

A Night to Remember

By MATTHEW TAY



IN an age when the true meaning of Christmas is getting diluted, the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary chose to celebrate an evening with the theme: The Reason for the Season. On Dec 30, the church hosted a family fiesta reminding everyone of the real meaning of Christmas, which is celebrating the birth of Christ.

The celebrations were intended also as an evangelization event. Several church ministries came forward to make the evening a success. Leading the way in the evangelization exercise was the Family Life Group (FLG) and it was supported by other ministries like RCIA, RCIY, Youth Ministries and the Epiphany group. Other

ministries were not far behind. They set up stalls to cater food to the many who came to enjoy the evening.

Parishioners were encouraged to bring a non-Catholic friend or family member to the event so that they could experience first-hand the community aspect of the Church. Weeks before the event, several parishioners stepped forward. Said Agnes Chua, a member of the Family Life Group: "We could see the excitement in our parishioners. Many came forward to help drop-off the invitation in the homes of those living near the church and support our outreach activities. Some also volunteered to bring food that was shared by everyone on the day of the fiesta."

Top left: Christmas carolling by Father Joseph and the Myanmar community. Middle: Magic show. Right: Some of the delicious food served. Bottom: The highly entertained audience on the piazza.

The food on offer included nuggets, sausages, fried chicken, pizza, fried rice, hot dogs, fishball, spaghetti, Satay-in-a-Cup and fried noodles. There was also ice cream, popcorn and cotton candy for the young. The church hall was transformed into a huge game area for children and a stage was erected in the piazza for performances like a magic show, a skit by the young, a dance item led by Nicholas Lye encouraging the audience to join

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in, carolling by the Myanmar community and even a couple of songs by Father Luke Fong.

As the non-Catholic guests were led through the church by our church guides, they got to pause at various places within the church. At these places, narrators explained to them about God's love and His gifts of salvation and healing through the Crucifix, Stations of the Cross, Confessional rooms, and the Altar. The visitors were enthralled and moved by the personal experiences shared by our narrators.

"The church tour was inspirational," said Ms Lin Zhiyin,

a non-Catholic who attended the church tour with her mother. "We were comforted by the peace and quietness inside the church. Overall, the evening's programme was well planned and we felt welcome."

Christian Kwan from the RCIA had special praise for the tour volunteers. "The RCIA, RCIY, Youth Ministry and FLG members who helped in the tours were exemplary. They stepped out of their comfort zone to speak up for Christ."

One parishioner who enjoyed the evening and who was impressed with the arrangements was Celestine Snodgrass. She said IHM parishioners have a great zeal for evangelization. ♥



The evening had something for everyone!



Spreading Christmas joy in the heartlands

By FIONA FOO

THIS year, our parish organised three sessions of carolling in our neighbourhood – two at the Heartland Mall in Kovan and one at the Nex mall in Serangoon. The objective was to spread Christmas joy and get mall-goers to join us for the IHM Family Fiesta on Dec 30 in our church.

On Dec 15 and 16 the choir performed at the Heartland Mall. The Alpha Choir kicked off the carolling event on the first day. The following day, the Myanmar community in IHM gathered together to sing a medley of English and Burmese Christmas songs. Located on a stage in the centre of the mall, the beautiful and upbeat voices of our volunteer carolers caught the attention of many mall-goers. Several people leant against the railings on the upper floors of the mall to watch and listen to both our choirs. One of them was Peter Tan, who was shopping with his family, a weekly routine for him. He mentioned that despite living in the Kovan area for many years, this was the first time he actually witnessed Christmas carolling in Heartland Mall and he felt it heightened the festive mood.

The last of the Christmas carolling sessions was held at the Nex mall on Dec 21, by the combined choir from our weekend masses. The carolling was held on the first floor just outside the mall entrance. The joyous melodies attracted mall-goers to crowd around our 39 choir members and soak in the Christmas spirit. Daphne Teo, one of the choir members, mentioned that this was the first time the choir had done Christmas carolling in shopping malls, and they were excited to be able to evangelize to the public. She also felt that it was a wonderful opportunity to reach out to non-Christians and hope their hearts were touched by the joy, love and peace of Christmas. ♥



Top: The Myanmar community choir at Heartland Mall.
Middle: The combined choirs performing at NEX.
Right: Parishioners distributing balloons. They also helped in giving out flyers to the public to join our Family Fiesta.
Left: The Alpha choir performing at Heartland Mall.

