

What does Easter mean to you?

By JOLYN TAN and JOYCE TAN

WITH Easter round the corner, it is apt for us to take some time to pause and reflect on what significance this season has for our lives. Is Easter simply a time where we can discontinue our Lenten sacrifices after 40 days? Or is there more? We asked some parishioners what Easter meant to them and this is what they shared:



"Easter is a time of gratitude for Jesus' unconditional love. He has given me the hope and strength to strive hard to be a better Christian. I feel and experience the joy of being in relationship with God."

Victor Tan

"To me, celebrating the resurrection of our Lord on Easter Sunday is celebrating the very reason for my faith and belief. Without the resurrection, there's no New Testament. Indeed, there'll be no Christianity nor the Catholic Church!"

Francis Gomes



"Every Easter brings to my mind two words, that of HOPE and VICTORY. Jesus brings hope to mankind that we will rise with him over death. This gives me much comfort in bearing the daily crosses (be they big or small). And so I cling on to this hope that I will emerge victorious against adverse circumstances because God is with me; His victorious hand will lead me through the perils of life."

Eileen Goh

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What does Easter mean to you? (Continued from Page 1)



"Easter is a time for our family to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ... a time for renewal of our bonds with Him!"

Grace Chua



"Easter is a sign of new life, of letting go of the old and embracing the new. Just like Jesus' resurrection, it is an embodiment of our own 40 days of change, embracing our new life with Christ."

Atricia Chan

"Easter is life after 'death'. To me, it means that I am given a second chance to try and do things right."

Amanda Chan

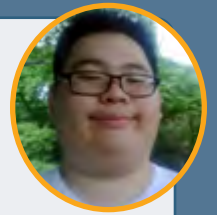


"We are from Our Lady of La Salette Praesidium, the IHM Filipino Legion of Mary. Easter this year is special for our Praesidium because it marks the Praesidium's 20th anniversary! We are grateful for the many blessings we have received – opportunities to share God's wisdom and love with our fellow migrants, praying the rosary, doing apostolic works such as hospital and home visitation, and for our spiritual directors Sr. Rosa Lim and Fr. Adrian Yeo. As we celebrate our 20th anniversary this Easter, we want to encourage others to believe and be devoted to Mother Mary and welcome everyone to be her Legion and her soldiers."

*Sally Florentino (left)
and Grace Telabon (right)*

"Easter is this time of renewal when this warm feeling resides in me. It grows and fills me with courage and energy for the year ahead so that I can be a better Catholic to the people around me."

Matthew Siew



"Easter is a call to me; a beckoning to enter ever more deeply into life with Christ. It bids me to leave my places of security and enter into a journey of unknowing with him, towards him; discomfoting, yes, but it is there that one encounters graces, consolations and deep joy."

Thana

One commonality we can see is that Easter is a time of renewal and new life. Indeed, as it is written in Romans 6:11, let us "count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus". Let this Easter season remind us of the hope the resurrection brings and keep our hearts burning with a love for Christ. Happy Easter! ♥

Parish Day of Recollection

ON May 7, the IHM parish will be holding a Day of Recollection. It will last from 9am to 5pm at St. Gregory Hall. All parishioners are invited to attend. The Spiritual Director is Fr. Ignatius Huan. The main theme is Mercy in line with this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy declared by His Holiness Pope Francis.

What is a Day of Recollection? Essentially a retreat is when one goes for a few days (preferably a week) to quieten down our senses and be with God, guided by a retreat master. This is not achievable in a one-day event. Hence a Day of Recollection is the proper term for such an event.

Fr. Ignatius Huan is no stranger in Singapore, and especially in IHM Church. Hundreds of parishioners

have attended the IHM parish Day of Recollection conducted by him over the past three consecutive years. These were organised by the Neighbourhood Christian Community, and many have fond memories of Fr. Ignatius' unique style in his spiritual inputs. So keep that date available!

More details, such as registration, will be published soon. ♥

A Catechumen's Story

By DENISE JULIA TAN

THEN a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper."

