

Christ is risen! Hallelujah!

By NICOLE LARISSA



EASTER Vigil service began with a procession from St. Gregory's Hall to the main church. The pascal candle was lit from the Easter fire and taken into the church. As the candle proceeded to the altar, parishioners lit up their candles and the whole church, which was in darkness, brightened up. This signifies Jesus' rising from the grave and a chance for us to rise from our spiritual tombs of

darkness as well, and into the light with Him. The altar servers then began to place flowers and candles around the altar and removed the purple cloths that covered the statues of Jesus and Mother Mary.

The service saw 21 neophytes, who had gone through the RCIA and RCIY programmes, get baptised. After the baptism rites were over, the newly baptised spread out to various parts of the church to spread the light from their

candles among the congregation. The congregation then renewed their baptismal promises after being blessed with holy water by the priests.

Easter Vigil concluded with 'The Easter Song (My Lord He Died For A Kingdom)', which was a good reminder for all gathered that once again, the Lord has risen for the good of all of us and conquered death to save us from our sins. ♥

Easter Triduum 2018



Top left and centre: Good Friday mass.
 Far right: Fr. Joseph washing the feet of our youth from the various youth ministries on Maundy Thursday.
 Bottom left: Holy Saturday Divine office.
 Bottom right: Stations of the Cross.



Their journey to become Catholics

By MATTHEW TAY

They came from different backgrounds. But they journeyed together with the same aim. On March 31, they were baptised in IHM after completing the Rite of Catholic Initiation for Adults (RCIA) to become members of the Catholic church.

Mary's journey with her daughter

Mary Lin's journey started when she was exploring the faith. While she was open to Christianity, she was not fully aware about the Catholic faith.

"I was wondering what the difference was," Mary told IHM Heartbeat. "So my sister-in-law

encouraged me to attend RCIA classes to explore and learn more about the faith." At the start, Mary was not sure if she wanted to get baptised, but as she went on the RCIA journey and started learning more about the Catholic faith, it made her want to get baptised. "I went to RCIA to explore and at first I was not really into it and actually missed the first lesson because I was overseas," Mary recalled. "But after 2-3 months I began to feel drawn to it. We got to know more about the Catholic faith every week through the practices and requirements," she said. "Love others like how Christ loved the church, his magnanimous love. I loved the

RCIA contingent. "I felt this is the best decision that I have ever made for her," Mary recalled. "On the night of baptism, we gathered at 5pm for prayers and worship and we were told to write a letter to God. She wrote the letter and I felt really touched by what she wrote. I am so glad that she knows she has a loving God and she must treat people with Love. This is something which is taught beyond classroom lessons or beyond any enrichment classes that I could send her to."

The journey taken by mother and daughter has also influenced Mary's husband, who now joins them in prayer every night. "It has become such a routine for us every night," Mary delightfully said. "This is something which had never happened before and started only in the last few months!"

Said Mary after her baptism: "I hope I will be able to show Jesus in me to everyone that interacts with me and to share God's goodness to people that I meet so that they, too, will be able to experience God's love for them."



teachings and that is why I wanted to get baptised."

Mary journeyed along with her daughter, Teresa Isabella Lim, who at 7, was the youngest member of the

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James' journey

The journey was different for James Leong, who has been married for 41 years. He was the only non-believer in his family. "Since my working days, I never once stepped into a church despite my wife encouraging me to go," said James. "But last Easter, I woke up, turned to my wife and said I wanted to go to church that day. I did not know why." It was very unusual because for many years, James only drove his wife and kids to church, then went to his usual coffee shop for breakfast. "The experience was strange, but maybe I was touched by the Lord."

For James, the sharing was what opened his eyes because as a non-believer, the experiences of the sponsors and fellow participants resonated a lot with him. "The journey taught me a lot of things. The sessions, prayers, teachings and sharing allowed me to open up fully and accept the faith."

When asked for his thoughts after baptism, James simply referred to Luke 11:9-10, 'Ask, and it will be given; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened'. "My mind is still thinking of the wonderful and beautiful baptism experience on that very special day," he said. "I sincerely hope the experience will be with me as long as God will give me the grace to keep that special moment, lest I become senile in my later years."

