



IHM celebrates Feast Day 2015

By JOYCE TAN & MATTHEW TAY

THE grotto (above, right) was decked with flowers of all hues. The pews were packed with parishioners. And there was a festive mood in the air as the parish celebrated the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on June 13. As in previous years, there was a triduum in the days leading up to the feast day.

Fr. Luke, who spoke on the first day, said our personal faith and collective faith as a people was crucial in building a Christian community. He said that faith enables a response to God's call by putting aside one's own preferences and to see God in others, which then brings forth community involvement inspired by the Holy Spirit. Carissa Sim, a 19-year-old parishioner, felt that because community living was opposed to individualism which

the world promotes, Christians can be the salt of the earth.

On the second day, Fr. John Paul, from the Church of St. Mary of the Angels, outlined the concrete works a community should carry out. Our Christian identity is accompanied by actions such as healing the sick, curing lepers, raising the dead, and casting out demons, which give hope to the community we live in. Similarly, the celebration of the Eucharist, done in the context of a community, gives hope for eternal life.

Fr. Clifford Augustine, also from St. Mary of the Angels, spoke on the third day. His focus was on the feast of the Sacred Heart, which fell on that day. He said that growing up in a traditional Catholic family he was often reminded of the fear of God and less of God's love. Years later, as a priest, when he spent three

years in Pakistan's Karachi, he saw God's love in the poor, in people who lived in fear of their lives.

Monsignor Ambrose Vaz was the main celebrant at the feast day mass. Other priests who concelebrated the mass with him were Fr. Adrian Yeo, Fr. Luke Fong, Fr. Antonio, Fr. Jeannequin and Fr. Robertus Sarwiseso. In his homily Monsignor Vaz pointed to the Gospel of St. Luke, which mentions how Jesus got separated from his parents and was found in the temple debating with the elders. Mother Mary did not blame St. Joseph for losing Jesus; instead both went looking for him. The lesson for us, he said, is to not let our mistakes cause us to venture further from God and help one another stay on track.

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The church piazza became alive as soon as the mass ended. Every table was taken up as more than 800 parishioners feasted on a sumptuous array of food. In addition, people took up space in the canteen and St. Gregory's Hall to meet up with friends over the dinner. Once dinner was out of the way, those gathered at the piazza were treated to some 'in-house' entertainment.

A call for talented parishioners had been put out a few weeks before the Feast Day, and four gracious volunteers agreed to entertain the gathering with their talents. Fr. Luke surprised all with an Italian song, and followed it up with John Legend's All of Me while Fr. Adrian was the first to be 'saboed' during the free and easy portion of the night and sang his version of Memory from the musical Cats.

Apart from the singing, there were also other forms of entertainment, such as indoor football and mini golf for the youngsters. The children were not forgotten and they had a bouncy castle to expend their energies when not munching on popcorn or licking their way through cotton candy. Everyone left with a smile on their faces, with some really exhausted by all the fun, when the night came to a close. ♥



Photographers: Richard Koh, Danny Lee, Raymond Lee, Thomas Koh

Mum inspires his conversion

By DOMINIC ABRAHAM

NO angel appeared in his dream. No 'water into wine' miracle transpired. Instead it was through a simple wish of his mother, that Clarence Michael Lim was called to be a member of God's family.

A seemingly unassuming 37-year-old man, with a quick and bright smile, moved from Malaysia to live and work in Singapore three years ago. He joined his mother and sister who were by then residing in Singapore. His mother was already a baptised Catholic when Clarence was born.

As a child Clarence attended a few Bible classes, because his friends used to attend the classes, but he grew up as a free thinker. "I didn't know what a mass was, or what happens in church," he said, while assuring that while he knew there was a God, he didn't think too much about who it was or in what form it was.

Clarence's mother was undergoing treatment for a serious illness in Singapore when he moved here.

She used to be an active member at Immaculate Heart of Mary parish, and was dear to quite a few parishioners. A couple of years ago, she succumbed to her illness. It was then that Clarence, who shared an extremely close relationship with his mother, began to visit the church, and "simply sit in church and let the atmosphere soak in, even though I didn't know what was going on". He kept returning time and again, as he liked the sense of peace he experienced while at church.

During these visits to IHM, his mother's friends, and even his sister, would mention to him that his mother always hoped that Clarence would be a baptised Catholic one day. That was all he needed to enrol himself in the RCIA. This Easter gone by, he was baptised and became a member of God's family, much like his sister who was also baptised at IHM a few years ago.

