

IHM's first Family Carnival

By DENISE TAN and PATRICK JONAS



ON a cool, cloudy Saturday evening, IHM celebrated its first Family Carnival. The event was held after the Sunset mass on December 30, the last Saturday of 2017. It was also a

family day celebration as the Feast of the Holy Family falls on the first Sunday after Christmas.

Besides being a day of fun and bonding with family and friends, the event also served evangelistic purposes. Parishioners were encouraged to bring non-Christian family and friends to join in the food, fun, and games, as well as to learn more about Christ and the church.

"It's bringing people in, in a non-threatening way. It's not like straightaway inviting them for mass, but just having them celebrate Christmas

with us," said parish pastoral coordinator Mike Arents.

While there were games for both young and old (including parent-child games), food (such as Bento sets and carnival staples such as popcorn and hotdogs), carolling, and even a bouncy castle, the main church was also open for non-Christians to take a tour. Besides seeing the Christmas crib, the RCIY members were also present to answer questions about the church.

"They come to enjoy, they come to celebrate Christmas with us, and they get to take home something — the understanding of the church and of Jesus," said Fr. Adrian Yeo, the parish priest.

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Carolling by our Agapecoces Choir.

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Many came with their children. And they were not disappointed. The magic show, in particular, attracted the attention of a large number of both young and old.

IHM Heartbeat spoke to a few who had come with their families for the grand evening. Two such families had only recently moved to our parish. Clive DaCosta came with his wife Tulip and their two young daughters Claire and Rachel. They are from Goa, India. The family, fairly new to Singapore, used to worship at the Church of St. Francis Xavier in Serangoon Gardens until recently. Having moved to Kovan they started attending services at IHM from December. Clive was impressed with the arrangements though he noted that the crowd was smaller than the one he witnessed at a similar event held at the St. Francis Xavier church last year.

Martin Lee, who came with his wife Emily and young sons Ignatius and Aloysius said the event brings the spirit of togetherness to the fore. He said those who are not members of our church and who were there at the event could see for themselves that there is unity among us. Martin and his family are also new to the IHM parish, having moved here recently. They were earlier residing in Sengkang and used to worship at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was very appreciative of the arrangements and said his sons loved the popcorn and candy.

Another parishioner who gave his nod of approval to the celebrations was Francis Wong. He was at the event with his wife Irene, son Bertrand and daughter Marielle. Francis, who has been a member of the parish since he was a little boy, said he and his family enjoyed the evening.

There were several food stalls, in addition to the one handing out Bento boxes for which tickets worth \$5 each were sold earlier. The rest of the food was free and those who came had a great time sampling hot dogs, ice cream, candy, pop corn and muah chee. There was a long queue outside the face-painting booth with both young and old waiting patiently to get colourful paintings of

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The magic show enthralled children and adults alike.



The DaCosta family.



The Wong family.



What a treat – candy floss!



The Lee family.



Enjoying the bouncy castle.



We've had our faces painted!

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Carolling by our Burmese community.



Alpha Music Group entertaining our parishioners & guests.



Youth leading Praise & Worship.

their choice done. Fr. Luke Fong also joined the fun and got one, a skeleton hand.

The event kicked off with Fr. Adrian's address inside the church followed by Praise and Worship and carolling.

The Family Carnival is a first for IHM. A similar event, the IHM Family Day, was held five years ago at Saint Gabriel's Secondary School.

"We hope that this idea (of the Christmas event) will grow bigger over time. Now, for example, we invited all the direct neighbours, although I would have much rather invited every street in the whole parish district," said Mike.

The Family Carnival involved the efforts of several ministries and volunteers. Fr. Adrian and Mike Arents gave it direction and they were supported by the parish coordinators and multiple communities such as the Family Life Group, RCIY, Singapore Catholic Deaf Community, LOWC, Lectors, SSVP and youth groups, to name a few. ♥



Light-a-candle, say a prayer.



One of our Bingo winners.



Above and right: Games for the young ones.



A time to spread joy

By MATTHEW TAY

IN the days approaching Christmas, three ministries in our church were on a mission to bring joy to others.

Double Mission

The Epiphany group had two mission objectives, local and overseas. Their local mission was the Advent tree which was placed near the main church doors. The tree is a familiar sight for parishioners as it has been making its appearance outside the church every Advent season since 2001. Parishioners are encouraged to pray for the conversion of a non-Catholic family member of friend by writing their names on a pledge card. One part of the card is hung on the Advent tree while they keep the other half as a reminder to pray for the conversion of the person whose name is on the card.

"This year (2017), we added a new prayer mission and asked

parishioners to also pray for Catholics who have stopped attending Mass and have stopped being part of the parish community," said Christian Kwan, a member of the Epiphany group. "We give out about 1,000-1,200 pledge cards every year and more than 800 are usually hung on the tree, each bearing two or more names," he added.



