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New Light, New Life

By MATTHEW TAY

WHEN the new light of Easter filled the church hall on the night of April 19 it also enveloped 21 elects, five candidates (received into full communion) and five adult confirmands, showing them a new path in their faith journey.

The night marked the end of a journey and the start of a new one for the 26 who had gone through RCIA for almost a year.

Said Parish Priest Father Adrian Yeo: "Our vigil is a statement, individually and collectively, that we are ready to be renewed and to live out of the grace we've received."

The Easter Vigil is divided into four segments – the Service of Light, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of Baptism & Confirmation and Liturgy of the Eucharist. The first segment was held in the church hall. The congregation gathered in the darkness and after Fr Adrian had lit the Easter candle, the light was passed on to the baptised Catholics before they made their way to the church in a procession.

After the Liturgy of the Word came the moment the elects had been waiting for. One by one, they were baptised and as they were being welcomed into the church, the congregation gave them a thunderous applause. The confirmation followed right after the baptism, with the neophytes, together with five others confirmands, were confirmed.

The Easter Vigil may look like any other mass, aside from the addition of the Service of the Light and Liturgy of Baptism, but to the 21 Catechumens, it was an extraordinary experience.

"It was a very spiritual and uplifting experience!", said Faith Teo, one of the newly baptised. "It really felt like the whole congregation was joined in spirit and unity in the presence of God, and it felt so real and surreal at the same time."

Sue Kong, who was baptised along with her husband and her youngest son Joshua, echoed the same sentiment. "I felt very 'high'. And that feeling lasted for weeks,"

she said.

Her husband, Edwin, agreed: "It is the changing point of our life. It is the pinnacle of our (RCIA) journey and the start of a brand new journey as a baptised Catholic and a Christian family."

While Nicholas Lim, a candidate who was accepted into the church, agreed with the rest, he paid a special tribute to the people who made all this possible. "The experience was nothing short of awe-inspiring. There had been much excitement and anticipation among my cohort to be sure, but in my honest opinion, it was the preparation that was the most important. The RCIA team went to great lengths to make sure we were all spiritually prepared for the big day."

Added Fr. Adrian: "Personally I feel great joy and satisfaction journeying with this RCIA group. They not only see the fruits of their labour, but also share in their transformation and their joy in accepting the faith, accepting Jesus and the Church." ♥

Conversion Stories

By MATTHEW TAY

Nicholas Lim: At home in IHM

IT was my late grandparents who first exposed me to the Catholic faith. They and my Catholic friends took me to the Blessed Sacrament Church some two years ago," Nicholas Lim, a newly baptised Catholic, recalled. He, however, decided to attend IHM because it was closer to his home.

The parishioners of IHM are glad to have Nicholas, who lends his voice to the 8:30am choir every



Sunday. "I felt I had to get to know some people if this was going to be my home church. So one day I asked to join the choir," he said.

"Since then, I've made so many friends who are also my neighbours. There is also a great community spirit. It does really feel like a kampong sometimes, and you get the opportunity to see how God is working in people's lives," he added.

He said he has his close friend and business partner Clarence to thank for planting the seeds in him "before I was transplanted to the IHM nursery!"

Having a supportive family also helped, although the support he received came as a surprise to him. "My father used to be 'Christian-hater'. I think my parents view my decision to convert as a positive influence in my life. I used to be a heavy smoker, but it's been a year since I stopped. God answers prayers, persistent prayers." ♥

Faith Keira Teo: A Rollercoaster Ride

WHEN you have a husband who is a cradle catholic, you would think that he would be the one to educate you in the faith. But that was not the case with Faith Teo, who was baptised during Easter. "My husband turned out to be an atheist over the years," she joked. "It was actually Greg Lin from the St. Theresa's Group (in the RCIA) who brought me to the church."

She had moved back from the US and had difficulty adjusting to life here. That was when Greg invited her to the church and she felt that it could give her the peace she

was craving for.

The conversion process was a rollercoaster ride for Faith. "It was a journey that started out with a healthy amount of scepticism. But I think that God touched me in the people I had the good fortune to interact with during this RCIA journey," she recalled. "My parents were tolerant about it (my conversion). I guess that is the best I can expect from them, considering that they don't know much about the faith."