Asked if anything had changed for him since the baptism, Clarence said: "I am much calmer these days,



in my thinking, and in my reactions. Things I could not let go of in the past; I have an inner strength now, to not let it affect me". He is also particularly happy that the RCIA does follow up gatherings with the group even after the baptism. There is a sense of belonging because of it, he added.

The friendships forged during the year-long course have remained intact and Clarence, along with a few of his new-found friends, makes it a point to attend mass every Sunday, and meet for lunch after that without fail.

The call to join God's family can come from anywhere, including in the form of a fervent wish of a mother. Clarence answered that call wholeheartedly and became a child of God, and in doing so demonstrated the love he had for his mother. ♥

Easter delights

By MATTHEW TAY

PARISHIONERS started flocking to the Church Hall as early as 7pm on April 10 to get together with other parishioners and celebrate Easter. The Easter Party, organised mainly by the Neighbourhood Christian Community (NCC), was part of the bi-monthly Parish Nights at the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The night was planned to entertain parishioners both young and old. Balloon sculpturing and games were organised for the children while older members took part in Bingo. There was also music to keep everyone entertained. Popular numbers like My Girl, I Can See Clearly Now and Stand by Me got the crowd tapping their feet. That was not all.



Fr. Adrian Yeo and Fr. Luke Fong belted out a few numbers to loud applause. The night ended with the overly-excited children bursting the piñata for candies.

Catherine Chua from the NCC, who spearheaded the planning of the Easter Party, said that this was only successful because of the

combined efforts of the various parish groups.

The occasion was also used to celebrate Fr. Adrian's birthday, which fell on the same day. Said Fr. Adrian: "It was an enjoyable night. It was nice to see a lot of families coming together, especially on a Friday night." ♥



Building communities at IHM

By JOYCE TAN

"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers... praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2: 42, 47).

OVER the past few months, Fr. Adrian has been meeting various individual church ministries and communities to facilitate a reflection session on community building, which is an initiative by the Parish Pastoral Council. To start off, the scripture passage from Acts 2: 42-47, describing the communal way of life embraced by the early Christians, was read. A video made by our own parishioners, featuring interviews with parishioners on their thoughts of what community is, and the impact of community on their lives, was also shown. Questions for reflection and sharing were then given. During the sharing, parishioners shared about their own unique journey and experience in the group, such as the reason for joining the group initially, and the motivation to stay on subsequently. Social support arising from close friendships formed among members, and a willingness to serve the church, were commonly

expressed. In addition, they also shared about their ideals regarding community, and the challenges of being in community, such as having to juggle multiple personal commitments and managing differences among members.

The community building reflection was conducted with the hope of transforming existing church groups into Christian communities modelled upon the example of the early Christians. This is in line with the Archdiocesan vision for the Church in Singapore to be a community of communities. Currently, although many church groups – as ministries – recognize and excel in their functional role of providing a particular service to the church, greater attention could be placed on developing their inherent role as a community that nurtures the spiritual life of its members.

In Pope John Paul II's *Novo Millennio Ineunte (At the Beginning of the New Millennium)*, he explained: "A spirituality of communion also

means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as "those who are a part of me"". In being aware of this spiritual solidarity with others, we would be "able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship". This echoes the Biblical term *koinonia*, which encompasses meanings of unity and participation.

Parishioners who attended the sessions with Fr. Adrian felt that it had been helpful in steering ministries towards community building. One parishioner Francis Tan felt that the session helped to foster a greater sense of the need for community beyond the carrying out of usual functional duties. It is certainly hoped that increased awareness for community will mark the beginning, as we progress on this constant journey towards the authentic communion envisioned by the late Pope John Paul II. ♥

IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



R **CIA:** Commissioning of RCIA sponsors and helpers was held in May. All of them pledged to journey a year with the new inquirers. They are at the commissioning by Fr. Adrian. ♥



R **CIA:** The new journey began on May 6. About 30 inquirers and confirmands have signed up this year. ♥



S **Society of St. Vincent de Paul:** Our parish hosted the SSVP's annual mass for its Friends-in-Need (FINs). Archbishop William Goh was the main celebrant and SSVP members and FINs from all over Singapore took part. ♥



B **Bible Apostolate Team:** Some of the 40 members attending the 24-week BAT session on the Great Bible Adventure. The members seen here are part of smaller groups created for sharing. ♥



I **IHM Lectors:** Our lectors are an integral part of each mass. While we usually see them in pairs at masses, there is actually a group that delegates the duties among themselves. Here, they are breaking the word and sharing a meal as a community. ♥