Angie's journey

Angie Teo's affinity with the Catholic Church started when she was a teenager, while attending Holy Innocents High School. Her parents and sister had earlier converted to the Catholic faith and she joined RCIA purely to learn more. "I was not sure if I was willing to go ahead to get baptised," she told Heartbeat. "Eventually I did find out more, though not enough, but it did strengthen me more and made me more definite that I wanted to be baptised."

She recalled the day she showed up at RCIA as one of the standout moments of the journey. "Up until the first day, it was a surprise to my parents, who were part of the RCIA team, because I had not submitted

any forms," Angie said with a laugh. "So when I suddenly showed up, they were so happy. I remember that I cried that day, I was so happy because it was like coming home."

Angie, who is a mother of five, was pregnant with her youngest when she started RCIA. "My children started attending catechism before me because I felt that it would be good for them to have a bit of a religion so they can be better children," Angie shared. "But there were obstacles because my husband and I were not Catholics so my parents had to speak to Father Adrian who allowed them to attend the classes."

Angie is grateful to the sponsors, saying that they are extremely important for the RCIA journey. "If not for the sponsors, many would have dropped out. Seeing their commitment and willingness to share makes you want to come back week after week. Because they are also committing their time, even though you may feel lazy, you feel obliged to come."

Angie added after her baptism: "The baptism felt so surreal, it was really like a homecoming. But the journey does not stop here!"

Robin's journey

Robin Fong's background was different from the others. He had been a Protestant for 30 years. But about 18 months ago, the Lord made him curious about the Catholic faith. "I do a lot of cycling and I usually cycle past the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary," he recalled. "Then one day, I felt that I

wanted to go inside. So I went in, did nothing but sit and I felt a very strong presence of God. So from then on, I started attending mass and I visited all the churches in Singapore."

But before he signed up for the RCIA he asked himself if he was serious and really wanted to become a Catholic. "Eventually I decided to leave it to the Lord."

Robin enjoyed RCIA. "It was always the highlight of my week! The two hours were very enjoyable and the food great," Robin joked. "I enjoyed the fellowship. The RCIA was to confirm and settle questions I had about the Catholic faith and it was very interesting. I never felt so close to God until these past 18 months in comparison to my last 30 years!"

Being the only Candidate this year, the experience was very special for Robin. "I am very thankful for the Holy Spirit who led me to discover the depths and treasures of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church," Robin reflected. "I am grateful to the RCIA team for guiding me in this journey. The feeling of receiving the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is beyond measure."

The message from the newly-baptised Catholics to non-Catholics who are interested in the faith is simple: Come and See.

"The journey is very long, about a year, and initially you will have some doubts," said Robin. "If you want to drop out, you can drop out, but do give God the chance to transform your life." ♥



Clockwise from top left: Isabelle watching Mary being baptised; James; Robin; and Angie.



Reverse Stations of the Cross draws many

By MIKE ARENTS

ON Holy Saturday morning parishioners gathered after the Office of Readings outside the Church for the outdoor Stations of the Cross, but in reverse order. The idea of the Reverse Stations was brought to Singapore by Malaysian Seminarians and has spread to a few Parishes in Singapore.

The original idea was that after Jesus was buried in the tomb, Mother Mary returned home and along the way she recalled what happened. A few years ago I rewrote these reflections to add in the perspective of St John as well, since this beloved disciple of Jesus took Mary into his home. As they walked home together they do not just remember the suffering Jesus went through and the pain they felt, but they also recalled his promises. As they progress on their journey their hope also increases.

At the first ever Reverse Stations held in our church on Holy Saturday morning, there was an unexpected

and overwhelming number of people. The Candidates for Baptism also joined in. I had prepared for 30 to 60 people to be present, but I think nearly 150 came. The carpark, where most of the stations were set up, had enough space, though we had to wait here and there to give people time to gather around.

We had planned to have some of the stations in the Columbarium but found that the space was not big enough, so the last three stations were held in the foyer of the Columbarium. Next year we intend

to improve the arrangements to cater to a larger crowd. But I guess the minor issues of our journey were nothing compared to the journey of Mary and John two millennia ago.