There are no bells or ornaments on this tree

By NICHOLAS LIM

THE Advent “Pray for Conversion” exercise has been an annual affair at IHM for the last 14 years. During the season of Advent, parishioners are requested to pray for conversion of their loved ones, friends and even enemies. Parishioners will then hang a prayer card on an Advent Tree and take home the detachable portion of the card as a reminder to pray for their intention.

The tree is up near the entrance of the church by the second Sunday of Advent. Usually, close to 600 cards are hung up every year with an average of about 1,200 people to pray for. Seeing the tree, visiting bishops

and priests have complimented the organisers saying that it was a great idea to have the prayers of the parish on the tree rather than bells and ribbons.

Over the years, many individuals have been called by the prayers to come to church to attend the Alpha course or RCIA. The intention for the Advent season just gone by was the same. The Advent Tree organisers hope that to put your prayer into action you will invite the non-believer or the lukewarm Catholic whom you are praying for to attend Alpha 2019, starting in February. ♥



Bringing cheer to the less privileged

AS part of its Advent outreach activity, members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in IHM requested parishioners to join them in bringing some joy to the families that they help.

SSVP members asked their FINs (Friends in Need as the people who are helped are called) what they wanted for Christmas. Each family could request for an item that costs not more than \$100 and each child (below 16) in the family, a gift costing not more than \$40.



Our parishioners were then asked to sponsor these gifts. SSVP members manned a table outside the church one Sunday morning and following an impassionate appeal by Fr. Luke Fong, they got overwhelming response from the congregation. All the gifts were sponsored by the end of the 8.30am mass.

Those who signed up had to buy the gifts and hand them over to SSVP members the following Sunday. By Christmas, all the gifts were distributed to the FINs. ♥

Getting closer to the Lord

By NICOLE LARISSA



FIFTY-FOUR Secondary 3 students were confirmed by his Grace Archbishop William Goh at our church on Dec 22. Prior to the big day, these young people had a four-day retreat which enabled them to rekindle and deepen their relationship with God.

During the retreat, they attended various sessions which included

washing the feet of their parents. They also received the Sacrament of Reconciliation followed by a praying-over session.

The youngsters were exposed to living out discipleship through community with a session titled Christian Living in Community. The current youth community members shared with them their journeys,

emphasizing the benefits of having people to journey with them in faith.

Said Ashley Teo, one of the confirmands: "On the first day of the retreat, I was really nervous as I didn't know what was going to happen. But over the four days, I managed to grow closer to God through the sessions with set topics and during praise and worship." ♥

Come and See

By BENJAMIN MAO

THE Come & See Events by IHM's Youth Ministry were held monthly in 2018. Its aim was to reach out and create a platform for anyone who would like to grow their faith, return to the church, find a ministry or community, experience God's love through different spirituality and find ways of prayer and connect with the greater community. This was the first time something like this

was attempted in IHM and it was a success.

We had sessions such as Taize, Movie Screening, Prayer through Dance, Drama and Food, Silent Reflections (Good Friday), Night of Worship and so on. The different events attracted people in the age group 16 to 60.

This year, we will be continuing with our monthly sessions and we hope to release all the dates by the

end of January, so that it will give you enough time to decide on a date and join us for an evening of fellowship, prayer and worship. The only pre-requisite is an open heart. We will be streamlining the types of sessions based on the responses and participation in 2018.

God embraces you wherever you are in your faith journey, is patient till whenever you are ready and is knocking at the door of your heart. Will you Come & See? ♥

Benjamin Mao is IHM's Youth Coordinator.



Theology on Toast

By JOYCE TAN

YOUTH and young adults enjoyed delicious Saturday morning breakfasts at Hatter Street café, while learning about the church teachings. This was the 2-part Theology on Toast (ToT) event, where Fr. Luke Fong spoke about Church Traditions on 13 Oct, while Fr. David Garcia shared about Catholic Social Teaching on 20 Oct. Yvette, a parishioner of IHM and the owner of Hatter Street, had generously availed her café for this. ♥

Farewell Fr. William Lim

By JOLYN TAN and PATRICK JONAS

A large number of IHM parishioners and many from other parishes attended the wake and funeral mass of Fr. William Lim at our church last month.