I **Infant Baptism Ministry:** Eager parents and Godparents listening attentively to Charles Dorai as he briefed them before the baptism of infants in May. ♥



F **First Holy Communion:** P3 students of the parish preparing for their first confession during the first holy communion retreat (above), and on their big day in church on June 7th (below). ♥



Fr. Adrian visits Tanjung Pinang with Epiphany members

By NICHOLAS LIM



EARLY this year, Fr. Adrian Yeo asked IHM's Epiphany members: "Has the money been put to good use? Are the children benefitting from our parish's goodwill?" He was referring to the Lenten Project 2014. This was a project to improve the living and classroom conditions of the students in Taroka, Rempang and Tanjung Pinang in neighbouring Indonesia.

With these questions in mind, Fr. Adrian accompanied Epiphany's TeachNLearn group on April 26 to visit two asramas (student hostels), St. Tarcisus and St. Marie Goretti in Tanjung Pinang, which were the main beneficiaries of the funds. Mr Edward Lee, our parish finance controller, was also part of the group.

The group was welcomed by the hostel master of St. Tarcisus (boys asrama), Pak Nando and Sr. Ivon, the hostel mistress of St. Marie Goretti. They then met the students who attend the English classes. The students were dressed in their Sunday best to welcome the group from IHM. Also present were volunteers from France's Missions Etrangères de Paris (Paris Foreign Missions Society) at the asrama. They are young adults

who had signed up to live and help out in the asramas for a year.

Sr. Ivon said the asramas were very appreciative of the help extended by IHM parishioners. Fr. Adrian and Mr Lee were told by the hostel masters that enrollment for both asramas had gone up sharply in 2015. They then toured both asramas with the respective hostel masters and MEP volunteers. At St. Tarcisus, they were shown the upgraded dormitory with fans and sturdier beds.

The welfare of the girls living in St. Marie Goretti was Fr. Adrian's main concern. In the past, Epiphany had told him that the girls' hostel, run by the Congregation of Jesus Mary & Joseph (JMJ) sisters, had little funding coming from their Provincial Headquarters in Manado, Sulawesi. They lacked clean water. The water they got was from rainwater and a run-down well. Security of the asrama was a concern to the sisters, and they suffered from frequent brownouts due to uncertain electricity supply. They also lacked proper cupboards. With the funds collected in 2014, Sr. Ivon managed to buy a wrought iron gate for the front entrance and a small power

generator. The nun was prudent with the money when it came to the cupboards. She just had the locks and handles changed instead of buying new ones. The well was repaired but no one was prepared to trek down the jungle path that led to the well as snakes were reported being seen there. Mr Lee, who had been diligently ticking off the inspection sheet, decided he would rely on the photographs that were taken earlier.

After the inspection, the group visited the classrooms. Certificates of Participation for a recent English examination were given out that day by Fr. Adrian to the students.

On the journey back in the evening, Fr. Adrian observed that the asrama administrators were prudent in their spending and had used the funds according to the donors' intention, which is to improve the living conditions of the children. He also discussed with TeachNLearn volunteers how best to use the remaining funds for the asramas. Mr Lee noted that Epiphany had kept a proper record of the funds. ♥

Nicholas Lim is the coordinator of Epiphany.



Fr. Adrian with Hostel Master - Pak Nando & Volunteer MEP Martin.



Sr. Ivonne showing the keys to the new doors.



Fr. Adrian giving out Certificates of Participation to students.

We are not coy about sharing

By REBECCA CHAN

COY (Community of Youth) was born when a group of young people realized the need to start a post-Confirmation community and came up with some ideas. It was the openness and enthusiasm of the 2014 batch of Confirmands that was the inspiration for those individual ideas to grow into a shared calling. Despite family commitments and commitments at school and work, we felt that we should not procrastinate any longer and instead simply start the journey.

We are a community of around 20 youth, mostly aged 16 to 18. All post-Confirmation youth are welcome to join this group. When we meet, we start with breakfast at 10am, followed by a session at 11am in the Upper Room. You will probably hear us before you see us!

Sessions usually start off with check-in sharing of our week, followed by a themed session or breaking of



COY members at their retreat in March.



COY members at Bishan Park for reflection and games during their retreat in March.

the Word. Following our retreat in March, which focused on experiencing the love of the Father through prayer, nature and community, we have been reflecting on the writings of St. Alphonsus de Liguori on God's love.

