



Spreading Christmas Joy

By PATRICK JONAS

DURING the Advent period leading up to Christmas, two major outreach programmes were undertaken by the parishioners of IHM. The Epiphany group along with the Legion of Mary visited needy people living around the Tanjong Balai church and handed out provisions during the weekend of December 10-11. Several members of these two parish groups and their family members joined in this effort.

A week later, a bigger outreach activity (above) was undertaken at the parish level. On December 17, the IHM parish community organised a trip to a dormitory in Jurong that houses over 4,000 migrant workers. Leading this effort were members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP) and the RCIA. Along with volunteers from the parish, they made a difference to these workers by presenting them with a festive pack containing five kg of rice, soap bars, biscuits and instant curry noodles.

A thousand of these workers were also treated to biryani, which was sponsored by a donor. Two others sponsored cans of Red Bull drinks and oat cookies. A band from the parish performed for the dormitory residents while several parishioners bonded with them over games.

The workers enjoyed the evening, even though some had just returned after a tiring day's work. Some stepped forward to join the band and belt out songs. One worker from Bangladesh even performed some spectacular magic tricks to entertain all present.

Christmas Message

Dear IHM parishioners,

Christmas is a time to share our joy with others, especially the less fortunate among us. I am happy that our parish community undertook various Advent activities to reach out to others and let them know we care for them. Christmas is also the season of peace and a time for fellowship with family and friends. On behalf of the priests in the parish — Fr Cary Chan, Fr Luke Fong and Fr Joseph Jeannequin — I wish all of you a Joyful Christmas. May God's Blessings be upon you this season and throughout the New Year.

Fr. Adrian Yeo,
Parish Priest, IHM

... Continued on Page 2

... Continued from Page 1

Said Murugan, an Indian migrant worker about the event: "We enjoyed the delicious food and the gift pack contained items that we use every day. We are grateful for this kind gesture."

The parish Advent outreach started with members of the SSVF and RCIA seeking donations and volunteers from the parish over two weekends in November. The response during the first weekend was muted but picked up beyond expectations during the second week, thanks to passionate appeals made by the priests of the parish. In the end, around 90 volunteers signed up and sufficient money was collected.

Overseeing a project of this scale had its challenges. Said Dylan Chow from the SSVF, who was one



Left: The workers enjoying the entertainment. Middle: Playing some Christmas games. Right Top: Rock star! Right Bottom: Magician at work.

of those spearheading the effort: "We were concerned initially if we would get enough volunteers, funds and even permission from the dormitory authorities. But we trusted in God's will and everything went off smoothly. Many came forward to help."

On the day itself, the SSVF

took the lead in setting up tentages and the stage at the venue plus arranging transport of volunteers and refreshment for all involved, while the RCIA took charge of the entertainment segment of the event.

They were assisted by the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants & Itinerant People (ACMI). Sister Sylvia Ng, who journeys with our parish's Catechumens and is part of the ACMI staff, helped in identifying the workers' dormitory and getting permission for the outreach activity.

The entire group of nearly 100 from the parish was also spiritually nourished before embarking on the trip to the dormitory. The day before the event, Sister Mel Benedictos of the ACMI held a spiritual session at the St Peter and Paul room for the volunteers.

All along, the parishioners were supported by the priests of the parish in this activity. Parish priest Fr. Adrian Yeo even turned up at the dormitory to lend support to the event.

Those who signed up to volunteer for the half day event left with a tremendous sense of satisfaction. There were several families among them.

Said Marybeth Tan, who was seen carrying the heavy, packed bags from the packing station to the storage area: "It was quite a satisfying afternoon. I am happy I could play a part in this outreach activity."

When the last song was being sung and the volunteers were packing up, a visibly tired Marybeth, who had come with her mother, said it was really heartwarming to see the joy on the faces of the workers. And that the hard work put in by all was worth it. ❤️



Clockwise from top: Prayer led by Sr. Sylvia before the packing and distribution. Fr. Adrian with Dylan Chow at the dorm. The youngest volunteer. Volunteers packing the bags. Workers collecting their goodie bags.



Photos: Don Neo

Balai outreach – a reflection

By KIM SNODGRASS

The first time I went to Tanjong Balai was an eye-opener. Before I went there I thought I'd seen the poor (living in the one and two-room flats in Geylang Serai). The poor in Tanjong Balai live in huts at the mercy of the elements, suffering from disease and neglect.

After my first trip I wanted my boys to experience the quiet joy that filled me, to feel Jesus smiling as we took simple gifts of rice, oil and such provisions to the poor there. I wanted them to feel that contentment with what we have which is the best counterweight to greed. All these blessings come from a small sacrifice



Left: Kim and son bringing cheer to the villagers. Right: Singing Christmas carols.

of our creature comforts over just one weekend.