Still, there were plenty of difficult moments during the journey. "I



think my biggest difficulty was not being able to find the faith in me at all times, especially during difficult times," she said. "It was hard to feel His presence. But I think patience was the greatest key. Eventually, if you can show the grace to be patient about your situation, God will provide."

When asked what she would like to share with her fellow brothers and sisters taking their first steps into the faith, she provided some short but strong advice: "Open your heart to listen. Faith is perceived by your heart, and not by logic." ♥

Edwin and Sue: Following their son, the beacon

THEIR son Joshua's baptism at Church of the Holy Spirit was Edwin and Sue's first beacon to the Catholic faith. Later, they met Angela, an IHM parishioner, at Catholic Kindergarten where their son attended school, and she started them on their journey to the church.

"Angela was the one who encouraged us to come to church as well as go through marriage encounter," recalled Sue. Along with her husband and older son, Joseph, they were baptised and joined the faith during

the Easter Vigil.

Coming from a Catholic family, it was unusual for Edwin not to be baptised as an infant. But there was a good reason for it. "My parents wanted me to choose the faith by my own. So when the time was right, it was good to come back to God," said Edwin. For Sue, it was a slightly different story.



"I was a student of Paya Lebar Methodist Girls School, so I was more in tune with the Christian

faith. My siblings also attended the same school but only I became a Catholic," recalled Sue.

The conversion process was a challenge for them, especially since both are working and had young children. "Sessions can drag at times. So it takes a lot of commitment. However, the sponsors' commitments were much greater and it was truly inspiring to us. They always made us feel loved and welcome," said the newly-baptised couple.

When asked for advice to those who are deciding to explore the faith, Edwin said: "If you are here (in church), it means something brought you here. Listen to that call. Nothing happens by chance." ♥

Spreading the Light of Christ

By DOMINIC ABRAHAM



THE Epiphany group's mission is simple: Evangelisation both locally and overseas. In the IHM parish-based apostolate that runs a yearly ALPHA programme, this is for people who want to know more about the Christian faith before RCIA. The group also organises Teach 'n' learn programmes in Indonesian islands for young children.

Epiphany also takes part in outreach events such as the Humanitarian Forum & Fair organised by CHARIS. Christian Kwan and John Foo began this outreach group in the year 2000, with the help of Fr. Brian De Souza, the apostolate's Spiritual Director then. They wanted to evangelise beyond boundaries of a single parish.

When Nicholas Lim, the contact person for the group in IHM, was approached to get to know Epiphany, he thought he was in a 'Spanish inquisition' on account of the barrage of questions he was faced with. But without too much hesitation, he responded to every query, giving us all the insights into what he and the group does, what they are trying to achieve, and how they are able to spread the good news through their activities.

The group was named Epiphany in honour of the Epiphany of Jesus.

"Epiphany" means the manifestation of God to Mankind, and that is the central focus of the group's mission – to bring the light of Jesus to the world. Education became the focal aspect of their apostolate, through discernment and prayer, and led by the Holy Spirit, and culminated into action when Fr. Poya of Tembisi parish, supported by the Bishop of Pangkalpinang, requested the group to teach English to the little children on the island.

Thus Indonesia became the first recipient of the group's overseas mission, based on its proximity to Singapore. Gradually, the mission stations began to grow in number and today there are three – Rempang, Taroka and Tanjong Pinang.

Volunteers are led back to Epiphany, based on the love and hope the little children have for their teachers, and the joy that the volunteers derive from working with one another. The three mission stations require approximately 15 volunteers per trip, and Epiphany makes close to 15 trips per station every year. With almost 675 volunteer days per annum, many volunteers go on multiple teaching trips each year.

Epiphany is funded by the patrons of the parish, and the group also collects some funding through the Canteen day. Nicholas opines

that Epiphany never collects more than is necessary.

A volunteer with Epiphany needs to understand that they are witnesses to Christ, and filled with a genuine love for the little children that they take under their wings. All new volunteers are provided with pre-trip briefings, and the mission booklet helps to prepare them spiritually, and guides them on what to do and what not to do on these teaching trips. The volunteers are usually accompanied by a seasoned volunteer when they take charge of a class.

