

New light, new life

By JOYCE TAN



THIS Easter marked the start of a new journey for some in our church. Twenty-five Elects who went through the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) were baptised during the Easter Vigil, while two were received into the Church.

Said Michelle Mikayla Fuan, one of the newly-baptised: "Baptism is a new experience for me. A new journey has just started, and I hope that God is with me. I open my heart to Him to give me the grace, strength, and faith to go on."

Terence Gomes, whose wife Stephanie was also baptised, expressed a similar sentiment: "This is the start of a new chapter, together with our son getting baptised next month."

In his homily, Fr Adrian reminded the Elects that they were called to die to their old selves and rise to new life with Christ, which involves doing His will. Referring to the series of readings preceding the Gospel – on the Creation story, the exodus out of Egypt, and God's promise of hope to the exiled Israelites – he pointed out the resonating theme of God's work of salvation for Mankind, out of His great love. God first creates Man, and then leads Man towards Him.

Easter Vigil Mass started with the church enveloped in darkness. Slowly, light emerged from flickering candles lit from the Easter candle. With the church lighting up as the Gloria was sung, it reflected God's continual call for us to step into the light of new life. ❤️

Their journey to baptism

By FIONA FOO



Gemma Ng: It started with her daughters' catechism classes

HER family did not prescribe to any religion while she was growing up but Gemma attended a Catholic school and got exposed to the faith as a young girl. After getting married to a Catholic, she had been faithfully attending mass every week with her family. However, she never once felt the need to convert until her daughter's first holy communion last year. After witnessing that special moment, Gemma also wanted to experience it herself. This led her to attending the RCIA briefing and eventually signing up for the RCIA. She credits her children, aged 8 and 10, as the main drivers in making this life-changing decision for her. When the children started attending catechism classes, Gemma got involved in their faith-building too. After their classes, Gemma and her

children would discuss on what they learnt, and through that, her desire to learn more of the faith also grew.

Her main takeaway from her year-long journey to the waters of baptism revolves around gratitude - to God, the sponsors, her family and her close-knit RCIA group. It made her realise that her life has always been so blessed thanks to God's immense grace, something she had always taken for granted. The group sharing with her sponsors and fellow group mates played a big part in making her journey rewarding

and insightful as well. She credits them for offering her the peace and assurance that people are willing to provide when needed. Gemma also shared that she realised her group mates were married to Catholics as well, so they had common topics to discuss not just about the faith, but about daily life too.

Gemma is looking forward to learn more and grow deeper in the faith after baptism. A few days before her baptism she said her husband and children were extremely excited for her. Gemma joked saying: "My youngest feels it is unfair that Mummy gets to receive Communion before she does!"



Gemma (right)

Michelle Fuan: She took her godmother's advice

LIKE it happens to many, Michelle Fuan got caught up with the busy lifestyle of today and it got to a point when she did not know what she wanted or needed anymore. The emptiness she felt in her heart soon led to

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depression. When Michelle confided in her godmother, she advised her to attend the RCIA to rediscover herself.

Through RCIA, Michelle learnt more about the Bible and Christianity, which she identified as the source of strength, and she immersed herself in her journey of faith. Her sponsors helped to address

her concerns and answered all her doubts with kindness and patience. Michelle felt she was given the support she needed as the sponsors never treated her questions as insignificant. There were regular group discussions which gave her different perspectives and insights on Christianity. Through this, Michelle saw her faith strengthening and inculcated a deep desire to learn and know more about Jesus. "Love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength" -- this was her main takeaway. Apart from the weekly RCIA sessions, Michelle also benefited greatly from the Majodi Retreat, where she developed a stronger connection with God as she took part in the Stations of the Cross. It served as a great reminder to her of



Michelle

the sacrifices Jesus made for us.

All in all, Michelle regarded her journey towards the waters of baptism to be "the gold at the end of the rainbow", as she felt more inspired, rejuvenated and connected in life. She has decided post-baptism that she will work towards being a sponsor in RCIA and also volunteer at charity organisations to help those in need.

Lim San San and Tricia Tan: Death of a relative, the spark

IT was the death of a relative two years ago that made her think. San San sat through the funeral rites conducted in a language she could not comprehend. It got her to

question life after death. Since she was educated in a Catholic school, it was a natural path for San San to start her journey in RCIA.

