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## Power of the Holy Spirit

More than 250 sick and elderly attend special mass to be anointed

By MATTHEW TAY

**T**HE sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is usually given to those who are close to death but it is also given to others who are suffering from some form of illness. It is a rite that is performed to convey God's grace to the recipient, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the anointing of the sick conveys several graces and imparts gifts of strengthening in the Holy Spirit against anxiety, discouragement, and temptation, and conveys peace and fortitude.

On Oct 6, the IHM Jollies Club along with the Ministry for the Sick and other IHM church ministries organised a special mass for the elderly and the sick. During this mass, about 250 parishioners were anointed.

The Jollies even arranged

transport for some, who were home-bound due to their condition, to attend the Mass. Eight home-bound parishioners were provided transport.

Said Dominic Chia of the Jollies: "On the registration form we asked if anyone needed transport and we arranged it for those who needed it."

Added Theresa Lee, who is also part of the Jollies: "More often than not, the home-bound need a special bus to bring them to church. Since we have the contacts from our monthly events, it made it easier to organise transportation."

Even though they were suffering, most of those who came for the Mass looked cheerful. Said Isabelle Chung, who attended the Mass: "It was a very joyful mood. They were all very happy. They were very reverent and anxious to be anointed. They treated it as a special occasion."



### *Christmas Message*

**A**s we prepare to welcome Jesus Christ into our hearts and our homes this Christmas, it is time for us to give thanks for all the countless blessings he has given us this past year. Christmas is a time that reminds us of hope. God came into this world to shine light into our darkness and lead us forward along the path of righteousness. On behalf of all the priests of the parish, I wish all our parishioners a very Happy and Blessed Christmas.

*Fr Adrian Yeo,  
Parish priest, IHM*

Shirley Yeo, a member of the Jollies, noted that the sick felt they got special attention from the priests as well as the parishioners. The fact that we have a special mass for them makes them feel they are part and parcel of the church, she added.

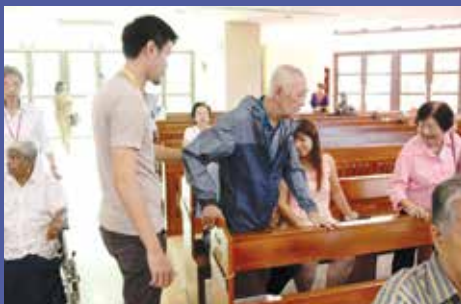
Bernice Conceicao, who is suffering from cancer, was delighted to receive the sacrament.

"I've always wanted to be anointed but never took any steps to do anything about it. It was something that fulfilled my longing and gave an assurance that God is always with me every step of the way. This was a physical encounter with the passion of Jesus through the Sacrament," she said.

After the mass everyone gathered in the church hall for some refreshments. It was also an opportunity for the sick to relax and enjoy the company of their caretakers, helpers, family as well as members of the various ministries. ♥

# Helping Hands

Members from various ministries came forward to make the Mass for the sick a memorable event. ♥



# Who was the first to break all 10 Commandments?

By MATTHEW TAY



THEY huddled over books, notes and iPads. A stranger who strayed into St Gregory's Room on Nov 14 night, would have thought an exam was about to begin. In reality, parishioners were gearing up for the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church's first ever Bible quiz.

The quiz was part of the parish's bi-monthly social event – an initiative of the Parish Pastoral Council to bring together parishioners for a night of fun. It was little surprise the IHM Bible Apostolate Team (BAT) was roped in to conduct the quiz. And they did a great job.

Said Christina Lim of BAT: "The main goal of the event was for parishioners to come together. We wanted them to have fun and go away with what they had learned from this experience, learning the word of God themselves."

She said she was surprised to see the amount of effort put in by the groups. "I am very impressed with the preparation the teams have put in," she told IHM Heartbeat. "As I walked around I could see them with printed notes, like ten year series! Some even had notes on their laptops!"

In the end, after pre-registry and walk-ins, a total of 12 groups took part in the event. While most teams were composed of members from church groups, there were two teams made up of family members.

Lawrence Sim of The Simpsons was one of them. "We decided to come for the fun of it. We decided only this morning to take part," he said. His team, comprised of himself, his wife and his two children, eventually finished sixth.



Quiz masters from the BAT team running the competition.

Before the event, Bernard Lim, part of the Secondary Catechism Team, was quietly confident that his team would do well, but was well aware of surprise packages. "The team is quite well versed and I think we stand a good chance. But there could be some sleepers as well," he



joked. "At the end of the day, we will also find out who in our parish reads the Bible!"

