultural differences, celebrating not only their individual legacies but also the solidarity found through faith.

For the Middle Eastern Student Union prayer, CHRISTOPHER TABET '26 said a prayer for the intercession of Saint Cherbil, a monk with thousands of healings attributed to him.

"The significant thing is that healings attributed to him were reported by Christians, by Muslims, by people of other faith, by people of no faith. And so he's a unifying figure, particularly in Lebanon, but for lots of people in the Middle East," Tabet said. "I was representing the Middle Eastern Student Union, which doesn't have a particular religious identity, and so I wanted to pick a unifying figure."

Other affinity groups also chose prayers that were both significant to them and their cultures, as well as connected to a diverse community of students. Muslim

Student Association, for example, chose the Arabic Dua-e-Noor prayer to convey the message of hope in times of hardship.

**"THE MORE PEOPLE GAIN EXPOSURE, THE MORE THEY JUST LEARN TO LOVE THE BEAUTY OF IT VERSUS FOCUSING ON DIFFERENCES."**

"I picked some verses that I thought related to the theme of light. And it was highlighting how you can lean toward God and He will lead you towards the light," MARIAM ALI '28 said. "At the end of the day, no matter how dark it seems, there will always be light. I felt like it would really be useful for everyone to hear that and to actually be a little bit hopeful."

Her prayer conveyed a universal message of hope. Like her, other students chose prayers that have multiple layers relating to their faith traditions. Latiné Student

Union, for example, sang "Paloma Blanca," a Spanish song whose title translates to "White Dove" in English.

"White doves are definitely a symbol of the church, but also what's mentioned throughout the song a lot is the Virgin Mary, or Lady of Guadalupe, as well as flowers. Flowers have a lot to do with our Lady of Guadalupe and the whole myth behind that which is very significant in Mexican culture," senior BELLA SANDOVAL, the singer of the first verse, said.

The prayer service not only served as a means to celebrate diversity, but also educated and engaged the community with the many groups on campus, gaining impact as it grows into a tradition. For South Asian Student Association and Hindu Student Association, the diya procession became a tradition during this service.

"I think the more people gain exposure, the more they just learn to love the beauty of it versus focusing on differences. When something's different, you feel uncomfortable and like it's unapproachable, but just by involving everybody, that can help break down some barriers and hopefully some stereotypes, too," DEVIKA KRISHNAN '27 said.

## BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW

"I like fishing. My favorite place to fish is Shoreline because the golf course is nice."

-LEO OGUREK '29

"I've had 14 dogs throughout my life so far. Buster, my French bulldog, is my favorite."

-STELLA NURISSO '29

"I used to live in San Antonio, Texas, for a year, when I was three or four years old."

-CHARLOTTE HISATAKE '28

"I play guitar. I like playing anything by Zach Bryan."

-DEVIN TURNER '27

"Before Saint Francis, I only ever went to mass in Spanish, so I didn't know 'Our Father' in English until I got to this school."

-MAYA FARIAS '27

"My cat has one eye. His name is Uno. He's really cute."

-GEORGIA HAINS '26

"I've been to eight plus countries. I would say Italy or Fiji was my favorite."

-TANNER WALL '26

but now, we feel it  
STUDENT LIFE / Interfaith Prayer Service

PRAYER SERVICE THEME, DIFFERENT LIGHTS, CULTURAL ATTIRE  
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