

# Generous Gifts of Love

By PATRICK JONAS



**M**ORNING rains, that preceded the days before Sept 9, stayed away on that day. IHM parishioners who drove in for the Sunday morning masses dropped by at the St Gregory's Hall to drop off their bags of used and new items and support the Society of St Vincent de Paul's (SSVP) Gifts of Love collection drive.

SSVP members and volunteers from the parish made sure that the items dropped off were collected and promptly moved to the sorting area, from where others moved them to the folding and packing sections respectively. The members and volunteers toiled hard. Some came as early as 8am and stayed until late in the evening. By then over 350 boxes of items were packed and transported to

SSVP's warehouse.

The goods will be sold when the SSVP Shop opens its doors early next year in Geylang. All the money generated from the sale will be used to support the needs of the poor in Singapore. SSVP plans to have similar collection drives in other churches later.

Carissa Tan, a parishioner who spent the whole day with her husband in helping with the collection drive said: "It was very heartwarming to see many volunteers working together to sort and pack the items. I

could truly see servanthood in action and it was wonderful how the Lord uses our talents for the expansion of His good work."

Said the President of SSVP's IHM Conference Dylan Chow: "I was really touched by the response from IHM parishioners in devoting their time to help in sorting and packing the donated items from morning till evening. SSVP would like to thank all parishioners for donating their new and used items as well as all the volunteers who made the collection drive a success." ♥



# Encountering God at the Parish Discipleship Retreat

By AMANDA CHOO and ALEXANDER CHOO

**E**IGHTY-two parishioners attended the second IHM Parish Discipleship Retreat (PDR) from Aug 2 to 5 in our church.

With the theme 'My Parish, Our Home', participants were exposed to a range of sessions presented by parish priests Fr. Adrian Yeo, Fr. Luke Fong and Fr. Joseph Kace, along with Parish Pastoral Executive Mike Arents and Youth Coordinator Benjamin Mao. Participants were invited to reflect on Sin and Salvation, their images of God, as well as Discipleship among other topics. After each session, facilitators also gave personal testimonies on the various ways God has worked in their lives. On the final day of the retreat, Archbishop William Goh made a special appearance to give some encouragement and affirmation to participants.

For Grace Tiong, the PDR was a reminder of God's love for her despite her inadequacies. She also attributed the positive experience she had at the retreat to the prayer warriors that interceded for participants throughout the duration of the PDR.

Brendan Lee attended the retreat with fellow members from the Youth Catechists. While his original reason for attending the PDR was

his community, he later realised that the true purpose was to "rekindle the flame in his faith journey".

Participants we spoke to mentioned the session on the Sacrament of Reconciliation struck them the most. A video showing the do's and don'ts of Confession was screened, after which participants were given time to do an examination of conscience before proceeding for Confession. To Brendan, the session reminded him of the spiritual cleansing he needs to receive on a more regular basis.

Katherine Lim said the examples depicted in the video were funny but noted that many are probably guilty of committing some of the common mistakes depicted in the video. "It is heart-warming to hear that every Confession is a homecoming to God," she continued: "He is there waiting to embrace us."

By the time you read this, the final PDR for this year (from Oct 4 to 7) would be getting over. Katherine strongly encourages parishioners to support this initiative by the parish: "As a disciple in any given ministry,



*Archbishop William Goh giving some words of wisdom.*

in order not to suffer from feeling burnt-out, we need to receive God's direction, energy and grace to be able to serve with love and joy." For those feeling apprehensive, Grace reminds that "God just wants to love you and wants you to feel loved by him."

If the prospect of attending a retreat alone feels daunting, Brendan recommends going with a community or with a friend. He shared that attending the retreat with his community members helped him share more freely and allowed group discussions to delve deeper. "Our faith lives are not led individualistically; community is essential in sustaining our faith," said Brendan. "But even if you are going alone, always remember that you have a friend in Christ who journeys with you constantly." ♥



*The participants of the second IHM Parish Discipleship Retreat.*

# Singing for God

By JOLYN TAN



**O**UR church has four choir groups, namely the Laudate Dominum Choir, Via Christus Choir, Agapevoces Choir, and the Regina Coeli Choir. At the heart of this ministry, is the desire to use one's talents to worship God and in doing so, draw souls closer to Him.

Before each weekend mass the hymns that are to be sung are chosen by the choirs after reflection on the week's Gospel reading.

I had the privilege of speaking to members from the Via Christus Choir (VCC), which sings during the 8.30am mass. This ministry was actively recruiting members just a few months back. Many responded to their call.