The rules were simple. Five rounds, 25 questions and one minute per question. Bibles were allowed and it seemed all too easy. The top six teams stood to gain prizes.

However, it was not smooth sailing once the quiz began. There were quite a few tricky questions, which raised laughter levels in the hall. The time to answer the last five questions was reduced to 30 seconds per question and this added to the tension and excitement.

When the marks were tallied, the Secondary Catechism Team

took third place, IHM's Catholic Faith Exploration's (CaFE) Cafe Latte the second and walking away with the top prize was the Young Adult's group, who called themselves YAK.

Said Bianca Chan of the Young Adults Community: "It was good

to see so many people down for an evening of fun and to really figure out how much we know about the Bible. I think it revealed to a lot of us that maybe we may not know as much as we thought we did. It definitely inspired us to go back and spend more time reading the Bible."

Parish priest Fr. Adrian Yeo was delighted with the turnout. "It is a good thing that slowly we are trying to get people down for the social nights," he said after the event. "The number of people that turned up tonight was really quite encouraging."

It was clear that the bible quiz was a tremendous success. Already, some are asking whether this will become part of the annual parish calendar.

By the way, the headline of this article was one of the questions at the quiz. If you are still struggling for the answer, ask Moses. ♥



Winners from the YAK team with Fr. Adrian.

# IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



**Ordination anniversary:** Our parish priest Fr. Adrian Yeo marked his 15th anniversary of priestly ordination on Nov 6. He celebrated a special mass in the evening, which was attended by his family members and friends. On Nov 9, after the 11.15am mass, he hosted lunch to parishioners to mark the occasion. ♥



**A year on:** The editorial team of IHM Heartbeat (above) wishes all readers a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with God's blessings. If you are willing to share your talents with this team, please do write in to us at [heartbeat@ihm.sg](mailto:heartbeat@ihm.sg). ♥



**Fund-raising drive:** Several church ministries came together on Sept 28 to raise funds for our Mother Church, the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd. Putting up stalls in the canteen and in the church piazza, they sold home-cooked food, tidbits, fashion accessories and items fit for the garden. Donation boxes were also passed around. The response was overwhelming.

The organising committee had targeted to raise \$15,000 but to everyone's joy, a whopping \$53,740 was collected. It is evident that IHM parishioners have a big heart when it comes to doing their bit for a good cause. ♥



**WATCH their lips:** Members of the Lectors' Ministry are all smiles during one of their regular fellowship sessions. They utilise the occasion to share the word of God and promote bonding. ♥



**HAPPINESS is...** Students in Tanjong Pinang display their certificates after their exams. Many of them were sponsored by IHM parishioners through the Epiphany's Sponsor-a-Child programme during Advent 2013. ♥



**WALK in the park:** It was bonding time for members of the Charismatic Prayer Group on Oct 18 as they went on a walk at the MacRitchie Reservoir. ♥



**IHM Jollies:** In November, the Jollies went on an outing to the Church of the Holy Cross. They also visited the IMM shopping mall in Jurong. ♥



**BLOOD donation drive:** IHM's 11th Bloodmobile Outreach gave a new lease of life to about 300 people in need of blood. We thank all those who selflessly came forward on Sept 14 to donate blood. ♥



**ALL Souls Day:** Hundreds turned up on All Souls Day to pray for their dear departed. They lit candles and prayed for the souls. They were assisted by members of Our Lady of Sorrows group. ♥

# Making marriages work better

By MATTHEW TAY



**T**HE front pews of the church are normally not full during the Sunday evening mass. But on Oct 12, the front rows were all taken up by couples, young and old. It took a while for the rest of the parishioners in the church that Sunday to realise that these couples were there to renew their vows.

They were from the Couple Empowerment Programme (CEP) and had just finished their weekend retreat.

"The idea was to return the couples to their parish community, renewed and empowered," said Ying Ying Thio, one half of the couple which founded the CEP. "The vows are a powerful way to reinforce their commitment to continue to work at their marriage. These couples have been returning for the talks conducted over eight weeks. That alone was a clear act of love," she said.

Said Cynthia Soh, who attended the CEP together with Kenneth Teo, her husband of 16 years: "The renewal of vows was extremely special. We felt that it was important that we exchanged our marriage vows once more, and the difference was that every word we spoke carried so much more depth. The sense of commitment we felt was so much more than even on our wedding day."

The CEP, which started in 2003, was in response to the gentle prompting of the Spirit to start a ministry for couples. The founding couple, Bernard and Ying Ying, initially were part of a ministry for single youths. However, after 25 years in the youth ministry, they realised that many young people had issues with their families. Therefore

it made sense for them to start a ministry for married couples.