Fr. William Lim, a former parish priest of IHM, passed away on Dec 8, 2018. He was 66. His body was brought to IHM on Dec 12 where in the evening His Grace Archbishop William Goh led the vespers, followed by mass and prayers. His Grace also presided at the funeral mass held the following day.

In his homily, the Archbishop described Fr. William Lim as a simple man who was obedient to God and his superiors. And in the process, His Grace said, Fr. Lim may have taken on more than he could handle. The Archbishop noted that Fr. William did have his flaws but that should not take away his commitment and devotion to the Lord. He thanked the sisters and staff of St. Joseph's Home for taking care of Fr. Lim with their love since the time he was admitted there.

Fr. Lim was parish priest of IHM from the year 2009 till he collapsed on Jan 3, 2011, while doing his morning exercise around Serangoon Stadium. Despite undergoing a triple bypass surgery, he never fully recovered and was on medical leave since then.

His Grace articulated a typical sentiment in his homily – which is



Fr. William Lim's funeral mass.

questioning why God would stop a priest, who could still continue to serve Him, to suffer from a stroke at an age that is not considered old. However, as His Grace emphasised, we cannot understand the plan of God from our eyes, and that for those who love the Lord, the Lord would work everything for good.

"The eight years (of convalescence) were not in vain, they were part of the redemptive suffering Fr. William Lim undertook for the church for the salvation of souls, for nothing is wasted in the eyes of the Lord", said His Grace. He also believed that Fr. William's time at St. Joseph's Home was a necessary time for the Lord to heal him.

His Grace also lauded Fr. William's sincerity of heart, being a man who wanted to serve God and His people. Fr. William's deep love for the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin was evident in the way he preached fervently about these topics.

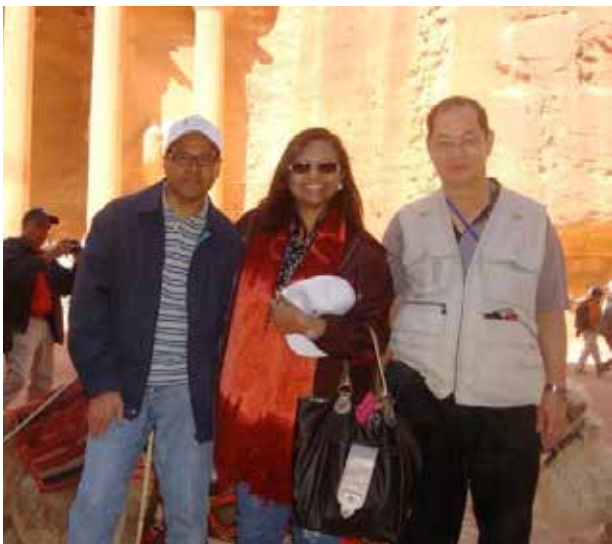
Despite the relatively short period of time that he was parish priest, Fr. William made his

impact on IHM and parishioners. He set up the Pastoral Administration Council (PAC) to manage administrative matters of the church, so that the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) could better focus on the vision and mission of the parish. Additionally, underscoring the crucial goal of vocations, Fr. William introduced the Prayer for Vocations during mass, a practice that IHM still continues.

"Through working with him on various pastoral matters I soon found that Fr. William was a humble servant of God who always wanted the best for his parish, who always made the time to listen. He had the best intentions for IHM," said Roy Kheng, who served as a member of the PPC under Fr. Lim.

Said Aurelia Ang, a long-term member of the Legion of Mary: "Fr. William Lim was a very humble and friendly parish priest. On most mornings after Mass he enjoyed the company of some parishioners for simple breakfast. The Teochew bantering and joviality was always a good start for the day for all present.

His obedience to the Archbishop was many a time misunderstood but he stoically soldiered on. He was pleasant and appreciative in spite of the stress of running a parish. Nothing and nobody could dampen his enthusiasm to strive for the



Fr. William with parishioners Charles and Rita Dorai during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

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best for his flock. In addition to the Vocation prayer his compassionate heart initiated the Magnificat Choir for funeral Masses. On the 13th of each month he prayed the Rosary at the Grotto with the Legionaries and all those present. His love for Mother Mary was exemplary. He added the Benediction prayers to the Hour of Grace on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. His hardworking and caring nature endeared him to many."

