

# Thank you, Fr Adrian

*The IHM parish community bids him goodbye as he moves to the Church of the Holy Family after 8 years here.*

By PATRICK JONAS



**I**T was not the best of times for the parishioners of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM). One after the other, parish priests had to leave the church for health reasons. Rumours swirled as the parish flock were left without a shepherd for several weeks.

Then in walked a young, fresh-faced priest on the cusp of turning 44.

Fr Adrian Yeo had never held the post of parish priest before. A few months earlier, he had been posted as an assistant parish priest in the Church of St Teresa in Kampong Baru. Just as he had been settling in his new post, came a call from the Archbishop.

"I could not say 'No'. I had laryngitis," said Fr Adrian in jest,

as he recalled his meeting with the Archbishop. "Seriously, I felt that I didn't have what it takes to be one (a parish priest), and I didn't want the responsibility, but when God calls then one has to answer," added Fr Adrian. That brought the non-nonsense Peranakan-Chinese priest to IHM on March 5, 2012.

He had to get down to work immediately. There were several areas that needed "repair", most prominent being the physical and spiritual infrastructure of the parish. To a casual observer at that time, the IHM parish buildings and church looked fairly new, but there were many areas that needed to be refurbished. That was successfully done, and it was followed by a spiritual cleansing of the church and

the premises.

Even before Fr Adrian embarked on these two missions, he had to plunge headlong into the parish's diamond jubilee celebrations. The church, which started as a chapel in 1953 to serve the needs of the local Catholic community, was turning 60 in 2013. Fr Adrian put together several committees. Parishioners rallied around him to make the year-long event a great success. It culminated in a grand gala dinner at the Orchid Country Club in December 2013. Archbishop William Goh was the guest of honour at the event which saw the church launch its revamped website and the parish newsletter "IHM Heartbeat".

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With the jubilee out of the way, the real work of bringing the parish community together began. This was something Fr Adrian felt was very important as it meant we were one large family who not only worshiped together in the church but also prayed for each other and gathered for fellowship outside as friends. With this in mind, he launched the Family Fiesta in 2017. Since then, this fiesta has been held every year in the weekend after Christmas. Not only do parishioners come together to celebrate the season of joy, they also bring along non-Catholic friends and relatives to see and understand what Christian spirit is all about. These non-Catholic friends and relatives are also given a tour of the church by volunteers. The Family Fiesta has thus become a great evangelisation exercise that is increasingly attracting more to the faith. On the night itself, various parish ministries set up food and games stalls to keep young and old engaged. In addition, there is a non-stop flow of entertainment with both music and dance.

When Fr Adrian was asked what he would remember most of the eight years he spent in IHM, he said without hesitation: "What I am most



Fr Adrian lighting a candle during a ceremony to bless the church.



Fr Adrian with Archbishop William Goh and Archbishop Emeritus Nicholas Chia during the diamond jubilee celebrations of the IHM parish in December 2013.

proud of is the Family Fiesta, the ability to bring the whole community together."

Another important contribution that Fr Adrian made was the setting up of the Family Life Ministry in early 2016. Not long after he took over as parish priest, he noted that while several parishioners come together to devote their talents for the larger parish community, there was a need for a ministry to promote family life. This ministry has since been organising the Milestone Wedding Anniversary Mass on August 9 every year.

The avid Manchester United fan is happy that the English Premier League has restarted and that his team is trying to make a comeback, but he is disappointed that cruises have been frozen due to Covid-19. Going on a cruise is something that Fr Adrian looks forward to every year to unwind. "I am fond of it as it is where I cannot be contacted, and because of the food and drinks. I can't wait for it to resume," he said with a smile.

As for now, he will have to make do with the company of Fr Kenson Koh, his Monday lunch kaki. "Our Monday lunches are sacrosanct. It is a time to be ourselves and relax," he said about his long-time Monday lunch partner.

As he moves on to a new parish, Fr Adrian said he looks back with fondness and joy at the good

times he had in the parish and the relationships he was able to build with parishioners.

"To me, I think all of you cooperating with me, and putting up with me makes me look good, because the parish is alive," he added. When asked if there is something he will miss, his answer was: "Well it is the people that I have come to know."