The peace and joy I receive makes me to want to go back there

every year. ♥

– Kim was part of the outreach mission to Tanjong Balai organised by the Epiphany group and Legion of Mary.

BAT feeds 500 in outreach programme

By DOMINIC ABRAHAM



THIS year, the Biblical Apostolate Team (BAT) of IHM parish chose to study Saint John's Gospel as the programme for the year. One of Saint John's standing messages has been about reaching out to the destitute and those in need. The group started to go through an internal transformation where, they went from being focused on studying the Bible to actually wanting to act on it as well.

A chance encounter between Christina Lim, the coordinator of BAT, and Linda Low set the group on the path to their first ever outreach programme. Linda and her husband have been running an outreach programme at Our Lady of Lourdes Church (on Ophir Road) for many

years. They provide food and drinks to Catholic migrant workers twice a month. Christina took part as a volunteer in one of these programmes and was convinced that this would be a good way for the BAT members to bring to fruition the reflection over Saint John's Gospel over the course of the year.

When she shared this idea with her members, they were keen and excited. Some volunteered to pick up the cost for the apples, water and biryani to be served to the workers. Others volunteered with their time and presence.

On Oct 2, during the evening mass at Our Lady of Lourdes, the priest blessed the food and drinks that the BAT members had brought.

Once the mass was over, about 500 migrant workers and local parishioners stood in two long queues and they were served food and drinks by the BAT members with a smile and a quick word for each of them. The workers waited patiently for their turn.

If they found something was running out, they were happy to share what they received with their brethren. At the end of the night, the workers helped fold the chairs and tables, and tidy up the church compound, and contributed their bit to the evening.

Some of the BAT members brought along their spouses and children and all of them volunteered to help out that evening. The outreach programme left a deep impact on many of them. Sarah-Ann, a 19 year old, said she felt a deep sense of satisfaction from seeing the smiling faces of the migrant workers, knowing that she was able to help end their day on a happy note. This outreach programme was to many volunteers the perfect transition from reflection and learning from Saint John's Gospel through the year, to translating it into actually reaching out to the needy.

BAT's programme for 2017 is to focus on the men and women that made church history titled Pivotal Players. Parishioners who are interested in taking part can find details of the programme on the church notice board, or can call Christina at 97303358. ♥



RCIA team takes part in Walk for Rice

By MATTHEW TAY



Punggol Waterway is a favourite spot for joggers, sightseers and, most recently, Pokémon Go players. But on Nov 5, there was a group of people gathered there with another goal in mind. They were members of IHM's RCIA taking part in the annual Walk for Rice. By joining the walk, they helped raise bowls of rice for the needy families living in the Southeast CDC area.

The walk was organized by Southeast CDC and NTUC FairPrice Foundation. Event organizer Alena Chong told IHM Heartbeat. "For every 200m walked, NTUC will donate a bowl of white and brown rice to the needy."

It was an initially a gloomy

morning on the day of the walk, with a heavy downpour before sunrise. However, as the time for the walk drew closer, the rain subsided, providing excellent walking weather. The 104 participants gathered in the open area at Waterway Point around 7am, said a morning prayer before embarking on their walk and raising 4,952 bowls of rice for the needy.

Ever since the annual event started three years ago, RCIA members have been taking part to do their bit to help the needy. The main objective initially was to provide an event for the RCIA catechumens to do almsgiving during the Advent period. This however, has evolved

into something more, with members seeing this event as a form of fellowship with other members of the community as well as friends and family of the participants.

"The best part of the walk was working out in a community while having fellowship at the same time," said Mildred Fan, an event regular. "Even our children look forward to this walk annually as they are also building their little circle of community during the walk."

When asked about the importance of the walk, Joyce Thiang, a neophyte on her second walk, said: "Every little effort from us makes a huge difference to the underprivileged. Hence I think it's important to play my part and participate in the walk." ♥

Advent is Waiting

By MATTHEW TAY

"WHAT do your parents do when they are waiting at a traffic light?" asked Father Luke Fong to a room full of young children. The children shouted some interesting and funny answers, but the overwhelming response was that their parents did not like waiting at the traffic light.

He then asked them a second question: "How about when you want to hatch a chick? What happens when you crack the egg after five days because you cannot wait?" One of the children shouted: "You cannot rush life!" That was the point that Father Luke wanted to make. Advent is waiting to celebrate the

birth of Jesus.

On Nov 27, the first Sunday of Advent, the Liturgy of the Word for Children (LOW4C) team held its annual Advent outreach for 27 children, who were gathered at the St Peter and Paul room. After the children understood the importance of Advent, they started to patiently create a wreath from simple materials like styrofoam plates, toilet rolls and green paper shreds. While the process takes time, it teaches patience to the children through an easily

understandable activity.