The check-in portion of our sessions are both a challenge and a joy. In the age of social media, it is easy to tell people about our life events, but daunting to reflect on and share our most personal God experiences, as well as our lowest moments. But we have come to find that by sharing the most vulnerable aspects of our lives, not only are our burdens shared, but our little joys also uplift our brothers and sisters.

We also have to work hard to stay focused on personal sharing, which is often a great source of fun when we digress. But perhaps this is the greatest sign of us being Christ's love to each other in a community, that we make the effort to quieten ourselves and to simply listen, accept and love.

And this is what inspires us on our journey together in this community, each one of us is unique (and a bit crazy) – we see ourselves shrink and Christ grow, as we become the loving face of God to each other.

As in Pope John Paul II's words: "Love of Christ does not distract us from interest in others, but rather invites us to responsibility for them, to the exclusion of no one." ♥

Rebecca Chan is a member of COY and a Secondary 2 catechist.

Horseback or motorbike, no problem for Sr. Rosalind

by PATRICK JONAS



MOST of you hear the name of this country once in four years. Paraguay becomes a talking point for a few weeks during the football World Cup and vanishes only to reappear four years later. But to Sr. Rosalind Chan, 76, this distant land was home for nearly 15 years. Life was harsh. She lived among poor farmers far away from civilisation, in a village no missionary had been for 20 years.

She arrived in this village, about 300km from Paraguay's capital Asuncion, in 1980 after first learning Spanish in Spain and then the native Indian language Guarani in the capital city for six months. In the village, she had several roles to play and they included breaking of the word, distributing communion, being a midwife and performing minor surgery. She also had to run a dispensary 12km away. The mode of transport initially was a horse. When she was thrown off the horse three times, she tried hitching a cart to the stubborn animal but this experiment did not last long as the horse would have none of it and threw her off again. When she explained her predicament to the bishop in the city, he gave her an old motorcycle. Soon she was 'phutt phutting' around, attending to the needs of the locals who were poor farmers who farmed on borrowed land, giving half the produce to the owners.

Food was tapioca – for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Sundays were different. She and her three fellow missionary nuns, all Latin

Americans, cooked a meal of sweet potato, rice and green or red beans. Meat was a rarity. When they were able to get meat, the nuns would preserve it with salt and have a slice once in a way. Eggs came from the chickens they reared. "Fruit came from the orange trees and a mango tree in our compound," said Sr. Rosalind, who would visit Singapore once in five years with the journey via Brazil and Hawaii taking three days.

Once here, she would spend a month and a half eating all the food she missed to her heart's content. But the harsh living conditions in Paraguay took a toll on her health and she was asked to stay back in Singapore during one such visit in 1995 on doctors' advice.

Sr. Rosalind belongs to the order of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM), who have a house right behind our church on Kovan Road where she is based. Growing up in the Lorong Low Koon area, she wanted to join the Franciscan Missionaries of Divine Motherhood when she was 15 but her mother was not too keen. Her mother was her heroine. When Sr. Rosalind was five, her father was killed during the Japanese occupation. Her mother had to raise her and her five siblings washing clothes and selling kueh.

She spoke to her parish priest who advised her to keep praying so that one day her mother would relent. Sometime later, the FMM sisters landed in Singapore after they were driven out of China. They started a dispensary at the Nativity church.

Sr. Rosalind volunteered at the dispensary recording temperature and the blood pressure of people who came there. Around a year later the nuns invited her to visit their convent on Holland Road and "I fell in love with the order".

When her mother finally agreed, she joined the order in 1957 and was sent to Petaling Jaya and from there to Australia to be trained as a nurse. After spending six years there, she returned to Petaling Jaya and worked at the Assunta Hospital until the early 1970s. She was then sent to Scotland to be trained as a midwife. On her return she was put in charge of the maternity section of the hospital. In 1980, all foreign nuns were asked to leave Malaysia. That led to Sr. Rosalind being sent to Paraguay.

On her return from Paraguay she took over running the FILODEP (Filipino Ongoing Development Programme) at the Holland Road convent. This is a programme that conducts courses for Filipino helpers on Sundays. The courses range from baking, dress-making, computer lessons, facial and body massages, hairstyling and international cooking. Around 400 girls attend the courses, which the sister continues to head.

In 2011, Sr. Rosalind was diagnosed with stage two cancer of the colon. Part of her colon and liver were removed and two years later she had to have her knees replaced. That explains why you see her with a walking stick moving around with a slight stoop. ♥

Do you enjoy writing and connecting with people in the Parish? The IHM HeartBeat team would love to hear from you! Email us at heartbeat@ihm.sg



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