



## Love lasts a lifetime

By JOLYN TAN

**C**ONTRARY to the 'throwaway culture' so pervasive in our society today, the celebration of milestone wedding anniversaries of 77 married couples in our parish was a strong testament to the fact that love can, indeed, last a lifetime.

The theme of the milestone wedding anniversary mass, held on Aug 9, was "Cherish the Treasure". In his homily, Fr. Adrian Yeo emphasized the nature of marriage in its "oneness and dissolubility". In the midst of the secular voices of division and to "throwaway what is broken", the way couples are willing to sacrifice and work at their marriage is "a reflection of Christ's love for His people – unconditional. Christ was willing to give up everything for His people, even His life," he said.

Reflecting on the homily,

Raymond and Joanne agreed how it was true that they could have chosen to walk separate ways upon encountering the first big quarrel in their marriage. "It is indeed the strength given by God that helped us to stay united! Thank you Lord Jesus for demonstrating to us what unconditional love is!" said the couple who celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

During the mass, all the couples renewed their wedding vows. For Kenneth and Annie, who also celebrated their 25th

wedding anniversary, leading the other couples in this was a "nerve wracking" experience, but nonetheless they felt "very honoured and happy to do this for God". The mass was special to them in another way too. Their parents, Adrian and Kum Lui, were the oldest couple at the mass, celebrating their 63rd wedding anniversary.

Many couples shed tears while renewing their vows. "The Spirit just moved our hearts, and we were weeping throughout," shared Sathia and Thana who were celebrating 20 years of marriage. "Personally, we have rarely remembered our anniversary –



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# When Our Lady's statue visited IHM

By NICOLE LARISSA XIAO and PATRICK JONAS

**T**O commemorate the centenary of the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Fatima, six statues of Our Lady of Fatima are making a global tour. The statues were blessed by Pope Francis and he gave them the title 'International Centennial Pilgrim Image of Our Lady of Fatima'. One of the statues visited Singapore on its tour of Asia.

During its visit here from Sept 10 to 18, the statue was to make its first stop at our church. But due to airline scheduling changes the visit had to be skipped, much to the disappointment of many parishioners. However, many of them managed to catch a glimpse of the statue at other venues in Singapore.

The venues included the St. Joseph's Institution, the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, the Catholic Spirituality Centre, as well as the Church of St. Mary of the Angels, the Carmelite Monastery and the St. Anthony's Canossian Primary School.

The Legion of Mary of our church organised bus services for parishioners to visit the statue at



*Fr. Barthoulot, then parish priest of IHM, welcoming the statue.*

the St. Joseph's Institution where there was a rosary devotion as well as benediction. When the statue arrived at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, Archbishop William Goh blessed it.

It is worth recalling that 39 years ago, in 1978, the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima visited Singapore. During the two-day stay here on April 18 and 19, the statue stopped by at Immaculate Heart of Mary church. The statue had come in a special Boeing jet named Queen

of the World and during its short stay, the statue was taken to the St. Joseph's Church, the Novena Church, the Church of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd and the St. Joseph's Institution.

The Catholic News brought out a special edition to commemorate the visit and it reported that from as early as 9am "there were people in the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary waiting for the Pilgrim Virgin's arrival at 11am."

The report has it that every available space in the church was taken up and "even the sanctuary was filled with school children."

Parishioner Pius Fernandez, 78, nostalgically recalled the visit. He was one of those who had the privilege of carrying the Pilgrim Virgin's statue during the procession at IHM.

Another parishioner Helen Chong also recalled the visit and she shared with IHM Heartbeat a copy of the souvenir that the Catholic News had published for the historic visit of the statue.

The late Fr. Pierre Barthoulot was the parish priest of IHM at that time and he conducted the novena devotions during the visit of the statue.

Many elderly parishioners that the IHM Heartbeat team spoke to remember the visit but they could not recall the details due to the long years gone by. ♥



*Procession of the Pilgrim Virgin's statue in the old IHM church.*



# IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



**I**nfant Baptism: Parents and Godparents with their young loved ones pose for a photograph with Fr. Adrian after the rite of Baptism on September 3. ♥



**H**ospitality Ministry: Five new Hospitality Ministers were commissioned on Sept 2. They included IHM's first woman Hospitality Minister. All members of the Hospitality Ministry also renewed their pledge and later celebrated the occasion with a dinner. ♥



**R**ite of Acceptance: Twenty-one inquirers, candidates and confirmands took part in the Rite of Acceptance on Sept 10. During this rite, the inquirers stated their desire to become baptised members of the church in the presence of the parish community, which affirmed their decision. ♥



**E**piphany: The Epiphany group held a Games Day at the Tanjong Pinang school which the group supports. In the photograph students of the school are seen playing a game along with Sr. Cecilia of the MEP Missionaries. ♥

## Students help out at Sunday mass

By NICOLE LARISSA XIAO

**T**O celebrate the Archdiocese's first Catholic Education Sunday, students from CHIJ Our Lady of Nativity (OLN) and Maris Stella High School visited our church on Sept 10.