Added parishioner Charles Dorai, who along with his wife Rita, was part of a group that went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with Fr. William: "During the trip Fr. William Lim came across as a very

simple priest who made sure that he mingled with all the members of the group. Fr. William was also instrumental in starting the Infant Baptism ministry in our church of which we have been members since then."

Patrick Jonas, a member of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul, recalled an incident which showed how much Fr. William cared for the sick. "During a chat with him one day I mentioned that an elderly Catholic lady who was being helped by the Society was seriously ill and in hospital. Fr. William asked me for her details and went to the Singapore General Hospital to anoint her. This lady was not even our parishioner."

Laura, a parishioner, shared that

Fr. William attended home rosary sessions at the homes of parishioners in the months of May and October whenever possible.

Archbishop William Goh summed it up nicely when he said that Fr. William's passing on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception was a sign of Our Lady's acceptance and delight in his devotion to God.

Fr. William was born on March 18, 1952. He was ordained a priest on May 20, 1990. He served as an assistant parish priest in the Church of the Holy Cross from 1991 to 1994, in the Church of St. Francis Xavier from 1995 to 2003 and in the Church of Our Lady Queen of Peace from 2003 to 2009 before being appointed the parish priest of IHM. ♥

IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



R **CIA:** Catechumens, their family members and friends along with RCIA sponsors took part in the Walk for Rice 2018. The group numbering 122 clocked a total of 575km, raising 5,750 bowls of rice for the needy. ♥



Y **Youth Catechists:** The Youth catechists of our church visited the St Theresa's Home as part of their Advent activity. They brought cheer to the many old residents of the home. ♥



P **DR 3:** The third Parish Discipleship Retreat in October saw 100 of our parishioners and ministry members come together to share their stories and strengthen their faith. ♥



C **Community Emergency Preparedness Programme:** Around 100 members from various ministries took part in this programme held in September and October in our church. Members were trained in the use of the fire extinguisher, to give CPR and the use of the Automated External Defibrillator (AED). ♥

Advent Outreach to Tanjung Balai

by JOYCE TAN

OVER the week-end of Dec 8 and 9, the Epiphany and Legion of Mary ministries organised an outreach event to Tanjung Balai on Karimun island in neighbouring Indonesia. Twenty-six volunteers went on this trip from our church to distribute food rations to 40 families and to some residents living in an orphanage. The island is two hours by ferry and the trip was led by a few members who regularly visit the island to do mission work. These volunteers had done an assessment on the needs of the people there before the trip. Each family was given a 20kg bag of rice, a box of noodles, some eggs, cooking oil, and biscuits. Families with children were also given toys.

Members on this trip also visited the San Immanuel parish. Within the parish compound, there is a primary school, high school, and Asrama (dormitory). The Asrama houses students from neighbouring islands who attend the high school. Nuns take care of these students. The volunteers prayed the rosary with the students at the grotto of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the compound. After the rosary, the volunteers and students enjoyed a lively evening with the students putting up performances – singing Indonesian pop songs and dancing – during dinner.

On the second morning, the volunteers attended Mass at St. Joseph's Church, and afterwards spent time visiting the wet market and small shops in the city area.

Those who came for the outreach were touched by the people's simplicity, who were appreciative of even the little that they had. One volunteer Gladys, had been coming for the yearly outreach for the past five years. She said: "The year-end is time to take stock of what I have in life. Although the trip is tiring, I feel



The volunteers and students.



Praying the rosary with the students at the Our Lady of Guadalupe grotto.



The San Immanuel primary school.



Volunteers with rations for a family.

joyful. I will come back again if I get a chance."

Experiencing the communion of the universal Church was something that another volunteer Bernadette had felt. She shared that it was a beautiful experience to attend Mass celebrated in Bahasa Indonesia and to hear the parishioners sing.

The outreach programme from

IHM to the island was started in 2004 by Fr. Brian D'Souza, who was then the assistant parish priest. He organised four-day mission trips for youths who taught English to the students on the island during the visit. Since then regular outreach activities have been led by the Legion of Mary and supported by Epiphany group. ♥



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