Nicholas doesn't like to dwell on the challenges that Epiphany faces, although they are adhoc and varied in nature. The group would rather focus on the hope, love and assurance they bring to the children that there are strangers who love them, and out of this love, make a difference to their lives.

Any new objectives of Epiphany will be centered on evangelization and this will require discernment by the group as a whole, which will translate as the group's vision for the future. Epiphany creates mission awareness among parishioners through the Advent Tree prayer card, World Mission Sunday exhibition, and also during the canteen day.

During the Advent season, the group promotes the spirit of giving through the Sponsor A Child programme and the praying for the conversion of family, loved ones or friends with their Pledge Card drive.

Any adult who has a desire to do mission work and share the good news can contact Nicholas Lim at nicholas.lim@ihm.sg. Or Celestine Snodgrass at 65-98425865 (riautnl@gmail.com). ♥



ALPHA - local evangelisation



St. Ignatius school at Taroka

Snapshots...

By COREEN TAN



Members of IHM's Malayalee community gather for Holy Hour and to pray the Divine Mercy every Thursday morning. ♥



Willing Hands serves the parish by cleaning and maintaining the church. There are about 10 members in the group and not many know about the work they do. ♥



Our Lady of Sorrows group at their recent retreat in Malacca. OLOS prays for the "dearly departed" at funeral wakes of our parishioners. ♥



Parish Rosary Night during the month of May, which was followed by fellowship over a light meal. ♥



Legion of Mary at their recent Eucharistic Celebration. The Mass was well attended by both members and the parish community. ♥



Rite of Election 2014 for the East, Serangoon and Central district parishes was hosted by IHM. The rite was presided by Archbishop William Goh. ♥



The **Wardens Ministry** was chosen for this year's Washing of the Feet on Maundy Thursday. Fr. Adrian washed the feet of 12 wardens in a display of service and humility. ♥



Parish **Easter Potluck Party** organized by LOW4C. Fun, food, fellowship and games for everyone. The finale game of Piñata drew lots of laughter and cheering! ♥



IHM **Easter Vigil** in the church, a joyful anticipation by the entire parish community. The vigil was a joint effort by several church ministries. ♥



Charismatic **Prayer Group** ran the canteen and organized the sale of hot cross buns on Maundy Thursday. ♥



The **Primary and Secondary Catechism** team held a combined rosary prayer on Mother's Day. ♥



IHM **Bloodmobile Outreach** during Lenten season, an initiative of the Ministry of the Sick, made successful by donors and volunteers ♥

Spotlight on RCIY

By COLIN LEE



INQUIRERS, Catechumens, Elects, Neophytes; if you think you have heard these words being mentioned in church, you are right. These are the terms used, in chronological order, to describe non-Catholics on a journey as they progress along four distinct phases in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). Our parish also has a Rite of Christian Initiation for Youth (RCIY). This is for young people, between the ages of 13 and 24.

The RCIY in our parish was established by Fr. Brian D'Souza – now youth chaplain of the diocese – about six years ago with the aim of preparing young non-Catholics to encounter Jesus and his Church in a comfortable environment and

with people they easily relate to. The group comes together for prayer, informational and experiential presentations and other faith-sharing activities revolving around the week's theme. The journey typically lasts about 16 months. Confirmed Catholics who are in communion with the church are invited to assist in the journey as Sponsors.

"RCIY is something very close to my heart as being a sponsor is being a direct instrument towards building God's Kingdom. Like guiding a child as he takes his first few steps, being a sponsor means guiding and helping to nurture the seed of faith in the youth. It is extremely gratifying seeing the youths grow and blossom in their passion for Christ," shared

Daniel Lee on his role as a sponsor in previous runs of the RCIY.

The RCIY in IHM meets every Sunday morning; beginning at the start of the year and culminating at Easter the following year, where Elects receive the Sacraments for the first time. The organisers take a breather in the second half of the year, before repeating the cycle.