The aim of the students was to educate our parishioners about the history of Catholic education in Singapore. They set up display boards in the piazza which told the story of Singapore Catholic schools and their history. The students distributed prayer cards with prayers composed by our Archbishop and during the

Sunday 8.30 am mass some of them took part as lectors, choir members and hospitality ministers.

The rest of the students, in their school uniforms, attended mass with their families as they witnessed this special occasion. During the mass, Catholic educators and all others contributing to the teaching industry in the congregation were given a special blessing.

Justine Ngow from CHIJ (OLN), who participated in the choir, "fully enjoyed" the occasion and said it was "a good first experience." She also



mentioned she would not want to pass up another opportunity like this if it ever came up, as she felt "blessed during the mass". Another student Jessie Ong from the same school said she "felt a sense of peace and calm during the mass." ♥





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this was the first time we truly celebrated it. When we renewed our vows we realised how blessed we are and how our capacity to love each other has grown and deepened over the years. Every year the gratitude and appreciation grows, we are immensely blessed by each other and by God."

Kevin and Kim who were also celebrating their 20th wedding anniversary found this mass a very meaningful experience. "It strengthened us to see how other couples have held fast on to their vows and how their families have grown," they said.

Following the renewal of vows, Fr. Adrian gave a special blessing to the couples. "Congratulations to all of you for coming to this point. Please continue to pray that you will always be a sign of Christ's love, and that God will deepen your love for each other."

The milestone anniversary mass was organised by the Family Life Group of our parish. This was the second year they were doing it and this will be an annual event. ♥



Patrick and Geslyn leading the couples in an anniversary prayer



Stephen and Polly Anna



Kevin and Kim



The anniversary cake



Kenneth & Annie & their parents, Adrian and Kum Lui



Robert and Susan representing the milestone couples to cut the anniversary cake





# Family power

By FIONA FOO

THOSE who have been involved in planning a wedding would agree wholeheartedly that it is no easy feat. On Aug 9, as Singapore celebrated its 52nd birthday, 77 couples came together to celebrate their milestone wedding anniversaries at IHM with a mass followed by a lunch reception. This would not have happened without the hard work put in by the church's Family Life group, made up of nine couples.

Four of these couples had journeyed together in the Couple Empowerment Programme held in 2014 and decided to come together to form the Family Life group in early 2016 with the objective of promoting marriage and family life. The other five couples joined the group some time later after they had got to hear about it.



Prior to the big day, the group met at least once a month in the early stages and the frequency of their meetings increased as the day drew closer. True dedication from the team can be seen from how most of them took leave of absence from work the day before to prepare and make sure everything was in place. In fact, their only experience of organising such an event was their own wedding, years ago. This increased their determination to make the milestone anniversary celebration a resounding success.

Like with all events, the key to success will undoubtedly be the things that go on behind the scenes. Agnes Chua, one of the founding members of the group, shared that planning for the decoration to make the event wedding-like was one example. In a bid to be prudent, the team decided to create most of the decorations and

gifts themselves keeping "Pastel" as their overarching theme. They spent the Sunday before the actual day to put together flowers, preparing door gifts and even sewing tablecloths together for the reception tables. Apart from decorations, administrative and logistic work like preparing name tags and managing external vendors also added to the list of things the Family Life team had to do. What seemed like a big job to do turned out enjoyable for the group, as they worked together with a common goal: To make the milestone wedding anniversary mass and reception a success with all the guests happy and satisfied. They also wanted the younger generation to see the importance of marriage as a sacrament, especially through such a meaningful event witnessing couples who never had the chance to renew their vows.

Of course, with every successful event comes various challenges along the way. When asked what were some of their difficult moments, the team immediately quipped that it was the seating arrangement for the lunch reception that followed the mass. With 46 tables needed to seat 77 couples and their guests it was a tough task to work out who sat where in an efficient manner to maximise space. If you had seen the beautiful video wedding montage of the celebrating couples played during mass prior to the event, you could possibly guess that coordinating a simple video itself was also not easy

especially with the management of before and after videos. When asked if they would do it again the team unanimously agreed they would, in a heartbeat. In fact, four out of the nine couples will be celebrating their wedding milestone anniversary next year, leaving them more excited than ever to plan next year's event.

Members of the Family Life said they were really touched witnessing couples of varying ages renew their vows. One member, Cynthia Soh, said her friend and husband who is a non-Catholic renewed their vows at the anniversary mass. "It was an emotional and touching moment for their family to witness the couple exchanging vows in church," she said.

When asked about his thoughts on IHM's milestone wedding anniversary event, parish priest Fr. Adrian reiterated that the main objective is to celebrate marriages, especially in today's world where marriage is seriously threatened. With divorces on the rise, he believes that the church should also focus on marriage, sending a strong message on the importance and significance of marriage. ❤️



*The Family Life group with some of their children, who also pitched in to help*



# An evening of empowerment

By JOYCE TAN

ON Sept 22, about 50 youth gathered in the church hall for an evening of worship, testimony, adoration and prayer. The evening started with Mass, followed by the Vespers prayer of the Divine Office, and dinner.