Just like how the Lord revealed himself to Elijah in Kings 19:12 in a whisper, so did he call Harithev Ratnagopal in the same gentle way.

"Usually, it's something drastic that happens in the family that makes someone turn to a religion. But for me, God took His time. He's been calling me the whole time," said Harithev, who will soon be taking on the name David (his current nickname is Dave).

Harithev began his journey as a catechumen in May last year, after his older son, Seishen Gerard, asked him if he wanted to go for the Alpha Course, a Christian faith introduction programme.

It was at the course, where Anglican priest and author Nicky Gumbel was speaking, that Harithev

began to feel things stir within him, inspiring him to follow through with RCIA.

However, Harithev's faith journey began way back. He shared that subconsciously, his wife, Carol D'Cruz and his two sons Seishen Gerard, 29, and Shiam Jerome, 26, were his biggest inspirations to conversion. It just took years of gentle but steadfast prodding from the Lord, who was ever present in his family.

"My wife and my kids are all Catholic. I've been married for 30 years and my two sons are very active in church – they're in the RCIY and the Youth Ministry. They've been involved with the church all these years but I never actually considered being part of it although it's always been on my mind."

Harithev, who was born a Hindu, always admired his wife's strong faith and his sons' dedication towards their involvement in church but he had his own inhibitions about becoming a Catholic. He thought that he would feel a lack of meaning in the faith. However, he said, he was never pressured into conversion.

"My wife always allowed me to find my way on my own. Not once she asked me. We were young then, but I think God was with my wife to tell her what to do. She respects all religions... and she respected that in me so she left it to whenever I was ready."

When Harithev started to attend RCIA sessions, he initially faced challenges with prayer and opening up during sharing sessions. But that changed during a retreat at the Majodi Centre in Johor Bahru, where he experienced a breakthrough in "letting God into (his) heart".

"When we were doing adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament, I was meditating when I felt my whole body tingle. Then I heard three messages come to me – "The Lord is in your home" ... it was the same message three times. I talked to the sponsors about this and they said maybe I never knew that the Lord was in my home all this time, all these years. I think that's true... I just never knew it."

As a new elect, Harithev is currently basking in the "magnificent" feeling of God's love and experiencing the profound peace within him.

"The whole experience has made my life very different. It's changed the way I see people and interact with them. Like with my neighbours, I don't get angry with them even if they do something wrong. My son told me that it's because I'm fired up now. Later down the road, I might plateau and become myself again. I said 'maybe'. This is the challenge... It all boils down to faith and remembering not to go back to being a 'normal' person with all your hatred, jealousy and greed. We need to constantly make an effort."

When asked about his post-baptism plans, Harithev says that he will "make God number one" and continue to grow in faith with his wife, who he believes will be a good guide, as his sons are "too busy" for him. He also looks forward to going to mass with his family with new-found understanding and meaning. ❤️



Want to know more about Divine Mercy?

THE Divine Mercy devotion in IHM began in 1992. It was started by Sr. Maria Lee, with Fr. Vincent Chee as its first Spiritual Director. The group conducts devotion to the Divine Mercy from Monday through to Friday, immediately after the 6.15pm mass.

On March 25, the group will start offering novena prayers every day till April 2 -- a day before Divine Mercy Sunday, which falls on April 3.

The coordinator of the IHM Divine Mercy Prayer Group explains the significance of Divine Mercy and its importance in today's troubled times globally.

Why is Divine Mercy so important?

If we look around us today, we hear of rampant conflicts, wars, violence, atrocities, injustices, deceit, immorality, selfishness, avarice, etc. The list can go on and on. These seem to be dominating our world, which has become more materialistic and secular. The world seems to be abandoning God. We may ask ourselves if there has ever been a greater need for God's mercy. But God always has a plan. He is the source of life which gushed forth for souls, and His ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. He is drenching the world in His mercy, if only we will turn to him.