"Advent teaches us to wait and prepare ourselves for the proclamation of Christ's birth where God becomes Man to pave the way for our salvation. It didn't happen with the snap of the fingers!" said Sharon Chow, a member of LOW4C. "To be true to the spirit of Advent, decorations in church shouldn't be up till a week before Christmas so that the anticipation builds up to a healthy level where the season is celebrated more joyously and not in a fatigued manner. That is the message we are trying to teach the children."

LOW4C runs children's liturgy sessions once a month but during the important liturgical season of Lent, LOW4C breaks the word continuously for five weeks to prepare the children for Easter. The children are in the age group three to eight. ♥



IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



Our Lady of Sorrows: Many turned up to offer prayers to their dear ones on All Souls Day. They lit candles to remember and honour the departed souls, helped by members of the Our Lady of Sorrows group. ♥



Divine Mercy Prayer Group & Our Lady of Sorrows: Members of these two groups made a pilgrimage to the Holy Doors of the Churches of St. Vincent De Paul, Risen Christ and Sacred Heart. ♥



Infant baptism: Fourteen young infants were welcomed into the church when they were baptized on Sept 4 by Fr. Luke. ♥



Society of St. Vincent de Paul: Members of the SSVV visited the residents of Silra Home on Oct 23. The residents were treated to a buffet dinner and bingo games after Mass. ♥

Video programme on the Eucharist, a hit with participants

The Eucharist is deeply rooted in Sacred Scripture and is not 'something' but rather 'Someone' with whom all of us are meant to be in Communion.

This was one of many key learning points which 37 participants gained from the video-based programme titled 'Eucharist – Discovering the Mass in the Bible' which was conducted in the Parish over 10 Saturdays from September to November this year.

The programme featured mini lectures by Dr. Brant Pitre, Professor of Sacred Scripture, Notre Dame Catholic Seminary. He guided participants in the teachings of the Church about the Eucharist, through

pre-figurations in the Old Testament, linking them to the reality of Jesus' words and actions at the Last Supper, and the essentials about the Eucharist and the Mass in the New Testament.

Participants experienced many 'Aha!' learning moments throughout the well-structured programme. Their feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and all indicated that they will recommend it to others.

Said Angela Tng: "I am now so conscious of the Mass as Heaven on Earth, which was so clearly explained in the programme".

Added Antony Lim, another participant: "I have learnt a lot about the Catholic faith through the Eucharist programme. Thank you



IHM for organising it".

Another who did not want to be named said that the programme gave him a deeper understanding of the significance of the Eucharist, its meaning, purpose and significance at each stage of the Mass.

The next programme on the Eucharist will be held in 2017. ♥

— Contributed by IHM Faith Formation

A night of fun

By JOYCE TAN and JOLYN TAN



“THE young are said to be the future of the Church, but they are actually the Church of today,” was what Shiam, the coordinator of the Youth Ministry (YM), told a group of about 40 youth at the end of the YM Games Day on Nov 19.

Mostly in their late teens, the youth who had gathered for the Games Day were from the various youth communities. Held at the St Gregory Hall, the purpose of the event was to bring the youth of the parish together, to get to know especially youth from the other youth communities. This was to remind them of their belonging to the wider Church, and the need to come together to serve the Church, such as the confirmation camp.



Enjoying dinner together.

Games Day started with evening Mass that day, which happened to be a Saturday, which was followed by dinner. Organized by the Young Adults Community, the games began after dinner. They were based on the popular international gameshow franchise Minute to Win It, where games were only 60-seconds long. The articles involved in the games were used items that were easily found in the house. There was a slight twist though, with the groups having to “auction” for snacks after each game using the points won.

From the enthusiasm shown in participating in the games – aiming ping pong balls into cups filled with water, bouncing newspaper balls using clipboards, and juggling marbles using spoons – it was clear that all of them enjoyed themselves thoroughly that day! We bring you some photos capturing some of the action. ❤️



Ready, set, aim! Getting ping-pong balls into cups filled with water.



Confirmation 2016: What confirmands say

By JOYCE TAN & JOLYN TAN

ON 10 December, our Secondary 3 brothers and sisters received the Sacrament of Confirmation. To prepare themselves spiritually, they had attended the Confirmation camp held from 2nd to 5th December. Six Confirmands share their experiences of their journey towards Confirmation. ♥



Mary Ruth Chan:

It seems so surreal to be confirmed, yet I also feel a mix of nervousness and undeniable excitement to become a 'soldier in God's army'. After nine years attending catechism, I'm finally 'graduating' and starting another journey. The camp helped me realize how much I do want to continue to grow in faith, and to continue my faith journey by joining a youth ministry.



Megan Basilla Lim:

Before I attended the camp, I thought that God loves us when we change. But after the camp I realised that God's love changes us, and this brought me closer to God. Learning how much God had done for me despite my unworthiness made me want to be a better person. Now I know that I need God. As a child of God, I am called to love everyone and I am more willing to love now. Confirmation to me is to be complete, to be a mirror of God. I look forward to be led by God's love and light.