This was the first time that such an event was held in our church and it was organized by Benjamin Mao, the parish's Youth Coordinator. The theme was on the struggles of life, with a special focus on exams, given that the exam period was drawing close for many students. Two youths gave testimonies on how they relied on God for strength to overcome the struggles they faced. There was also a time of prayer, during which the youth prayed for one another.

Some of the young people who attended the session did so because they felt a strong desire to grow in their faith. One of them, Stephanie Cheong, 18, who is going to sit for her A Levels in November, said: "My friend had asked me once to attend an A Levels/IB exam Mass, which I did, so I felt I should come for this one too".

Another youth, Melissa Tan, 18, felt grateful that she had attended.



*The team leading praise and worship.*

She explained: "I feel that God saw me struggling and called me here to reassure me that things would be better. I am thankful for the people who prayed over me". She had been considering whether to attend initially, but eventually decided to do so because she wanted to keep up with her faith life and stay close to God.

According to Benjamin, the purpose of this event was to bring the different youth communities in the Youth Ministry together in prayer, and to emphasize the centrality of God in our lives. "It is important that the youths are exposed to the greater community, in order to have greater support, and learn to build new relationships with one another in our journey towards

God." He also added that ultimately, our relationship with God isn't just an aspect of our life, but should very much be the meaning of our lives. "This, he said, "will affect how we live our lives, how we treat others, and how we treat ourselves."

It is hoped that these events will be conducted regularly in the future. Through exposure to different forms of prayer, faith formation, and sharing, our youth may encounter God and grow in a loving relationship with Him, where in seeking God, to ultimately discover more about themselves and their calling in life.

All youth and young adults are invited to join in future Youth Ministry events and journey together in faith as a community! ♥

# Anchoring the Youths

By MATTHEW TAY



THE post-Confirmation group in IHM has a new name.

Said Nicole Xiao, a member of the group: "Having felt that we could no longer relate to the name (post-con), the group went through a month-long discernment process. Soon, we came up with the name 'Anchored', which means 'to aim to be anchored in Christ'."

As one of the youth ministry's (YM) groups, the post-Confirmation group was set up in Dec 2012. "We initially didn't know what the purpose was or what to expect," Nicole recalled. "We just wanted to continue to be in the church community as well as continue forging friendships." In the end, the group became a pillar of support for the youths who wanted to continue journeying with each other after catechism while also growing an authentic relationship with Jesus.

The age group of Anchored's members ranges from 18 to the mid-20s. It welcomes anyone who wishes to join the ministry, regardless of age. ♥



# The new Pastoral Council

by MATTHEW TAY



**L**AST year, very few parishioners turned up for the Parish Assembly. As a result, the church could not elect a new Parish Pastoral Council. After much thought, Fr. Adrian Yeo, the parish priest, felt there was a need to change the way the Pastoral Council was set up.

He decided to go back to the days when the Pastoral Council was composed of representatives from the different church ministries. So in July, the first meeting of all heads of ministries was convened. This is now the new Pastoral Council. The members of this council are all ministry heads or their representatives.

The council meets once a month with Fr. Adrian chairing the meeting. According to Fr. Adrian, at a later date an executive committee will be elected from within this council. The executive committee will consist of a chairman, vice-chairman and secretary. They will help run the meetings. "Currently I am leading the meetings. But when things are more settled, we will vote for an executive committee," said Father Adrian.

He added that Mike Arents, the



new Pastoral Coordinator in charge of the pastoral activities of the church, will work closely with the pastoral council. He said that he and Mike will come up with pastoral initiatives and convey it to the council.

He also explained how the new Parish Council will help in parish activities. Said Fr. Adrian: "While the weekly bulletin is one avenue to communicate with the ministries, it is not the best way to provide them the rationale behind the plans and the kind of support required for parish activities. Therefore, this council will explain, discuss and communicate with the ministries about the activities and get help with the manpower required for various parish activities."

Another function of the council is to coordinate and communicate all ministry activities with each other. The council meets every last Monday

of the month and during these meetings, ministries can share their planned activities and invite other ministries to join them.

For example, he said, that at one of the recent parish council meetings the representative from the St. Vincent de Paul ministry briefed the council that the group was planning to do a dormitory project and invited other ministries to join them.

With the new pastoral council now into its fourth month, the stronger communication between ministries ensures there is no duplication of work, which then ensures maximum efficiency and cooperation among the various ministries.

Fr. Adrian feels the current format of the Parish Council works differently than the previous PPC. Members of the previous PPC were nominated parishioners and they had difficulty communicating their needs to ministries when they planned parish activities. Now, with the new pastoral council, if the Church wants to hold any activity, the needs are easily communicated to all the church ministries, with the process starting at the monthly pastoral council meetings. ♥



**Editorial Team:** Agnes Chua, Colin Lee, Denise Julia Tan, Fiona Foo, Jolyn Tan, Joyce Tan, Matthew Tay, Nicole Larissa Xiao, Patrick Jonas

**Layout:** Karen d'Almeida

**Contact:** heartbeat@ihm.sg

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