The overseas outreach is a Teach and Learn (TnL) mission for the benefit of students in the Riau Islands.

"We visit three mission stations regularly in Rempang, Taroka and Tanjong Pinang," said Nicholas Lim, the coordinator of the Epiphany group. "We conduct English learning lessons and help children aged between 6 and 12 learn the language."

Added Celestine Snodgrass, another Epiphany member: "It was through the initiative of the late Bishop Hilarus of the Riau Islands that we got invited to start the English programme in Rempang. In Tanjong Pinang the late Father Henri, MEP priest, approached us. Our decision to accept the offer was made through prayer and discernment with our then spiritual director Fr. Brian D'Souza. The decision to continue our work in these

place are taken after discussion with our spiritual directors."

In addition, the Epiphany group is also doing a Christmas outreach in Tanjong Balai to improve the material wellbeing of the poor communities there. The group takes two busloads of people from the parish every year, which is the maximum number they can take for this outreach mission.



Supporting Friends in Need

On Dec 10, the Society of St. Vincent De Paul (SSVP) hosted their yearly Christmas party for the families they support. They are called Friends In Need (FINs). The SSVP Conferences



of the five other churches in Serangoon district — Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Church of St. Francis Xavier, St. Anne's Church, Church of the Transfiguration and Church of St. Vincent de Paul — joined the IHM Conference in hosting the party in our parish hall. The aim of the event was to share the joy of Christmas with the FINs.

"Around 450 people, including SSVP members, took part in the celebrations," said SSVP IHM Conference president Adrian Cher. "The party was organised by a committee drawn from members of all the Conferences in Serangoon district. Fr. Adrian was kind enough to allow us to host it in our church hall and we sincerely thank his generosity and kindness," he added.

The FINs were treated to a sumptuous buffet and everyone, including the children of FINs, had a great time as there were activities such as a quiz competition, balloon sculpting and face-painting. The

adults were treated to live music, a Nativity skit and Christmas carolling. The FINs also won attractive prizes through a lucky draw. In addition, there was a photo booth where the FINs could take photographs to take home. The event ended with Santa and his Santarinas distributing sweets to all present in the hall.

A Children's Advent

On Dec 6, with an eye to the future,

the Liturgy Of the Word for Children (LOWC) engaged in their yearly advent outreach, which they feel is important to guide the children on waiting and preparing for Jesus.

During their activity, the children had to patiently paste strips of black construction paper and pieces of cellophane to create the nativity scene. After which, the art pieces were individually placed into a laminating machine. ♥



Giving thanks for the year gone by

By NICOLE LARISSA

TO celebrate Christmas and give thanks to God for all He has given them this year, members of various youth ministries got together for a dinner on Dec 22. The Youth Ministry End of Year Christmas Dinner, as the event was called, started with the youths attending evening mass.

This was followed by a scrumptious buffet spread laid out in the church hall. The youth loved it and they utilised the occasion to catch up with their friends. Some struck amazing poses at the photo booth to take home memorable pictures.

Following the fellowship, the youth split into groups consisting of one or two members from



Prayerformance: a prayer performance put together by members of youth communities Anchored and RCIY.

each youth community to create a skit inspired by the Nativity Bible story. Teams got creative and used materials such as trash bags, construction paper and old newspapers to create a unique skit that definitely tickled the audience as each team managed to bring out the plot of Jesus' birth in the activity, adding their own personal touch.

Another novel item, presented by members of Anchored, caught the eye. It was called 'prayerformance', a prayer-cum-performance. They used body movements as a means to pray and danced to the song Joy

of the Lord. A few members of the Rite of Christian Initiation for Youths also joined in the prayerformance, allowing the audience to feel the happiness and peace that Jesus has given this bunch of youth. The night ended with a praise and worship session, allowing everyone to use song as a form of praise to thank the Lord for the year and to prepare their hearts for the Christmas and New Year season. ♥

Right: Youths making use of the photo booth set up in the church hall to take pictures and bond with one another.



IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



Youth ministries: Throughout the month of December, many of our youth communities and ministries gathered their members for various retreats and bonding activities. These retreats all had a common purpose: Knowing more about God, their community members as well as themselves.

Youth communities Anchored, Community of Youths (COY) and Young Adults Community (YAC) respectively during their retreats held in the month of December. ❤️



Epiphany: The Epiphany group held its Christmas Party at Taroka, Indonesia along with the teachers at the Taroka school to mark the last class of the year. The young teachers dressed up for the party and sang Christmas carols to the delight of the students. ❤️



Catechists: About 70 Catechists, catechism facilitators and helpers were commissioned on 7 January 2018. ❤️

Confirmation camp experiences

By JOYCE TAN



FIFTY four confirmands from our parish received the Sacrament of Confirmation on Dec 2. In preparation, they had attended a Confirmation Camp the week before. The camp included activities such as praise and worship, games, faith formation sessions and reflection times. Intercessors also prayed for the participants during the camp.