From station to station a different person got to carry the cross and different people took turns to read the reflections. It was a beautiful experience for many and a meaningful preparation for Easter later that night. Please do join us next year. ♥

Mike Arents is Parish Pastoral Executive of IHM



IHM sets up emergency taskforce

By SARAH CHEW

IN January this year, IHM set up a Parish Emergency Preparedness Taskforce. The aim of this taskforce is to educate and prepare our congregation in handling emergency situations. Responding to the Archdiocesan Emergency Response Operations guidelines, our parish had started work on this since 2017 and aims to complete them for progressive implementation by the second half of this year.

The task force is headed by our parish priest, Fr. Adrian Yeo and its members are made up of parishioners with expertise in security, fire and safety. The team requests parishioners with medical and first aid capabilities to register themselves with the parish office so as to be part of the medical team.

Various readiness frameworks such as fire and safety, security and medical will also be established.

Several of the church's Hospitality Ministry group leaders have undergone the Community Emergency Preparedness Program (CEPP), jointly organised by the Archdiocese, Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore Police Force and Singapore Civil Defence Force. Furthermore, some have also been trained and certified in the areas of carrying out improvised first aid, performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation, usage of automated external defibrillators and fire extinguishers.

Additional fire and safety measures include auditing the sufficiency of existing fire and safety equipment currently deployed, ensuring they are regularly inspected to be in good working condition and identification of potential fire hazards and prevention. Emergency evacuation

plans during Mass, non-Mass and during catechism lessons will also be established. This stage of implementation is expected to complete by June 2018.

Subsequently, the CEPP will be extended to the parish and volunteers will be trained and certified in the in-house programme. This will then enable the parish to establish a first base of emergency responders in the event of an emergency situation.

Lastly, there will be an on-going education process to sensitise and engage parishioners in playing active monitoring roles. After all, it is everybody's responsibility to ensure the well-being of each other in Church. This stage of implementation is scheduled for completion by the second half of 2018. ♥

IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



Rite of elections: Our Elect, candidates, godparents and sponsors with Archbishop William Goh at the Rite of Election held at the Church of the Transfiguration on Feb 24. ❤️



Lenten Blood mobile: The blood donation drive on March 18 saw 213 people turn up and 150 bags of blood were collected of which 67 were from first time donors. ❤️



Bible Apostolate Team (BAT): A new scripture study was started by BAT on St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians on Feb 25. It is held every Tuesday and one participant commented that she has been learning quite a few Greek words since classes started. ❤️



Infant Baptism: Eighteen infants were baptised last November in our church. ❤️



Epiphany: This is the 17th year that the Epiphany group is conducting the Alpha course in our parish. ❤️



Altar Servers: Eight young altar servers were commissioned on 17 March. May our good Lord continue to guide and bless all our altar boys whom He has called. ❤️



Divine Mercy: IHM's Divine Mercy Prayer Ministry organised a Divine Mercy novena in preparation for the feast of the Divine Mercy on April 8. ❤️

Two youths on God's love

By JOYCE TAN

The School of Witness (SOW) 2018, an eight-week live-in discipleship school conducted by the Office for Young People (OYP), was held from Jan 8 to March 3. Two young parishioners who attended the school, Ambrose Chua and Dominic Reyes, share their testimonies on how SOW has transformed their lives.

Ambrose Chua: I entered SOW 2018 with an open heart and mind. I knew God was calling me because of clear signs received -- encouragement of my friends, the appropriate phase of life I was in, and following an inner voice to say "yes, here I am Lord." My initial intentions were simply to increase my knowledge about the Catholic faith, find out more perspectives of the faith life, and to discover more about myself.

Through SOW, I discovered even more about myself – my tendency to shy away from God because of my distorted image of Him. I had always been running away because I never truly had the right image of God – one that is all loving and abundant and unchanging.