While the recruitment drive for inquirers and sponsors has ended, those with a desire to be a part of the journey are still encouraged to contact Daniel at rciyihm@gmail.com or the parish office. More information can be found at <http://www.ihm.sg/groups-ministries/faith-formation-evangelisation/rciyandone.org.sg>. ♥

A sponsor's story

BLESSED Teresa of Calcutta once said: "Give, but give until it hurts." This is what Seishen Gerard said when asked for tips for anyone contemplating serving in church.

And giving to the church he has been, for the past decade or so.

Seishen is IHM's assistant-coordinator for RCIY. Standing above average height, with broad shoulders, Seishen – who holds a full time position at a physiotherapy clinic – has a presence about him that is unexpectedly gentle. My conversation with him revealed a warm and unassuming personality who has deep faith in God.

"My journey as an altar server really brought me closer to God and allowed me to feel his presence up close and personal. It was here that I realised the importance of church work and how I could help make a difference in someone's life

by just showing God's love, care and concern through simple acts," he said, recalling how it all began.

When he stepped down in 2008, he was approached by Fr. Brian D'Souza to be among the pioneer batch of RCIY sponsors. A role which he accepted readily and he has not looked back.

Apart from helping out at RCIY sessions every Sunday morning, Seishen represents RCIY in a group of young people that meets regularly to discern and chart the future for IHM's Youth Ministry.

When his schedule permits, Seishen supports other causes he is passionate about, through his actions. "During my free time, I cover football matches as sports trainer," he added with a hint of enthusiasm. He also volunteers his time with



children with special needs and people with disabilities. Asked if his RCIY friends ever sought his work-related advice, his responded swiftly with a chuckle, "of course, some even asked for treatment!" Seishen is looking forward to enrolling in a Master's programme in physiotherapy, sometime next year.

When queried about his source of inspiration, he answered, "my faith in God." It is this simple yet profound conviction, which he attributes to his mother, that "keeps him going" in his journey. He says the RCIY community is blessed with past inquirers joining the ministry. He believes that "everything we do should be for the greater good of God" and seeks to spend more quiet time in adoration "listening to what God wants him to do." Now that's inspiration for all of us. ♥

The Boys in White

By JOYCE TAN



THEIR mission: The extraordinary duty to serve at every Mass. Assisting the priest, ensuring strict observation of the myriad liturgical rituals and procedures – they play an instrumental role in the celebration of the Mass. Meet the boys in white, Altar Servers from St Dominic Savio Altar Servers' Society. On March 7, they had their Investiture Mass where new altar servers took their pledge, while existing members renewed theirs.

Being an altar server comes with great responsibility. Commitment is required and discipline enforced by the Exco, with each server being accountable for his attendance at rostered mass duties. Every week, each server is required to serve at least one weekday Mass and one weekend mass. Serving a weekday mass might mean having to reach church at 6am on days of duty to serve morning mass.

Before the start of each mass,

servers are required to arrive 15 minutes early to get ready. They would change into the appropriate attire and say a prayer. They wear a cassock (the white tunic) and a sash or cord is tied around the waist. On special occasions, the red cape around the neck is worn as well. The colour of the sash worn is specified according to the liturgical season. A prayer written by Fr. Luke Fong a few years ago, is recited to make the altar servers focus on God and be in a prayerful disposition.

In preparation to serve mass, all new servers have to go through a period of training, lasting from 3 months to 1 year. This training, conducted by senior servers, involves learning the procedure of the mass, the various liturgical instruments, as well as the roles of altar servers. Examples of these roles include the torch acolyte (the servers who carry the torches), the cross bearer, and "offertory" (the servers who assist with the offertory).



Speaking to these servers, it is evident that they feel proud in having the opportunity to serve at the altar. Shannon, 13, said, "It is different from the congregation. For example, we get to ring bells, and I feel closer to God serving on the altar." Alphonsus, 17, shared similar

sentiments, saying, "We are not just sitting down, but serving at the altar and serving God, and we should be proud of that". Likewise, other Servers expressed their liking for roles such as carrying in the cross and torch during the procession at the start of mass.

As a testimony to the strong sense of belonging to and pride in being in the Society, some senior servers have served for 10 years or more in the Society. Dominic Kumar, who has served for 11 years, is one of them, and attributes his continued service to feeling that he is part of something bigger than him. Lucas, who has served for 10 years, says that it is the friendships forged and strong sense of brotherhood that made him stay on. In addition, as a senior server in the Exco, he feels that he has developed his leadership skills. Lucas explains: "With the help of the juniors, the Exco has worked as a team to improve the standard of the Society. God nonetheless is the number one driving force."