Since IHM had yet to start the registration for the 2018 RCIA programme, San San started attending another church to know more about the faith. But when registrations started at IHM, she signed up for the programme along with her daughter Tricia last year. As both went through the programme, they had their questions patiently answered by their sponsors, and the two began to grow spiritually with the new perspectives they garnered in the weekly sharing sessions with their group mates. San San highlighted that the collective sharing and group bonding sessions were heart-warming, and she had enjoyed the community feeling that made every session a conducive



San San and Tricia

and productive learning spiritual experience. As she learnt more about the faith, San San noticed that were significant changes in her life. One of which was that she started to feel conscious of her actions, and was constantly evaluating if they were right or wrong. It also made her feel at peace as she learnt to forgive others, just like Jesus did.

As the youngest member in RCIA at 14 years old, Tricia has also saw changes in her life. For one, she started attending catechism classes. She learned more about God and started to think before every action - What Would Jesus Do. She credits the RCIA and catechism experience in helping her to be a kinder person as well.

Both mother and daughter are yet to decide which ministry to join. San San is positive that her spiritual learning is not over yet, and is looking forward to grow deeper with God alongside her daughter Tricia. ♥



Lenten visits to Indonesian islands from IHM

TWO groups of people from IHM visited the neighbouring islands of Indonesia during the Lenten period. The first visit took place from March 17 to 19. This group — led by Fr Joseph Kace and organised by the Epiphany Ministry — visited Batam, Tanjung Uban, Galang and Karium.

The second group visited the Asrama Putri Santa Maria Goretti in Tanjung Pinang during the weekend of April 13-14. This group consisted of members of the Parry Neighbourhood Christian Community and their friends. There were 13 members in each group.

The first group, led by Fr Joseph, visited the Rempang Children's Home, where one of the members of the group Mr Joseph Chng has been involved in educating the children of poor families for many years.

In Tanjung Balai, the group had a rosary session at the Sacred Heart Church followed by the Stations of the Cross outside.

The group also visited a church in Teluk Dalam and did the Stations of the Cross.

The second group, led by Thomas Wee, spent some meaningful time with 42 girls aged between 13 and 19, mostly orphans, who are cared for by three nuns. The group arranged dinner for all after which the girl residents put up a show of songs and dances. Three members of the group sponsored three needy children for their education. Mr Wee has been supporting the needs of this orphanage for some time.

The following day was Palm Sunday and the group attended the open air procession before entering the Church of Christ the King for mass in Bahasa Indonesia. ♥



Members of the group led by Fr Joseph (above and below) doing the Stations of the Cross.



NCC Parry Members and friends at the Asrama Putri Santa Maria Goretti.

IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



Alpha programme: Following the Holy Family Feast Day Carnival in December, around 30 signed up for the Alpha programme. Many of them are expected to join the RCIA. ♥



Altar Servers: They organised a day out during the March school holidays for games and fellowship. ♥



Infant Baptism: Seven babies were baptised by Fr Joseph Kace on March 3. ♥



BAT: Seventy members from IHM attended the Bible Conx event held on Jan 12 at St Ignatius church. ♥



Divine Mercy: The Divine Mercy Novena in progress prior to the Feast of the Divine Mercy, which was on the Sunday after Easter. ♥



SVP: Parishioners joined SSVP members in its Lenten Outreach project to pack ration bags and distribute them to residents of 2-Room flats in the neighbourhood. ♥

It's bonding time

By NICOLE LARISSA

THE Secondary One teens of IHM had a bonding day on March 23. The aim was to enable the entire cohort to get to know each other better as they start their faith journey after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Together with some of the youth catechist volunteers, the teenagers kicked off the day with an ice-breaker game called Social Bingo. Following that, youth coordinator Benjamin Mao shared his personal experiences of how he managed to transition from primary to secondary school.

The students later explored the church grounds with the help of a Beatitudes treasure hunt. They also had time set aside for an activity titled Handmade of the Lord, an arts and crafts session to use art and their creativity as a form of prayer and thanksgiving to the Lord.

The day ended with more games that the teens enjoyed a lot. There was even an impromptu dance performance by some of the catechists! ♥



Recognising God's calling

By JOYCE TAN

A 4-week series of talks for young adults held in our parish received good response. It was conducted by one of our parishioners Nicholas Lye. The series centered on personal vocation and discernment, including Christian singlehood and dating. Aptly titled Abundance, one of the main messages was to recognize and discover who God has called us to be, and to experience the fullness of life in living out our unique and unrepeatable vocation. It was also shared that vocation is born when our deepest joy meets the world's deep need. The unfolding of God's purpose for each person's life takes place according to His time and order.

The talks were attended by both parishioners and non-parishioners. One of those who attended, Lionel, 24, from the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, felt that the sessions were useful. As he is a Catechist in his church, he felt that

it was relevant to both the students he is teaching, as well as for his own personal life.