In his homily during the Confirmation Mass, Archbishop William Goh invited the congregation to reflect on the source of our identity – to know who we are, and who we are called to be. He said that having a Christian identity rooted in the family of God allows God to make a home in us. In Confirmation, our identity in the faith is confirmed, so that we can go out and share our experiences with others. Evangelizing starts with us first having a personal encounter with God and being fully alive in Him, constantly being Jesus' disciples, and to belong to a faith community.

Looking back on the catechetical year that has passed, the Sec 3

catechists felt that God had made all things possible despite challenges faced. The catechists said they appreciate and thank the parents and godparents of the confirmands for their involvement and the efforts they put in.

To one confirmand Kieran Lowe, Confirmation meant a continuation of faith as a young adult. Two other confirmands Callista Goh and Cheyne Fernandes felt that Confirmation strengthened their relationship with God.

Three of those who were confirmed shared with Heartbeat their experiences of the camp:

Ryan Loke: Confirmation camp for me was an experience I will certainly never forget. I was grouped with an amazing bunch of friends who shared openly and comforted each other. The facilitators were caring and always went out of their way to help us. This really made me feel comfortable instantly. I was really touched by the Holy Spirit through the reflections, confession and the praying over. It just felt like a whirlwind, and as the Holy Spirit

took came upon me, I stumbled several times. My hands felt warm and I felt at peace. I think the camp allowed me to feel what God's love is and its power. I really look forward to what else God has planned in time to come.

Grace Goek: During the Confirmation camp, I was able to form my spiritual identity through the activities and sharings. It made me think deeply about myself and my relationship with God, which I don't usually. I also appreciated the wide exposure to praise and worship. Overall, confirmation camp was a wonderful experience that changed my mentality on many things.

Chloe Tham: Confirmation camp was a time of prayerful reflection and sharing. Throughout the camp there were various sessions, which allowed us to have a greater awareness of God's blessings in our lives and His love for us in different ways. During praise and worship session, we rejoiced over the great things God has done for us. ❤️

Giving them a jolly good time

by FIONA FOO



HAVE you ever had a compelling urge to make a difference in someone's life? It was this feeling that led to the creation of IHM Jollies back in October 2012 by some in the parish.

Their numbers are small but the nine members of the IHM Jollies share the same values in bringing cheer and joy to aged and sick parishioners. The group organises outings for the elderly. But the most important event that they organise is the annual Mass for the Elderly and the Sick. The special mass is now a much looked forward to event in the church calendar. The mass is followed by lunch and fellowship. The Alpha Music Group provides entertainment and the members also play games like Bingo with the elderly.

The IHM Jollies also organises visits to other Catholic churches in Singapore. These visits help the elderly understand the history of the church and gives them an opportunity to pray there.

Other activities include taking the elderly for shopping trips before Chinese New Year. They are taken to Woodlands to shop for Chinese New Year goodies. The group has in the past organised



trips to Johor Bahru to allow the elderly to feast on durians. All these activities are done with the objective of bringing happiness and building friendly bonds among them.

The IHM Jollies ministry meets once a month, usually on the first Tuesday. After every outing they share their experiences and plan for the next activity.

Despite their tight schedules, members of the IHM Jollies remain committed to serve the ministry wholeheartedly. Dominic Chia, IHM Jollies' coordinator, and his team unanimously agree that seeing the elderly enjoy the activities brings them great joy and motivation to continue the good work. At the end of the outings organised by them, often some of the elderly excitedly enquire about the next event. This further motivates the group to plan an even better and enjoyable outing for them.

Top: Visit to Novena Church in July. Left: Monthly birthday celebrations. Below: At Gardens by the Bay.



The members admit that seeing the elderly making friends and taking care of each other brings happiness knowing that they played a small part in it. When asked about their personal gratification, Theresa, a founding member of the IHM Jollies, shared that as followers of Christ, being part of the group is like a resurrection of the spirit because they witness the growth of their members and just by being with them is such a worthwhile and priceless experience.

The IHM Jollies conduct recruitment drives every now and then to recruit new team members or volunteers to accompany them on their outings. People who love socialising, and find true joy in serving others are welcome to join this group. ♥



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Published by: Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, 24 Highland Road, Singapore 549115

Printed by: E-Press Printing Services, Blk 3015A Ubi Road 1, #02-01, Singapore 408705