Serving on the altar may give the impression that the Society is one of constant seriousness that is devoid of fun. However, the Society has many activities that the altar servers have described as "fun". In addition to encouraging the servers to pray more, the Society has an annual camp and games sessions twice a month after their meetings. As Dominic sums up: "The Society prays and plays a lot, has lots of games, is nurturing and gives direction to its members". He then adds: "We always welcome new people!" ♥



Interview:
Father Joseph Jeannequin
 by PATRICK JONAS

He never wanted to become a missionary

OCTOBER 7, 1944. It was the feast of the Holy Rosary. World War II was raging. Young Joseph Jeannequin wanted to make his confession. Since it was not safe to live in his home, he and his parents had moved to a shelter beneath the factory where his father worked. Allied planes regularly flew over the area, then under German occupation, on bombing missions. Being a clear day, there was a chance the planes would come, so the youngster wanted to go to church in the afternoon but an elderly man who was moving his wife to the shelter that day asked his help in tidying up a corner for her. Joseph stayed back and as soon as he finished with the job he rushed out to go to the church, only to hear the sound of planes in the distance. He scrambled back to the shelter and could hear the bombs go off. When the skies cleared and the people came out, they found the church had been bombed. The priest who was hearing confessions and 10 people who were there were killed. Joseph had narrowly escaped death.

When Joseph was in Primary School, his teacher asked him to write an essay on what he wanted to be when he grew up. He wrote that he wanted to be a priest but never a missionary. "I was afraid I would have to leave my family", he said with a chuckle. But God had other plans for Joseph. When he was 12, he joined the minor seminary but after two

years, he was asked to leave. "I was playful and talked too much," he said with a smile. But he was determined to continue and so approached other seminaries. Only the MEP Society was keen to accept him as an ordinary student, since he did not want to become a missionary. But after hearing exemplary stories of MEP priests overseas he changed his mind and became a seminarian. So soon after he was ordained in 1951 at the age of 25, he left France and since then, Asia has been home for Fr. Joseph Jeannequin, now popularly known as Fr. JJ.

Fr. JJ was first sent to Myanmar (then Burma), where he spent 14 years. Fr Louis Loiseau (a fellow MEP priest and now at the Church of The Risen Christ) was also in Myanmar at that time and the two spent several years together at the minor seminary in Rangoon. It was also in Myanmar that Fr. JJ got a Chinese name, when he was in charge of a parish with mostly Chinese parishioners. They called him Fr. Yang Lee Chian since the name sounded very much like the English pronunciation of his French name.

When the Burmese government did not renew his "stay permit" he was moved to Phnom Penh, in Cambodia where he learnt Teo Chew, and later to Hsinchu, Taiwan, where he learnt Mandarin. It was from there that he moved to Singapore in 1972.

For the first two years, he served at the Church of Risen Christ and then moved to the Church of the Nativity

where he spent a good 27 years. Fr. JJ, who turns 88 in July, has over the years won a place in the hearts of all who have dealt with him. His gentle ways and cherubic smile are hard to miss.

"I am something like semi-retired now. I don't offer morning mass. I hear confessions every day in the afternoon. I have difficulty standing for a long time but sitting in the confessional is no problem. I am very happy to give them God's forgiveness," said Fr. JJ, who also prepares catechumens and sometimes visits the sick to give them holy communion. To IHM parishioners, he is a father figure. One regularly provides him with a steady supply of Raja bananas, another sends him papayas and yet another bakes bread for him.

Fr. JJ is one of five children. Only his younger sister, a nun who is 84, survives. He speaks to her twice a day. The other person he keeps in touch every day is Fr. Loiseau.

What does he miss of France?

"My hometown. I grew up in the foothills of a mountain range. I miss the mountains and the mist."

And if you are wondering why the Allies bombed his church, the story goes that a German officer used to go up the church tower every day. He loved music and used to play the church organ. Someone had tipped off the Allies that the Germans were using the church tower as an observation post. ❤️



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