Nicholas had organised the Abundance series as a means of bringing young adults together to talk about issues very much related to their stage of life. Said Nicholas: "The topics chosen were those I felt weren't often spoken

about, especially through the lens of scripture and theology. Hence, from my own theological studies and my own real life experiences and learnings, I decided to share this wisdom through the Abundance series, in the hope that young adults will have new insights and perspectives to guide them in their choices and dealings with others." ♥



A weekend of retreats

By MATTHEW TAY



Members of the Youth Catechists group

ASK anyone within the parish what is the best way to bond with members of the church community and they will tell you without much hesitation: Retreats.

On March 16, two parish communities held their retreats at the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

For the Youth Catechists (YC), it was their annual retreat targeted at new members who joined them this year. The retreat puts the freshies through different games and activities as part of a faith survival scenario that continues throughout the duration of the camp.

"The camp focuses on sustaining our faith life by developing a meaningful prayer life and deep relationship with Jesus within the context of community," said Amanda Choo, the YC coordinator. "It also gives the new members opportunities to interact and get to know the seniors and the rest of the community."

Participants were quite appreciative of the retreat.

"It was really fun," said Joel Tan. "I was able to grow closer to those in my batch and it aided me in shaping my spiritual journey."

"The retreat helped me closely examine my faith life and think about the people that will be guiding me along my faith journey," added

Celestine Gimino. "The retreat also showed me that a community is important to help me to continuously grow closer to God."

Another retreat that weekend was by the New Cross Youth Group, holding their first ever retreat.

"New Cross is a youth group for those aged 15 to 18. We are a group of Youths who are all so different but yet come together with the same goal, journeying towards Christ," said Wivina Siah, one of the group coordinators. "The main purpose of

this retreat is for the youths to bond with one another and with Christ."

New Cross has 18 members. One of the retreat participants, Rui Wen, who was confirmed in 2018, thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

"Through this retreat, I have encountered Christ through my fellow community members," she said. "They shine with the light of Christ, and everyone is so loving, compassionate, and selfless, just as Jesus is. They motivate me to be more like Christ in all that I do." ♥



Members of New Cross Youth Group

He heard God's call of Christian Love

by SARAH CHEW

YOU may have seen him on Sundays assisting the main celebrant during the 8.30am mass. He is Brother Andrew Lin, a friendly down-to-earth person with an infectious love for God.

He grew up in a Catholic family where he, his elder brother and younger sister were nurtured in daily prayer and faith formation by his parents. One would therefore think answering God's call to priesthood came naturally to him. After all, he graduated from Christian missionary schools – Maris Stella Primary School and Anglo-Chinese School and was actively involved in the church choir, youth communities and catechists' programmes from a young age and throughout his adulthood. So when 35-year-old Bro Andrew decided to answer God's call to the priestly vocation, none of his friends or family was surprised.

However, he confessed that he was initially drawn to the idea of marriage, primarily because of his love for children. Looking to replicate the love he received from his parents, he sought out relationships with girls in the hope that receiving romantic love could fulfil him and bring about a sense of self-worth. It was not meant to be as he soon realised his misperception of this form of love and self-centredness in pursuing it.

His turning point came when he attended "School of Witness", a 7-week retreat jointly organised by the Catholic Archdiocesan Youth Centre and ICPE Mission (Institute for World Evangelisation) Singapore where he experienced God's profound love for humankind and realised he too was a beloved son of God. This realisation led him to believe that he was searching for love in the wrong places, looking to receive but not to give. Said Bro Andrew: "I experienced a great sense of peace when I finally said no to the path of marriage."



Doubting no more, he started his 8-year seminary journey in 2015. He is now into the fifth year of his priesthood formation. He works with youths and relishes the opportunity to rekindle his love for youth ministerial formation because of his roots in youth and catechist work. It is also an affirmation to God's mysterious way of having prepared him for this path since young. Having gone through the same challenges, he feels that their "longing for an encounter with God their Father" resonates deeply with him and he is compelled to share his own experience of God's great love with them.

When asked about whether he will be able to relate to parishioners' various challenges in life, having grown up in a nurturing and loving environment, he says that he believes God's immense love for him will always guide him to listen, to share

and ultimately, to imitate His love for everyone. Said Bro Andrew: "The circumstances surrounding most problems might be different but at the root, it is the longing for love."

Bro Andrew graduated from the National University of Singapore with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and before he joined the seminary he worked as an insurance claims and investigation executive. He also held the position of a youth co-ordinator at his parish Church of the Holy Family. Trained in classical pianoforte, he also plays the organ, guitar and used to compose psalm music at leisure. Currently, he is attached specifically with the youth group in our parish and works with them once a week, typically on a Saturday or Sunday until the end of November this year. If you are keen to take him on in a game of chess, he will prove to be a formidable opponent. ♥



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