When invited to reflect on our image of God, I clearly saw how God was the Father who loved me so much that he was willing to let me go astray many times, just so I could find my way back to Him on my own accord. He gave me the free will to choose Him or hurt Him. Although I chose to hurt him on numerous occasions, He was always there, ready to receive me with His arms open wide. He was like the Father in the parable of the prodigal son, who welcomed his repentant younger son who squandered his riches. Similarly, despite rejecting God on countless occasions, He always revealed Himself to me. He knew allowing me to have my own deep conviction to repent would be greater than any faith forced on to me. God still chose to renew his covenant with me every single time I fell, simply because He loves me. (1 John 4:8 – "God is Love")

Living a life of intentional discipleship in SOW, and following closely in Jesus's footsteps really



Dominic (second row, rightmost) and Ambrose (second row, second from the right) with members from their IHM youth community Anchored, at the SOW closing Mass on 2 Mar 2018

opened my eyes to the world before me. Saying yes to Jesus every morning and throughout the day, and making an intentional effort to put Jesus first, brought so many insights to my struggles. However, I know I am still human, not being strong enough to face worldly trials alone. Nonetheless, it is in God that I find my strength (Philippians 4:13 – "I can do all this through him who gives me strength.")

Dominic Reyes: I was born Catholic and into a loving family of four. Growing up, I knew about God through catechism, but never truly knew Him. When I developed an interest in the faith, I started to dedicate more and more time researching, hoping to increase my knowledge. I signed up for the School Of Witness 2018, thinking it would be a good platform to continue expanding my knowledge. I used to think God loved the world, and since I happened to be in the world, He only loved me in general. I never expected to develop such a deep and personal relationship with God. I wanted to increase my knowledge, but instead it was my

faith that was increased.

Throughout SOW, I constantly experienced the tangible and intimate love God has for me. As St Augustine says: "Do not hope to understand to believe, but believe that you will understand."

I never imagined that God's love would be so overwhelming and never-ending. He is a reckless lover who would climb up every mountain to chase after me when I stray. God is no longer a distant observer, but a personal lover. He knows me by name and continues to call me each and every day to serve and praise Him.

Now, being a Catholic means so much more than just attending Sunday Mass and community sessions. It is constantly maintaining this intimate relationship with God, to constantly seek Him in whatever I do and to contribute to building His kingdom, not my own. Knowing that my God is with me always, I am also no longer paralysed by fear and doubt. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11. Amen. ♥

The young came, saw and reflected

By JOYCE TAN



“Come and see” is a series of prayer events by IHM’s Youth Ministry (YM).

This series kick-started with the Night of Worship on Feb 9 and the sound of lively music and enthusiastic singing by about 100 youth filled St Gregory’s Hall. While focusing on praise and worship as a method of prayer, the event also sought to draw participants into a deeper reflection on the Word of God.

The chosen theme of “Listen” was apt, given that the Gospel passage that day was about Jesus healing a deaf man, opening his ears and loosening the ligament of his tongue (Mark 7: 31-37). Some points for reflection based on the Gospel passage were highlighted by the Youth Coordinator Benjamin Mao. Although we may all be hearers of God’s Word, our levels of receptivity differ. The first level is to listen superficially, without recognizing the message behind what is heard. The second is to listen and come to understand God’s message for us, as well as to come to the knowledge of who He is. The third level is where we allow God’s message to take root and transform our lives.

Francis Xavier, a parishioner who attended the event, had invited his friend Veronica. Not having attended something similar before, Veronica was appreciative of the

experience, saying: “This event was heartwarming. The messages shared were beautiful and were the truth. God is always with us every step of the way”. Francis also enjoyed the time of worship, adding: “It was wonderful to see a combined vibrant team leading this session. All the worship songs sung had many meanings in the words.”

The second event of the “Come and See” series was a reflection session held on Good Friday. This was a silent event, where participants could take their time for their own personal reflections. Members from the Community of Youth (COY)

from YM had set up 14 Stations of the Cross in St Peter and Paul’s room. Each station had a short write-up to invite participants to reflect on that particular station.

The aim of this Come and See series is to reach out to youth and young adults in the parish who are not involved in the Youth Ministry, to provide a space for them to encounter God through prayer. As such, participants were encouraged to bring along their friends.