What is Divine Mercy?

The message of The Divine Mercy is simple. It is that God loves us – all of us. And, he wants us to recognize that His mercy is greater than our sins, so that we will call upon Him with trust, receive His mercy, and let it flow through us to others. Thus, all will come to share His joy.



The Divine Mercy message is one we can call to mind simply by remembering ABC:

A - Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world.

B - Be merciful. God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. He wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us.

C - Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive.

The Divine Mercy is based on the writings of Saint Faustina Kowalska, an uneducated Polish nun who, in obedience to her spiritual director, wrote a diary of about 600 pages recording the revelations she received about God's mercy. Even before her death in 1938, the devotion to The Divine Mercy had begun to spread.

The message and devotional practices proposed in the Diary of Saint Faustina are completely in accordance with the teachings of the Church and are firmly rooted in the Gospel message of our Merciful Saviour. Properly understood and implemented, they will help us grow as genuine followers of Christ.

Can you be part of the IHM Divine Mercy prayer group?

Yes, you can be part of the group whose mission is to bring the mercy of God to a hurting world. You can learn to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet and join us in praying it regularly. Be a Divine Mercy warrior. Join us in our prayer devotion.

Venue: The main church

Day: Monday through to Friday (except the first Friday of the month and certain important days in the Catholic calendar)

Time: Immediately after the 6.15pm mass.

The devotion starts with an opening hymn followed by prayers and singing of the Chaplet and the Divine Mercy Praises and more prayers. The whole session lasts approximately 25 to 30 minutes.

The second Sunday after Easter is Divine Mercy Sunday. On Oct 5 a mass will be offered in memory of St. Faustina Kowalska. ♥

— Coordinator of the Divine Mercy group

IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



R **CIA@IHM:** 25 of our catechumens were received by Archbishop William Goh at the Rite of Election held at the Church of Christ the King on Feb 13. The catechumens were led by Fr. Adrian, who is their spiritual director. As they journey towards receiving the Sacrament of Initiation this Easter, please keep them in your prayers. ♥



I **IHM Jollies:** On Feb 16, 85 Jollies and friends gathered to celebrate Chinese New Year. Fr. Joseph Jeannequin celebrated Mass followed by Lo Hei and a few rounds of bingo! ♥



C **Confirmation:** 52 Secondary 3 students received the Sacrament of Confirmation in our church. Archbishop William Goh's homily emphasised the important role parents play in their children's faith formation. ♥



C **Catechist Commissioning:** 60 adult catechists and 40 youth catechists along with members of Liturgy of the Word for Children were commissioned on Catechetical Sunday. ♥



Y **Youth Catechists:** 50 youth catechists, including 18 who completed their first year, took part in an end-of-the-year retreat in December. Some of them are seen in the photograph above. ♥



A **Advent Outreach @ Tg Balai:** Young IHM parishioners spread Christmas joy by distributing provisions to over 100 families living near the Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Joseph Church in Tanjung Balai. This was organised by the Legion of Mary and the Epiphany group. ♥



P **Primary Catechism:** P4 children attending catechism at IHM actively participated in the Stations of the Cross during their catechism sessions in the period of Lent. ♥

Five youths on the path they chose after Confirmation

By COLIN LEE



THE catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that by the Sacrament of Confirmation, we are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. This makes us more obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ.

Given it also heralds the end of a required curriculum at most parishes, for the well catechised, Confirmation means taking up ownership of one's own faith formation. Amidst their busy schedules in preparation for milestone exams this year, I caught up with five youths from our previous batch of Confirmands, to find out how they are living out this new phase as true witnesses of Christ.

"A symbol of acceptance", "a wakeup call", "it makes me an official Jesus person", these were some of the phrases they used to describe the significance of Confirmation when queried.

"It is the start of my journey as a young adult Christian. Now, I just want to develop my faith even more", said Almaz Chew, who opted to be a member of the Youth Catechists (YC). Sharing her sentiment, Tyler Sam, a fellow YC member, added: "I felt a need to remain connected with the church. I believe I can learn the most in YC, as we continue to grow and share the good news with others."

