

Celebrating the Reason for the Season

By JOLYN TAN



IHM's annual Family Fiesta was held on December 28, with the theme "The Reason for the Season is Love".

Serving as a reminder to Catholics of the true meaning of Christmas, the theme was also an invitation to non-Catholics to find out more about this celebration.

In the weeks leading up to the event, no effort was spared. Outreach events like carolling and distribution

of balloons in the nearby malls were carried out, and invitation cards were distributed to parishioners to invite their non-Catholic friends and non-Catholic family members.

During the fiesta, befrienders were stationed at the Church entrance to welcome guests and explain to them the various events slated for the evening. Guests were provided with green wristbands and parishioners with red ones.

The Epiphany group took the lead in organising this year's fiesta while other ministries helped to run the various food stalls. Stalls had creative names such as "Christmas Tree Waffles" and "Jingle Bell Twists".

There was never a dull moment throughout the night. There was a harp performance, carolling by lectors and the Burmese community who were joined by Fr Joseph Kace. Fr Luke Fong did a solo performance with an unusual song choice of "You Never Walk Alone". He explained that it exemplified the Christmas message of Jesus coming to Earth and never leaving us alone.



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Nicholas Lye led a flash mob which involved dancers of all ages. The children of the parish performed a Nativity play and the deaf community put up a signing performance to “Christ be our Light”.

Children were kept busy as well in the Church Hall. Two bouncy castles were set up in the hall, alongside claw machines. Other activities such as balloon sculpting, face painting and a magic show by Andrew Kong were held as well.

Concurrently during the evening, church tours were run by volunteers from various ministries. The tour started at the entrance of the Church, with explanations about features such as the confessional and holy water font.

The tour then proceeded to the sacristy, where altar servers explained to the guests about the items that are used during Mass. One guest, Farandy, said that while it was not his first time in a Catholic church, this segment of the tour allowed him to “learn more about the mass and understand the significance of the various objects used”.

Following that, guests were invited to spend a moment in prayer before the sanctuary. They were also invited to place a lighted candle beside the altar. It was heartening to see a great number of candles around the altar at the end of the night.

The tour ended with a visit to the Columbarium. Here the guests were accompanied by members from the Our Lady of Sorrows group. When the tour ended, the guests were given a goodie bag and invited to attend a follow-up tea session to learn more about the faith.

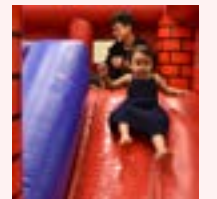
A member of the organizing team, Willcyn Tang, shared that it was “heart-warming and inspiring to see every parishioner, young and old, join hands to make this event a successful one”. He added: “The coordinating team consisted of talented individuals who, rooted in Christ, constantly encouraged one another with prayer, fellowship, and healthy doses of humour, especially when challenges weighed down upon us”. ❤️



Nativity play by the children.



Conducting a tour of the church.



Heralding the Christmas spirit to our neighbours

By KAREN D'ALMEIDA



The combined choir performing for the evening crowds at Nex shopping mall.

CHRISTMAS is generally a time for gift-shopping and feasting. To show our neighbours a different perspective, our parish held three outreach sessions at the nearby shopping malls, with the intention of inviting them to our Family Fiesta on 28 December.

This is the second year that IHM has done this. Nicholas Lim of Epiphany group said it was a parish-wide evangelisation effort to "bring our church to the marketplace" and invite people to the Family Fiesta.

Recruiting volunteers began as early as October. Business owners were invited to display invitation cards at their premises. Invitations were distributed around the neighbourhood. Volunteers were sought to help at the mall sessions. "It is amazing how God always finds the right number of parishioners to come forward to help," said Nicholas.

At the outreach sessions, parents, young children and even grandparents gathered courage and joy to hand out balloons and invitations to passersby. Some were accepted graciously while others were faced with rejection. However, everyone had the right spirit, and it

went well.

Different choirs performed at the three sessions. On 7 and 8 December, Outreach@Assisi Group, comprising members from various parishes, sang at the Heartland Mall.



Above: Singing at Heartland Mall. Below: Balloon ambassadors!



Parishioner James Tan brought his family to join the choir on the second day. Conductor Alexius Yeo shared that they overcame their nerves by singing their hearts out for God. "It was a magical experience," he said. Choir member Girlie Costales was heartened that shoppers had stopped to listen to the singing and said: "I'd definitely volunteer again if given a chance!"

Members from IHM's different choirs combined to perform outside Food Republic at Nex on 20 December. Their varied repertoire caught the attention of those streaming in and out of the mall. Sheila, a resident of Serangoon, was one who stopped by. "It's so beautiful," she commented. Like many, she particularly enjoyed the upbeat songs. In fact, it was the catchy songs that made many stop to listen, nodding their heads and swaying to the beat. After the singing, the crowds were warmly invited to our Family Fiesta.