Said the couple: "We are passionate about this ministry because we know so many couples are hurting and are in need of healing. We know that this outreach is a gift of the Spirit that can bring healing to couples and their families. And we are not alone. There have been many couples who have joined us in CEP and the community has grown over the years."

CEP aims to provide couples with a post-marriage formation and catechesis to strengthen their marriage in the midst of modern day challenges.

Said Ying Ying: "We know of couples who were struggling with third parties, addictions or were on the verge of divorce. With the counselling support from the Family Life Society and the outreach of the CEP community, they have found new hope."

The CEP ministry has been presenting its sessions at a number of parishes in Singapore since 2006. At IHM, 33 couples signed up, with 16 of them from our parish, for the CEP programme which runs for eight weekly sessions.

The sessions are built on the tasks of a Christian family as taught in Familiaris Consortio. The eight sessions were focused on the first task, building an authentic community of persons, starting with husband and wife relationship.

"Children need a secure and loving home environment to grow and mature into emotionally well balanced individuals who can strive to achieve their highest potential," said Bernard. "Parenting skills must

be exercised in the context of a warm and loving home environment that respects the kids for who they are and in a family that embraces the wider family and community," he added.

Kevin Suryadi and Evelyn Tan, a couple from IHM who have been married for close to five years, felt that the CEP was a meaningful exercise. "We signed up firstly to strengthen our marriage and to prepare for our first baby's arrival," shared the couple. "We thought it would be good to learn from experienced parents the potential challenges in a marriage in order for us to mentally prepare ourselves."

Through the sessions, the couple learned to be grateful and patient to each other. "It (the sessions) further strengthened our bond as a couple and brought back some loving memories, which is a reminder of why we got married in the first place," Kevin recalled with fondness. "It also highlights certain issues or potential issues that we may face. It reinforces that we need to always work on our communication and to ask for God's grace to be life-giving to each other."

The effect of CEP goes beyond personal reasons and some IHM attendees will be starting a family life group after the sessions ended. When she heard of this, Ying Ying was thrilled. "That is really the purpose of CEP, to build communities who will go on to support each other, be nurtured in their faith formation and to be better spouses and parents," she said.

CEP will host its next programme at the Divine Mercy church in early 2015. ♥



## Youth in Action... At YM Leaders' Meeting

By JOYCE TAN



**W**ITH the year drawing to a close, about 20 youth leaders from the various groups in the Youth Ministry (YM) came together for a day of recollection on Nov 1. The time of recollection included reflection and sharing, lunch, and planning for the upcoming year.

Recognizing the importance of discipleship and a vibrant spiritual life in guiding Christian leadership, the day started with the youth leaders reflecting on their spiritual lives, personal encounters with God, and how they had used their gifts and talents for His service.

After lunch, the leaders discussed the direction to be set for the year ahead. One theme that was repeatedly emphasised was for the youth in the different groups to identify more strongly, and be more involved, with the YM as a whole, rather than to segregate and focus solely on their own groups, acknowledging that everyone is a brother or sister in God's family. Other challenges raised included the tight schedules that the youth have due to school work and activities.

Wesley Lye, from the Post-Confirmation group, was glad for

this gathering of youth leaders, "With all the leaders being so busy with both work and church commitments, it was really heartwarming to see everyone set aside one entire Saturday to come together and do what the first community in Acts of the Apostles did – pray together, break bread, and most importantly, share lives. Even as we try to build up this community of believers among the youth in IHM, I look forward to the day when we can as one church truly call ourselves one body of Christ, and a community of saints!" ♥

## Youth in Action... As Child Minders!

By JOYCE TAN

**I**F you stepped into IHM during the weekends and Friday evenings when the Couple Empowerment Programme (CEP) was happening, you might have mistaken IHM to be a childcare centre! Children were running along the corridors of the parish pastoral centre and doing various activities in the classrooms.

The community spirit of the parish came alive when volunteers from various parish groups, such as the Liturgy of the Word for Children (LOWC), Bible Apostolate Team (BAT) and Youth Ministry (YM), generously gave up their precious weekends and evenings to support the couples attending CEP, by babysitting the couples' children. The children played toys with the volunteers, did art-and-craft, played ball games and watched movies.

With the ages ranging from 5 month old babies to 12 year old children, many hands were needed as the volunteers had to brave challenges including separation issues, hyperactivity, vomiting, incessant crying, the need for attention, and help with homework.