While quality content is an important part of formation, the priority of building a Christ-centred community remains. On

relationships within YC, Joel Chin observed: "It's like a family here. We have a lot of fun together but we always return to the roots, which is our faith. Learning about God in a fun environment really helps with bonding and learning."

"I wanted to learn more about people and deepen my faith. In a sense, I became better off from listening to the experiences of others through our sharing sessions. From their life experiences, I've learnt to make good decisions," added Joshua Chng, who joined Community of Youth (COY) earlier this year.

Indeed, the decision to remain active in church has been a good one so far for Joshua and the others, having collectively realized multiple benefits, among them: A wider social circle, heightened spiritual awareness, increased knowledge of the faith and consistency in prayer life. "YC challenges me to better myself and keeps me anchored," added Tyler.

Said Clarissa Khor, a recent member of COY, who continues to journey with her group from confirmation camp: "Journeying with my group made me realise the importance of having others on this journey with me. When I strayed, my group members brought me back to God and have been my pillars of support ever since."

Unabashedly, when asked about future plans, most expressed an interest in increased involvement with the church after their exams; to help others by sharing their experiences or otherwise serve with their many gifts and talents. Which leaves the "long-confirmed", like myself, wondering: How else can I claim this special strength and bear true witness? ♥

(Top) Joshua and Clarissa.

(Left) Tyler, Almaz and Joel.



Re-discovering her first love

By NICOLE NG



KERYGMA School 2016 was a two week stay-in school from Jan 10 to 24 this year. Organised by the Office for Young People, a dynamic team of church workers that connects and reaches out to Catholic youths and young adults, Kerygma School was started with the aim of bringing youths closer to Christ and teaching them how to use more creative ways to spread the Good News.

The first week of the school focused on allowing participants to develop and deepen their personal relationships with God. In the second week, participants attended workshops to learn how to share their faith journeys through different creative avenues like mime, dance, preaching and media.

"For I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. The life I live now I live by faith in the Son of God, who loves me and gave His life for me." Galatians 2:20. For me, attending this school allowed this particular verse to come alive in my life.

It was through His amazing grace that I received the gift of

wisdom and courage to identify the silent yet overbearing struggles in my life. I still remember distinctly the first Sunday that I checked into the school. The mandatory ice breakers were played, introductions made and names exchanged. Amidst the raucous laughter and loud conversations between new friends and faces, I could not have felt more awkward and intimidated. In a group of over 40 new people to make friends with, I suddenly felt so naked and scared and exposed. All at once my insecurities were laid bare in front of me and I was consumed by a gripping fear. What do these people think of me? Why hasn't anybody talked to me yet? Am I being funny enough? Will any of these people even want to be my friend?

This uncomfortable jolt was God's way of shaking me up from my spiritual slumber. In truth, while God was present in me before the school, I had still been selfishly hiding some parts of my life away, thinking that He would leave me alone if I guarded myself from him.

Kerygma School taught me the importance of having a God-based self esteem. God sees our struggles

and the ugliness in our hearts, but even in the pitch darkness He is with us.

During a night of praying over, Jesus spoke to me words of truth that changed my life. "I have not forgotten you, Nicole. I accept you." It was totally liberating to realise that Jesus wanted me to come to Him as I am, and that I do not need to prove myself to anyone to feel good about myself.

The most beautiful thing about some of my Jesus moments during this school was that despite being deeply personal, it was communal as well. This wonderful community of believers journeying together created an environment of safety for me, and allowed me to try to love others as how He wants us to be loved.

It was through Kerygma School that I came to fall in love with the Eucharist as well. When I come into communion with Jesus through the Sacrament of Eucharist, I become whole again and I receive his grace to live a renewed life in Him.

My personal encounter with God during Kerygma School has allowed me to live in complete freedom. I no longer find my identity in the affection people show me, or in my desire to be looked at with respect and admiration.