There will be more events coming up in the Come and See series! All youth and young adults are welcome to attend. ♥

Top: Band leading Praise and Worship: Below: Participants singing and praying.

Photos courtesy of Jeremy John



Welcoming Father Joseph

by FIONA FOO

IT has been two months since Fr. Joseph Kace arrived in our parish. The soft-spoken priest has settled down quite well after making his move here from Myanmar, his home country.

The 43-year-old Fr. Joseph is the chaplain of the Myanmar Catholic Community in Singapore. He celebrates mass in the Myanmar language twice a month – on the second and fourth week – and hears confessions for an hour before mass. He also does Bible sharing with the Myanmar community, conducts spiritual retreats for them and attends rosary sessions in his role as spiritual director.

Fr. Joseph was ordained in April 2009 in Hwarikhu village, where he was born. The village falls within Pekhon township in Shan state, which is in the southern part of Myanmar. His specialization is in missionology, and he strongly believes that as Christians, we should “make whatever good things you do as a mission of Christ.”

He shared with Heartbeat how he got the name Joseph. When he was seven days old, he fell ill and his parents thought he may not survive. So they approached a priest and got him baptised, trusting in God to work His ways. He was given the name Joseph by the priest along with Kace (pronounced Kah-say), which in his native Hwari language means Joseph. Unlike his siblings, he was not given a surname by his parents as a tribute to God.

Growing up in Myanmar’s countryside, the young Joseph was tasked to cook and clean for his family. With a large family, consisting of seven siblings, it was no easy task for a young boy who had to juggle school as well. But God, according to him, works in wondrous ways. He was given an opportunity to move to the city and stay in a minor seminary while studying in a government

secondary school as long as he did well in his last primary school examinations. Armed with good grades and a desire to move to the city, he took it up and said goodbye to his hometown.

Fr. Joseph said that at that young age of 12 he did not have a strong desire to be a priest. However, staying in the minor seminary allowed him to practice various spiritual exercises and follow a strict routine juggling between studying and spending time with God. It was then he realised that he was forming a strong spiritual connection, and knew that becoming a priest was his ultimate goal. It was further reinforced when it came to his secondary school exams, when he prayed extremely hard for God’s guidance and eventually attained satisfactory results. While many of his peers left the minor seminary after passing secondary school, he moved on to the major seminary to pursue his desire to become a priest.

He spent a year studying English, which was a difficult task for him. Despite that, he pressed on and with God’s grace, moved on in his journey to becoming a priest. In Myanmar, where majority of the country’s population are Buddhist, the then Bishop opened a Faculty of Spirituality within the seminary and invited visiting professors to teach. This gave him a great opportunity to learn from these foreign professors. It also widened his knowledge of the faith. In 2002, he left for Rome where he spent six years before returning to the Pekhon Diocese in Myanmar.

Fr. Joseph recalls his experience in Rome to be an eye-opener. Many members of the Hwari tribe could read Italian, as their native language is written in the same manner that Italian is written. This came about from the influence of Italian missionaries in Myanmar. As a result, he did not have much trouble learning the language. He travelled



widely, spending time in various parishes. He cites Ischia, an island 90 minutes by boat from Naples, to be his favourite city. “The people are friendly and the place is beautiful!” he said, reminiscing his time there.

Even though he may be new to Singapore, he has some connection to this place. The late Fr. Peter Paul, who was based in our neighbouring parish of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was his uncle – his father’s first cousin.

Fr. Joseph is quickly adapting to Singaporean ways. He says he has no issues with the local food. “I have an international stomach!” he quipped, and adds that he is adventurous in his food options.

He says that there are some cultural differences between Singapore and Myanmar. For one, he noticed that during mass in his home country, children will sit in the front, followed by youths and then adults. Also, men and women are seated separately on either side of the church.

As for his interactions with IHM parishioners, he says he is looking forward to meeting more of them. He loves sports and jogs at the Serangoon stadium. He is fond of table tennis and badminton and hopes he can explore the possibility of playing these two with the help of some sports-loving parishioners. ♥



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