Alyssa James Tang:

My experience at the Confirmation camp was enriching, soul-searching and extremely fulfilling, by experiencing happiness in its simplest and most genuine form; being with Christ. For example, during the prayer session, I was touched by God's transcending peace. This journey towards Confirmation has been a long one, but Confirmation is the fruit of my persistence in this journey with Christ. Despite many hurdles along the way, I am assured that as long as I am receptive to God's love, I will receive it. God does things in His time, and I am thankful for how everything turned out.



Alisa Catherine Yeo:

I had initially thought that the Confirmation camp would be dreadful, but it was much more fulfilling than I expected. We learnt so much – how to love, who we are and how much sacrifice God has made for us. The camp provided a safe haven in which we could truly express ourselves without feeling judged at all. Confirmation to me is like a rite of passage into the mature, Catholic adulthood, and I simply cannot wait for it.



Luke Ambrose Chua:

I feel really blessed to have this opportunity to be confirmed and am very fortunate to attend this camp which has prepared me. At the start of the year, I thought Confirmation was like a graduation, which meant an end to catechism and having my Sundays free! But after the camp, I feel that Confirmation is about being a true witness of Christ, being obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed. It's a time when we as Catholics are old enough spiritually to follow God and His ways.



Cheryl Doo:

Overall, I feel very blessed to be able to gain so many novel experiences and to spend the camp with God and my wonderful group. A beauty of the camp was the opportunity to bond and share unabashedly with my group, and to have the chance to deepen my faith and grow closer to God. I was also reminded to be confident about God's presence in my life, to embrace Confirmation more willingly rather than out of obligation, and a spiritual journey with God that does not just end at Confirmation.

Serving with a Smile

by FIONA FOO

EVERY weekend, when you come to attend mass you never miss these men in blue ties and sashes. They are members of the church's Hospitality Ministry. Until recently, they were called Wardens. The name change was brought about by the group's spiritual director Fr. Luke as it better reflects the role of the ministers in the church.

From traffic control duties to ensuring order, comfort and the safety of parishioners, our Hospitality Ministers make sure they are always willing to lend a helping hand to the congregation and the priests of the parish.

The Hospitality Ministry was set up in 1981 when Fr. Pierre Barthoulet was the parish priest. It started with just four members. Within two months 10 more joined the team, and together, they took turns to serve during the two masses at that time. As years went by, the parish congregation grew and so did the number of weekend masses. Today we have more than 90 Hospitality Ministers serving not just the five weekend masses, but also on special occasions like Good Friday, Christmas and All Souls Day.

The Hospitality Ministers are one of the earliest to reach the church and the last to leave. Before the mass they guide parishioners to park their cars in designated spots and also

ensure that the cars are guided out after mass. It can be hot and stuffy at times doing traffic control but these men in blue sashes always try to put on a smile, serving to the best of their abilities.

Inside the church they make sure the bulletins and magazines are always at the designated spots. They also ensure that the pews are clean after each mass and if someone has left behind something, it is handed over to the church office. At every weekend mass they help in doing the collections, which is duly counted and safely placed in a church locker after mass. They are also at hand to assist the priests and the Eucharistic Ministers when people go up to receive Holy Communion.

The Hospitality Ministry recently held its AGM and Andrew Ang was elected Coordinator. Louis Lim and Peter Foo were elected Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Andrew, who takes charge in January, said that in the light of growing terror activities around the world. Hospitality Ministers will be undergoing training in order to spot suspicious activities or provide first aid immediately when required. With such initiatives in place, parishioners can be assured of their safety always.

Despite the hard work, many Hospitality Ministers derive great joy from serving the church. There

are some members who have been in the ministry for over 30 years. It is a challenging role but yet extremely fulfilling at the same time. When asked what are the key traits necessary to be a successful Hospitality Minister, both Andrew and outgoing Coordinator Christopher Lee agreed in unison that one would have to possess humility, integrity and honesty. As the job is not a glamorous one and many a time done behind the scenes, if one does not possess the three qualities mentioned one would easily give up. They urge whoever who has the heart, to come and join the ministry and experience the gratification and joy in serving God.

The Hospitality Ministry is not all about work. On the 15th of every month, the ministry holds a rosary session at the church's grotto. The five groups of Hospitality Ministers (from the five weekend masses) take turns to host the rosary. This is followed by a fellowship over food and drinks. Over the next two years, the leaders of the ministry plan to have more activities and retreats for the members to enable them to better serve the parish community.

From 2017 onwards, the ministry will welcome women parishioners to take on the role of Hospitality Minister along with the men. Those interested can get in touch with the Hospitality Ministers after mass. ❤️



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