Marciel Oquais and nine fellow sisters-in-Christ from the Legion of Mary joined the VCC after encouragement from their spiritual director, Sister Agnes. Said Marciel: "Initially I was hesitant to join as I am not musically inclined but Sister Agnes convinced me otherwise."

Singing has also become relevant to Marciel's work as a teacher at a Christian childcare, where she now uses songs learnt from her choir to engage the pre-schoolers under her

care. She believes that this is a form of apostleship and a way to lift up her work to God.

Choir sessions have also helped its members grow deeper in the faith and as a Christ-centred community. The VCC begins choir practices with Lectio Divina, group sharing, followed by input taken from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Other choirs also have similar Gospel reflections, and include prayers such as vespers or the rosary.

As one member, Thomas George, shared: "Since I've joined the choir, I find that whenever I miss a practice I feel like something is missing. At the start of the session we read the Gospel and share, and I have learnt from the experiences shared by others. The choir has also helped me a lot – there were times when I had problems and all the members prayed for me, and things worked out." Thomas joined the VCC together with his wife and seven-year-old daughter.

This sentiment of warmth was also echoed by another member, Germaine Tan. Having joined the group just a month ago, she already feels a sense of attachment to the choir.

"Nobody judges anybody, regardless of your music ability or regardless of how badly you think you sing. Everybody is always very encouraging and positive. I'm very touched and happy to be part of this community."

Such a friendly environment is also evident in the Regina Coeli Choir. In fact, since the choir was formed, over five couples from among them have tied the knot. The choir noted that in one recent year, members of the group were blessed with the arrival of five babies.

Joan Lee, a member of the Regina Coeli Choir, feels that "being in the choir helps me to feel that I belong somewhere in the parish. It gives me a sense of purpose, knowing that I am contributing a little each Sunday to my parish."

Apart from choir practices, the choir groups also take the time to enjoy each other's company through events such as birthday celebrations and potluck sessions. In fact, durian outings are a must for the Regina Coeli Choir.

All the choirs of IHM are always open to new members joining them. If you feel drawn to praise God with your voice and help lead people towards Him, do not hesitate to approach any of the choirmasters after mass for more details. All that is required is a heart for service and worship! ♥



Above & top of page: Combined choirs performing at special occasions.

## Laudate Dominum Choir

"Praise the Lord!"

Serves at the Saturday 5.45pm mass  
Practices on Saturday at 4pm

## Via Christus Choir

"Through our singing, all may know Jesus is the way, the truth and the life."

Serves at the 8.30am mass  
Practices on Sunday at 11.15am

## Agapevoces Choir

"To bring people to Jesus through our music and to enhance worship of God at mass through our singing and music"

Serves at the Sunday 11.15am mass  
Practices on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month, as well as on Sundays at 8.30am

## Regina Coeli Choir

"To help God's people gain a deeper awareness and understanding of God's Word through the use of psalms and hymns"

Serves at the Sunday 5.45pm mass  
Practices on Sunday at 4pm

# IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



**L**ectors: On July 7, the lectors in our parish pledged their commitment to the ministry at the Saturday evening Mass celebrated by Fr. Adrian. ♥



**S**ingapore Catholic Deaf Community: The community celebrated its 40th anniversary on Aug 5 with Archbishop William Goh as the main celebrant during the 11.15am Sunday mass. ♥



**I**nfant Baptism: Our parish welcomed four infants into the community when they were baptised in the month of September. ♥



**D**ay of Recollection: Fr. Luke, Spiritual Director for all Liturgical Ministries, conducted a Day of Recollection for all those serving in the Ministries on July 7th. ♥



**R**ite of Acceptance: Thirty Inquirers, Candidates and Confirmands took part in the Rite of Acceptance on Sept 2. They are now ready to publicly declare their intention to continue their journey towards becoming Catholics. ♥



**H**ospitality Ministers: Four new Hospitality Ministers were commissioned on Aug 11. The rest of the Hospitality Ministers renewed their commitment during the mass. ♥

# IHM Milestone Anniversary Mass

By DENISE TAN



**T**HE IHM Milestone Anniversary Mass was celebrated by Father Luke Fong on Aug 9 in our church. Themed "My Best Friend, My Soulmate," the event saw 50 couples celebrating five to 58 years of marriage. That morning, couples posed for photographs at a decorated photo booth before they renewed their marriage vows and took part in the anniversary mass. The mass, which had readings, hymns, special prayers, and the homily geared towards the sacrament of matrimony, reminded couples of the vocational nature of marriage.