Choir member Theresa Lye said: "We shared the true meaning of Christmas in our messages and songs, we scattered the seeds of love, right where people were at." Choirmaster Daphne Chng added: "Songs may lead hearts to Jesus." Hopefully, the outreach sessions led many to the Fiesta on the 28th! Kudos to all who helped! ❤️

An Outreach beyond our shores

By MATTHEW TAY

ON Dec 7 and 8, a group of IHM parishioners travelled to Tanjung Balai in Indonesia. They were part of the annual Advent outreach project organised by the Legion of Mary and Epiphany ministries.

Once in Tanjung Balai, these volunteers numbering 13 helped to distribute rations such as rice, sugar, noodles and eggs to 100 needy families on the Indonesian island. They also hosted a Christmas dinner at Asrama Francis Xavier run by the Holy Family congregation of nuns. The dinner, hosted for the poor and needy children from Tanjung Balai and the nearby islands, was organized to usher in the joy of Christmas.

For Angela Chang, one of the volunteers, it was an enlightening experience. Said Angela: "All this while, I took things for granted, believing that Christmas is a 'Spending Christmas'. I personally am not in favour of spending money on gifts. However, going to Tanjung Balai has made me realize that even a small gift can make the needy extremely happy."



Volunteers of the advent outreach 2019.



Volunteers serving dinner at the Asrama Francis Xavier.



Angela (second from left) with fellow volunteers preparing to distribute rations.

The children were very happy to accept the toys the volunteers gave as most of them never had any toys. That made Angela realise how lucky the children in Singapore are. Angela also observed that the people were happy despite their poverty and that they had faith in God.

Lilian Sim, the logistic coordinator for the outreach to Tanjung Balai, told Heartbeat that the Advent outreach programme evolved from the Epiphany's TeachNLearn mission trip to Tanjung Pinang and since 2017 has become a yearly affair. She added that in addition they also do a Lenten Pilgrimage to the Riau Islands during Lent.

Parishioners who are interested to contribute can look out for Epiphany's fundraiser which is held twice a year. If you are keen to volunteer, you can check <http://charis-singapore.org/web/index.php/epiphany#missions-trips> for the next TeachNLearn mission trip to Tanjung Pinang or look out for the announcement in the Parish Bulletin for the next volunteer trip. ❤️



Volunteers distributing rations to the needy families in Tanjung Balai.



IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



Retreat: Our catechumens took part in a retreat at the Major Retreat Centre in Johor Baru from Jan 10-12. They were joined by their sponsors and Fr Adrian. Mike Arents, our pastoral coordinator, was the retreat master. ❤️



Chinese Bible Apostolate: This IHM parish group launched its monthly first Thursday of the month Mandarin Intercessory Prayers in October. ❤️



Infant Baptism: Ten infants were baptised by Fr Adrian on Jan 5. ❤️



Altar Servers: Six young members joined the group recently. ❤️



First Holy Communion: Seventy-three Primary 3 students received their First Holy Communion in September. ❤️



First Confession: The P2 children in our parish received their Sacrament of Reconciliation also in September. ❤️



Retreat: The Sec 1 catechism students had a two-day retreat in November. ❤️



Mass for the Elderly and Sick: It was held on Oct 28 and 269 parishioners received the Sacrament of Anointing. ❤️

Goodbye Fr JJ

FR Joseph Pierre Gerard Jeannequin, affectionately known as Fr JJ, left for his heavenly abode on Dec 24. He was 93.

A year after his ordination in his native France, Fr JJ moved to Asia in 1952 to serve as a missionary. He was only 26 at that time and went on to serve in Myanmar, Cambodia and Taiwan before moving to Singapore in 1972.

In Singapore, Fr JJ served in the parishes of the Church of the Risen Christ, Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Anne's and IHM, where he moved to in 2002. Fr JJ was known for his compassion for the poor and he was well loved by all IHM parishioners.

His gentle ways and cherubic smile will always remain with us. May his soul rest in peace. ♥



Above: With Fr Louis Loiseau. Below: Celebrating Fr JJ's 90th birthday in 2016.



The challenges after Confirmation

By JOYCE TAN

IT was a joyous occasion for family, friends, and catechists, as they celebrated the Confirmation of over 60 Secondary 3 students on Dec 21. The Confirmation Mass was celebrated by Archbishop William Goh.

In his homily, Archbishop Goh presented an issue of concern confronting the Catholic Church – the reality where many youth are leaving the Church after being Confirmed. The end of catechism classes, the lack of a personal relationship with God and sense of belonging to a faith community, and parental discouragement against involvement in church activities, were reasons for the exodus. Faith does not come automatically with Confirmation, but requires continued intentional discipleship. As

discipleship can only grow in the context of a community, he reminded that all Catholics have a part to play in helping youth to have a sense of community. Ultimately, the

Sacrament of Confirmation is a sacrament of witness, where confirmed Catholics are called to witness to Christ in their lives.

Although it was tiring to journey with the students for the whole year, Amanda Choo, the coordinator for the Secondary 3 Catechism Team, felt that it was worth it, and a privilege to journey with the students.