Child minding had been started as the CEP organisers recognised that there are couples who wish to attend the programme, but would be unable to go as they could not leave the children alone at home. To Sharon, a volunteer from the LOWC, child-minding had been a meaningful experience, "Personally, I had gone through the CEP programme... A lot of work goes behind the scenes in terms of preparation of the programme. In getting involved in this, it is my little bit of contribution to the efforts of those called in this ministry to help those couples who have also put aside their egos, to come together to learn from and share with each other. Needless to say, I was also very uplifted by our youths and their uniqueness that they brought to the programme." ♥



# Spaniard's 40 years of priestly life in Asia

by DOMINIC ABRAHAM



**W**HEN Fr. Antonio Gonsalez was in the third year of his theology studies in Spain, he was told that he will need to work in the Philippines after his ordination. But he had to learn English. So he spent the last year of his Dominican priestly studies in Ireland and was ordained in July 1974.

A year later, Fr. Antonio arrived on the island of Batanes, the northernmost province of the Philippines with 15,000 people, mostly poor farmers. This was to become his home for the next 24 years.

Being one of the five Dominican priests on the island, Fr. Antonio soon began to understand that he had to take on many different roles to satisfy the various needs of the people. He became the 'go-to' person for all things religious and otherwise. And in doing so became an integral part of the lives of the people on the Island, who looked upon him with awe.

Life was tough. Those days there was no electricity on the island. The day began very early, with mass sometimes at 5 am. And sunset meant the day was done with. It was a place "where time didn't count," he says. The island would be battered by 10-12 typhoons every year, and soon just like the people of Batanes, Fr. Antonio also got used to this aspect of nature.

To be able to better serve the people, the bible, the liturgical texts and sacrament were painstakingly translated to Ivatan, the local dialect

over the course of many years. "It was very fulfilling and rewarding to be the only channel of spiritual enrichment to the people," he says of his long stint in the Philippines.

Fr. Antonio came to Singapore in January 2000, the first Dominican on these shores, when he was asked to set up a home for the order. He spent the first few months with the Redemptorists before fellow Dominican priest Fr. Fernando Munoz joined him in March the same year. The two lived in Bukit Timah for a while looking for a permanent abode. That was when Fr. James Yeo, who was then parish priest of the Immaculate Heart of Mary church (IHM), asked Fr. Antonio requested his help. With that began his association of over 14 years with the people of IHM. It was also fortunate that the two priests found a home in Serangoon Gardens, to set up the Dominican Order. It is called St. Francis De Capillas House after the first Dominican martyr who was canonised in the same year that the Dominican order was set up in Singapore.

In the beginning, Fr. Antonio served at IHM every second weekend, "when masses were held in the parish hall," due to renovation of the church, he remembers. During this time, on the request of the Bishop, the Dominicans received a couple of 'fixed' apostolates. For over 12 years Fr. Antonio celebrated daily mass for the Missionaries of Charity sisters till the sisters moved from Thomson

Road to Jurong. Along with that, he also celebrated weekend masses at the Good Shepherd Cathedral, until the church was closed for renovation last November. Since then, he is seen almost every weekend at IHM assisting with the liturgical services and meeting the parishioners. He also helps with the Spanish Mass celebrated every third Sunday at the Stella Maris Chapel, for people from his native part of the world.

Fr. Antonio, who was born in a village close to the city of Palencia (Spain) in April 1948, is one of six children. His parents devoted three of them to the service of God -- he has an older sister who is a Dominican nun and a younger brother who is also a Dominican priest. He says that having an uncle who was a Dominican priest could have been the reason why the Dominicans benefitted from three Gonsalez vocations!

When asked about his impression of IHM, he said "it feels like a real home to me, because of the way the parishioners have accepted me, their friendship, and their immense generosity. It is a vibrant parish with plenty of activities." And although he has tried not to get attached to the place, to "avoid the trauma of separation" based on previous experiences, their love and has made that very difficult for him.

Football is his favourite sport. The Spaniard is a faithful follower of his national side and tries to watch them play on TV once in a while. Having lived a true missionary's life among the people of Batanes, he says "I eat anything that is available, but Mee Reebus is the exception, as I ate it every night for dinner for a year on arriving in Singapore".

Will Singapore continue to remain his home? He is hopeful that on account of his age, he might not be required to move elsewhere but "obedience is key, and if my superiors need my services in any other part of the world, I will be sure to go".

The next time you see Fr. Antonio at IHM, be sure to say hello, as he enjoys the conversations, but be careful not to offer him any Mee Reebus. ♥



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