Fr Adrian had a very good rapport with his parishioners. When parishioners did not turn up in strength to elect a new Parish Pastoral Council, he turned that into an opportunity and created a parish council with representatives from all the church ministries. This saw more active participation of ministry members in church activities. We even saw ministries helping and supporting each other to successfully conduct parish programmes.

If it was not the best of times when Fr Adrian took over as parish priest, he is leaving at an even worse time, thanks to the virus pandemic. He had to celebrate the IHM Feast Day mass in June without a congregation inside the church. However, many watched the live service sitting at home. At the end of the service, he gave a touching thank you message recalling his eight years at IHM. He even apologised to parishioners seeking their pardon if by any chance he had offended anyone.

We will miss you Father. ❤️



## Messages for Fr Adrian

We are saddened as you leave, more so by not being able to celebrate and praise the Lord in person with you for your years of efforts in our parish.

But we know that more will experience the love and mercy of God in your new parish just as we had experienced it through your leadership here.

We are confident you will succeed in spreading God's love wherever you go.

- Sarah Chew, Lectors Ministry



Fr Adrian celebrating his 20th sacerdotal anniversary

Father Adrian has always been a silent shepherd, supporting the church and ensuring that we are provided for. I am truly honoured to have worked with him all these years.

- Shiam Jerome, Youth Ministry



IHM Parish Feast Day - The Immaculate Heart of Mary

2,258 views • Streamed live on Jun 20, 2020

38 0 SHARE SAVE ...

Fr Adrian celebrating IHM's Feast Day mass on June 20 in an empty church. The mass was streamed live on YouTube.

Fr Adrian has journeyed with me as my parish priest through many stages of my life. As a young adult seeking to serve God, he gave his unwavering support to the activities we planned for the youth, from movie nights to a dedicated room for the Youths to gather. He invested a huge amount of time to meet with each ministry in an effort to encourage parishioners to journey as a community rather than simply serving in a ministry.

As a single discerning my vocation, he gave invaluable advice about choosing my life partner. To his amusement, he identified my future husband (Ben) before I did, and journeyed with us as we became friends and fell in love.

He officiated our marriage three years later, blessed our new home, baptised our first child, and blessed our second.

We will miss our weekly trips to his office after mass with our little one, who looks forward to seeing "Father".

Fr Adrian has been a huge part of our faith journey and we will miss him dearly!

- Bianca Chan, Youth Ministry



Fr Adrian with all the couples after the Milestone Wedding anniversary mass, which was one of his initiatives.



## Messages for Fr Adrian

Thank you Fr Adrian for being an outstanding steward of the parish and spiritual father to all of us in IHM. We will miss your rousing homilies which resonated with us deeply. You were always approachable and would never fail to ask me how I was doing. On behalf of the youth of IHM, I wish you all the best in your new parish.  
- Timothy Wong, Youth Ministry

I would like to thank Fr Adrian for the many initiatives he introduced in our parish like the monthly maintenance fund, Heartbeat newsletter and the upgraded Weekly Bulletin.

Fr. Adrian is a shepherd who cared very much for his parish flock and he is always approachable.

- Peter Tay, former catechist



(Above) Fr Adrian with parishioners who took part in the first Parish Discipleship Retreat; (below) Anointing a parishioner during the Mass for the Sick; Belting out a song during the Family Fiesta and being a sport during one of the church feast day celebrations.



I will remember Fr Adrian as someone who knows his parishioners personally. He has also been very supportive of activities and programmes in the parish, which have helped us to grow spiritually and to build up the community. Thank you Fr Adrian for shepherding the parish these eight years, and may you always experience the fullness of life in your vocation as a priest.

- Joyce Tan, Youth Ministry



Fr Adrian celebrating mass with safety measures in place during Phase 2 of the Circuit Breaker.

Fr Adrian wanted our parish to have a ministry that would promote family life. We are grateful that he responded to God's call to form the Family Life Group and nurtured it since then. I request Fr Adrian to pray for members of this group so that they will continue the mission of FLG, that they remain as Christ-centered families and influence other families to do the same.

We thank Fr Adrian for his guidance and for helping in the spiritual formation of the members. We will all miss you and we hope you will visit us when time permits.

May the Spirit of God be with you and fill you with wisdom and joy as your shepherd your new flock.

- Agnes Chua, Family Life Group



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