Some confirmands shared how they felt God's presence during



the Confirmation Camp. One confirmand Nicole described her experience during praying over at the camp as "touching". Another confirmand Janel shared that her encounter with God during the camp spurred her to attend a 9-day novena organized by the catechists, leading up to Confirmation.

From this month to March, there is a Heroes Programme intended to help the newly confirmed grow in discipleship. ♥

Youth communities in focus

By NICOLE LARISSA

Community of Youths (COY)

COY spent most of 2019 learning how faith plays a part in current issues and they hope to receive more guidance from the Lord in 2020. Said Isabelle: "2019 was definitely hard especially with all the obstacles that were thrown in our path. But one thing that remained constant was Jesus, who guided us every step of the way. Added Hugbert, another member of the community: "This year, I learnt to step out of my



Members of COY serving at the 2019 Confirmation Camp.

comfort zone and know more about my faith."

Rite of Christian Initiation for Youth (RCIY)

The 2019 enquirers got baptised during Easter Vigil which brought great joy to their community. They have since been preparing for their February 2020 run. If you would like to join them as a sponsor or know someone exploring the faith, please point them in their direction.

Denise who got baptised last year said: "One of my greatest takeaways from the RCIY journey is the friendship forged with my sponsors and fellow inquirers. I continue to find support in them, who continually inspire me to grow in faith!"

Youth Catechists (YC)

Youth Catechists hold weekly sessions on Saturdays. These sessions and regular retreats have



RCIY members on their recent retreat.

encouraged faith formation of its members. The annual cookout and Advent party also helped members to grow in faith and friendship. In 2020, the youth catechists hope to spend more time together and keep journeying with each other in faith. Said Grace: "Although 2019 had been a tough year for me, YC had always encouraged me to rely on God during those difficult times. With the community's never-ending support, I've come to put God at the centre of my life and I have grown a lot, spiritually." ♥

Bringing God's word to the little ones

by SARAH CHEW



Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."
Matthew 19:14

AS Christian parents, we have the responsibility to nurture and train our children in God's ways of which the first step is to cultivate their faith. Besides reading Bible stories to them, sharing our personal testimonies in ways they can comprehend and teaching them how to pray, we also try to engage them in faith communities so that they can learn and grow with their peers and others in a religious environment. In this edition, we take a look at IHM's Liturgy of the Word with Children and its role in the faith formation of our young. This ministry was set up in 1998.

Currently, the ministry consists of 14 adult members who are assisted by a few parishioners. Some of them have been assisting the ministry for more than 10 years. The Children's Liturgy takes place during the fourth Sunday of the month while the

11.15am mass is in progress. During this time the children gather in a hall with the ministry members to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word and re-join the main congregation for the Liturgy of the Eucharist at the mass.

As this ministry caters to young children between the ages of 3 and 8, special attention has to be paid to make these sessions engaging and interesting to them. Ministry lead, Ms Sheila Srinivasan said the biggest challenge the ministry members face is in proclaiming the Gospel message in a way that the children can understand without losing its essence. For example, she recalled an occasion when they grappled with the issue of how to explain the meaning of "stewardship" to the children. Said Sheila: "We had to use very easy to understand terms or objects such as presents, money or allowance that are given to them by their parents and talents such as being able to play the piano, sing, swim, etc., to explain how God wants them to take care and nurture these gifts that are given to them." Sheila added that at times ministry

members feel a degree of inadequacy in their ability. To counter this challenge, the ministry has increased the faith formation for its members by having regular meetings. They meet twice a month during which they engage in the breaking of the Word, reflection and prayer, guided by their spiritual director, Fr Luke Fong. In reconciling their inadequacies, they see an opportunity to teach the valuable attributes of humility to their children as they lead by example. Their belief and hope that the Holy Spirit will guide them thus allows them to form stronger parent-child relationships and a bigger faith family.

Besides the monthly Children's Liturgy sessions, the ministry also organises and participates in workshops, retreats and ministry fellowship services to help parents bond with their children in the faith. For example, the ministry holds a workshop at the start of every Advent. At this workshop, the meaning and purpose of Advent is conveyed through craftwork such as the Nativity scene, stained glass painting and designing and making Advent wreaths. Most of these art and craft activities are completed during the workshops while parents of the younger ones are encouraged to complete them at home in order to continue their engagement with their children. During special days such as Children's Day, the ministry organises special goodie bags as giveaways with faith-related gifts such as the 5-finger prayer cards that encourage parent and child to pray together at home. The main objective of these activities is to encourage the growth and development of our faith together with these children through learning, mimicking and expression of self in ways related to our faith. Besides these IHM-organised activities, parishioners with young children who are interested in more options can check out ONE (Office for the New Evangelisation) website, <http://www.one.org.sg/events/#tab-id-2> for similar activities throughout the year. ❤️



Editorial Team: Agnes Chua, Denise Julia Tan, Jolyn Tan, Joyce Tan, Matthew Tay, Nicole Larissa Xiao, Patrick Jonas, Sarah Chew

Layout: Karen d'Almeida

Contact: heartbeat@ihm.sg

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