Said Fr Luke in his homily:

"Because it is a vocation, it is about the couple's participation and willingness to be a living and vibrant hub for God's divine plan for love for the world. Many marriages fail to see that their marriages were meant for a mission, or some haven't even heard that Christian marriages are missions. Some have only seen marriages crumble, and see it as Mission Impossible."

Father Luke also reminded couples that Jesus Christ should be the "reference point and origin of where their love for each other in the marriage comes from... and they do not merely rely on their own goodwill to make the marital love work."

After mass, couples gathered for a delicious buffet spread in the church hall. There was also a special cake cutting by two couples, Andrew and Agnes Goh, and Anthony and Mary Das, who celebrated their 58th wedding anniversary.

Peter and Dorothy Lek, who celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary, were thankful to the priests, the Family Life Group, photographers, music ministry and everyone else who helped put the event together. "We really hope that this event will be ongoing to remind couples of their wedding vows to each other and to put Christ as the centre of our lives." ♥



**E**xtraordinary Ministers of the Holy Communion: On Sept 22, Ministers belonging to this ministry pledged their commitment at the Saturday evening mass. ♥



**B**ible Apostolate Team: Since July, 50 participants are turning up after the Sunday 8.30am mass to take part in a Bible programme, which offers guidance to navigate life using the wisdom found in the Bible text. ♥

# Bringing the light of Christ to the young

By GERMAINE TAN



**L**EADING up to their First Holy Communion on Sept 2, 61 Primary 3 children attended a half-day camp. The camp was held on the eve of the First Holy Communion mass, which was celebrated by Fr. Adrian.

The aim of the camp, according to their Catechists, was to ensure that the young ones understand the importance of the sacrament they were about to receive. In the words of P3 Catechist Michelle Ng: "Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist: Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity."

Leading up to the camp, the Catechists had been sharing prayers and scriptures with the children in order for them to know who Jesus is. All this was reinforced in the half-day camp themed: "For My Flesh is True Food." During the camp, the children got to experience Eucharistic adoration, a first for them. Despite their young age, they did not have problems focusing as they had been

well-prepared by meditation sessions throughout the year.

Of all the sessions during the camp, the children enjoyed the tour of the church the most. They got to walk around inside the church and also visit the sanctuary, where altar servers showed them the articles used during the mass and explained to them what they are used for. Although the youngsters have seen these articles before from a distance during mass, this was the first time they got see them at close quarters.

The Pri 3 group also enjoyed the karaoke session titled *Christ be our Light*.

On the same day, the Pri 2 students had a Reconciliation Retreat. The retreat was held before the students experienced the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time. The theme for the retreat was *Abide in Me* and was attended by 60 children who will receive their First Holy Communion next year. The retreat

focused on the Ten Commandments and allocated ample time for the Examination of Conscience, during which the children put on a black cape. After the Reconciliation Service, they take off the cape to indicate that they had been relieved of their sins and are back in the light of Christ.



In recent years, the catechists in our church have been working hard to improve the steps taken to prepare our children for their First Holy Communion and make it more meaningful to them. The Catechists look upon these children fondly, describing them as responsive, attentive and "a bunch of lovely kids". ❤️

# Come and See

By JOYCE TAN

**Taize:** As part of the Come and See series, a taize prayer session was organized on July 27. The session was done by a Taize group which conducts Taize prayer sessions at the Good Shepherd Place in Toa Payoh.

Jun Wei who attended, felt that Taize is a meaningful form of prayer. "Having sung Taize music in a choir but admittedly not knowing the history behind it, I was pleasantly surprised to learn about the roots of not just Taize music but also about the vibrant Taize community. To me, Taize music is distinct in that it is repetitive but never boring. Taize is like a good theme song for Bible verses, helping me to process and internalize God's Word."



**Prayer through Dance:** This was also part of the Come and See series. On Aug 31 evening, about 20 people started dancing to music in St Peter and Paul's room. Conducted by Br Nicholas Lye, the session aimed to use dance as a means of prayer. Br Nicholas explained that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that others can see Christ through our actions. By being conscious of the presence of God in us, and lifting up all that we do as a prayer, we can "pray without ceasing" as written in 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

One parishioner felt that this different form of worship was refreshing, where movements could be unrestricted.

**Night of Worship:** Yet another event under the Come and See series was the Night of Worship on Sept 21. There were also testimonies by the youth about their struggles and the how God has worked in their lives.