Instead, I claim my true identity as a child of God and a bride of Christ – one who is loved and loved again beyond all reason and compare. Through Kerygma School, God has given me the courage to look beyond the standards of the world and choose an alternative new lifestyle of purity and grace.

My first love has a name and a face, and his name is Jesus. ❤️

Nicole Ng is a member of Post-Confirmation group.



Soldiers of Mary

by DOMINIC ABRAHAM



THE members of the Legion of Mary in the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish see themselves as soldiers of Mary who are always prepared to support the various activities of the church.

The ministry is part of the larger global Legion of Mary organisation, and conducts its activities based on the directions provided by the Legion's handbook. The ministry was established in the IHM parish in 1954. Its two primary objectives are Personal Sanctification and Evangelisation. Every legionary is required to live by these values and demonstrate how they have achieved this week after week.

A group of Legionaries is referred to as the praesidium. As per the handbook, no single meeting of the praesidium can extend beyond one and a half hours. Over time, as the number of members went up, the Legion in the parish grew to three praesidia: Our Lady Star of the Sea, Mother of Vocations and Our Lady of La Salette Praesidia. Each praesidium has its own office bearers. Our Lady of La Salette Praesidium is made up of members from the Filipino community. This praesidium looks after the spiritual needs of the many domestic workers living in the parish.

In Singapore, the Legion has a national council, district councils and the parish level groups. At every meeting, a specific altar to Mother Mary is assembled, and prayers are offered. A short discourse is given by the praesidium's spiritual director and text from the specific handbooks is read. A bag is passed around

the group for collection of funds. The money collected is utilised for expenses for the altar. The parish praesidium is not allowed to retain more than a set amount, and any excess money is sent over to the district and national councils.

Every member is required to perform activities that will help them achieve the primary objectives of the Legion. During the meeting, each member must read out from a documented note what they had done since the last meeting in this regard. Members must have a valid reason if they are absent and this must be presented to the group. The activities that help the Legionaries achieve the objectives can be varied. They could do hospital visits. They could spend time at an elderly person's home to provide solace and company, they could attend a wake and pray the rosary, or could even simply counsel a contact going through troubled times.

The Legionaries would like to clarify that this ministry is not only about prayer. They also actively participate in activities that help the parish priest manage the church. They run the canteen on Sundays when needed. They help with the Jollies club on the first Tuesday of every month, where they help take the members to various churches and other places of interest. They visit the Institute of Mental Health and spend time with the patients on the first Sunday of each month. Some of the Legionaries work with ex-prisoners who want to repent and turn over a new leaf. Some take the Holy Communion to the homes of sick and immobile parishioners who

are unable to come to church. Some also teach catechism every Sunday.

This is the only ministry in the parish that meets every single week. There are members who have been legionaries for over 40 years. As they like to say, "once a Legionary, always a Legionary". For those that may not be able to participate in the weekly meetings, there is the auxiliary membership. Auxiliary members need to attend only one meeting in a year to renew their act of consecration to Our Lady: "I am all yours, my Queen, my Mother, and all that I have is yours". The rest of the time they are free to perform their duties towards achieving the Legion's objectives on their own.

During the months of May and October, which are devoted to Mother Mary, the Legion takes bookings from parishioners to pray the rosary in their homes with their family and friends. On every All Souls Day, the Legion offers a mass for those Legionaries that have passed on. The members insist that their ministry is not "only for old people" and wish to see many more parishioners of all ages, join the Legion. Those interested can observe the Legion meetings and decide if this is your apostolate. For more information and to be an observer at one of the meetings, please contact Aurelia at 9760 3805.

Our Lady Star of the Sea Praesidium meets every Thursday at 7.00pm in St. Thomas Room. The Mother of Vocations Praesidium meets every Tuesday at 7.15pm in St. Thomas Room. And Our Lady of La Salette meets every Sunday at 10.00am in the columbarium chapel. ♥



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