Wivina, one of the leaders of this segment, expressed her hope that participants were touched, even if it was in the smallest way. Carrin, a participant, said: "I felt the testimonies were heartwarming". Another participant Carissa shared: "I was touched by one of the testimonies which showed how God is our firm foundation whom we can trust, despite our struggles and feelings of inadequacy." ♥



# Theology on Tap

By JOYCE TAN

**T**HE Theology on Tap session on Christian Dating saw an overwhelming response. It was organised by the Young Adults group of IHM. The event on Sept 7 at the Crossings Cafe on Waterloo Street, saw about 80 people attending -- the majority of them young -- including some non-



Br. Nicholas speaking at Crossings Café.

IHM parishioners. Br. Nicholas Lye facilitated the session by outlining the fundamental truths about God, about ourselves as human beings, and about Christian marriage.

"Theology on Tap" is a concept adopted from churches in the West, where talks are held in bars with the intention of evangelizing to a wider audience. Said Shanice, 21, a participant: "There were a lot of fundamental truths; one of them is that a love, that we are called to share with one another, should stem from God."

The session on Missionary Discipleship was conducted by La Salle Brother Collin Wee who serves at Hope House, a halfway house for delinquent teenage boys. One participant, David, felt inspired by



Participants listening to Br. Collin.

Br. Collin's missionary work, saying: "I like the real-life stories of what it means to dedicate your life to service."

As the next two talks in this series are to be held over breakfast on Saturday mornings, Oct 13 and 20, they have been called Theology on Toast. Those interested may email youth@ihm.sg to register. ♥

# A home away from home

by FIONA FOO

**I**F you happen to visit our church on the second and fourth Sundays of the month around 3pm, you will notice the presence of many Myanmar nationals. On these two Sundays, a mass in the Burmese language is celebrated in our church and it explains why they are there.

These masses are celebrated by Father Joseph Kace, who is the chaplain of the Myanmar Catholic Community, and sometimes by visiting priests from Myanmar. Our parish is the only church in Singapore that holds masses in the Burmese language.

On an average, about 250 Myanmar nationals attend the mass. This is followed by a simple home-cooked meal in the canteen, which gives them time to catch up with each other. Many travel from faraway places like Jurong and Tuas to attend the mass. The Myanmar Catholic community members are divided into seven groups based on the diocese they come from back home and each group takes turns to assist in the smooth celebration of the mass. This means they will be in charge of roles like the choir and lectors.

The Myanmar Catholic community was formed in 1998 with a group of less than 10. It has since grown to about 800. According to Sr. Maria Goretti, a Burmese nun who is the assistant spiritual director of the community, the group holds monthly rosaries and does Bible sharing, and the venue for these events are the



(Above) Members of the Myanmar community singing carols during the last Family Day celebrations in our church and (below) Children from the community performing a Hawaiian dance during our Feast Day.

homes of community members. In addition, the community also participates in IHM parish activities like the blood donation drive, as well as our annual church Feast Day. This year, young children from the community performed a Hawaiian-themed dance during the feast day celebrations. Once a year, the community organises a large-scale gathering in locations like the East Coast Park or Pulau Ubin for members to take part in fun activities like games, team-building activities, singing as well as having a good meal together.

Fr. Joseph Kace told IHM Heartbeat that he derives great joy seeing how the Myanmar Catholic community members come together to attend mass and interact with each other after mass. He said he tries to attend most of the activities of the community, including the Bible sharing and rosary sessions. He says it gives him an opportunity to know the community better and see how he can help them wherever possible.

The vice-president of the community, Nicholas Htun Min Zaw, has been

in Singapore for 11 years and was previously the president of the community's youth wing. He shared that everyone in the community is like a member of one large family. He recalled an incident which happened some years ago. One of their members fell critically ill due to a blood disorder. As she was a foreigner and new in her company, she was not entitled to company insurance, resulting in large hospital bills. The Myanmar community helped raise as much money as they could and sought help from a convent to get her temporary lodging while she recuperated. They also helped to send her back to Myanmar. Till this day, this memory holds strong in Nicholas' heart. He says he was touched by the overwhelming response from his fellow countrymen in Singapore.

One of the upcoming events that the Myanmar Catholic Community is planning for is their annual Christmas celebration. They expect around 800 people to attend and are looking for a big enough venue to serve everyone a feast after the mass in Agape Village. The community also plans to sing Christmas carols, in English and Burmese. ♥



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