



IHM Celebrates SG50

By MATTHEW TAY

EVERY other month, the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary hosts a social night. The aim of this exercise is to get parishioners to socialise and get to know each other better. Since August was the month of Singapore's 50th birthday, the Parish Pastoral Council decided to do something different.

"We do a parish prayer and social night every alternate month. Since this August was special, we thought we should do something to celebrate Singapore's 50th birthday," said Bianca Chan, a member of the PPC. "It just became a matter of how we could celebrate together with Singapore".

After the usual evening mass at 6:15pm, parishioners congregated in the canteen where they were treated to a pot-luck

feast. Everyone present contributed to the large variety of food which ranged from home-cooked food such as mee goreng and outside food like bee hoon to fried carrot cake, paos and even Texas Chicken.

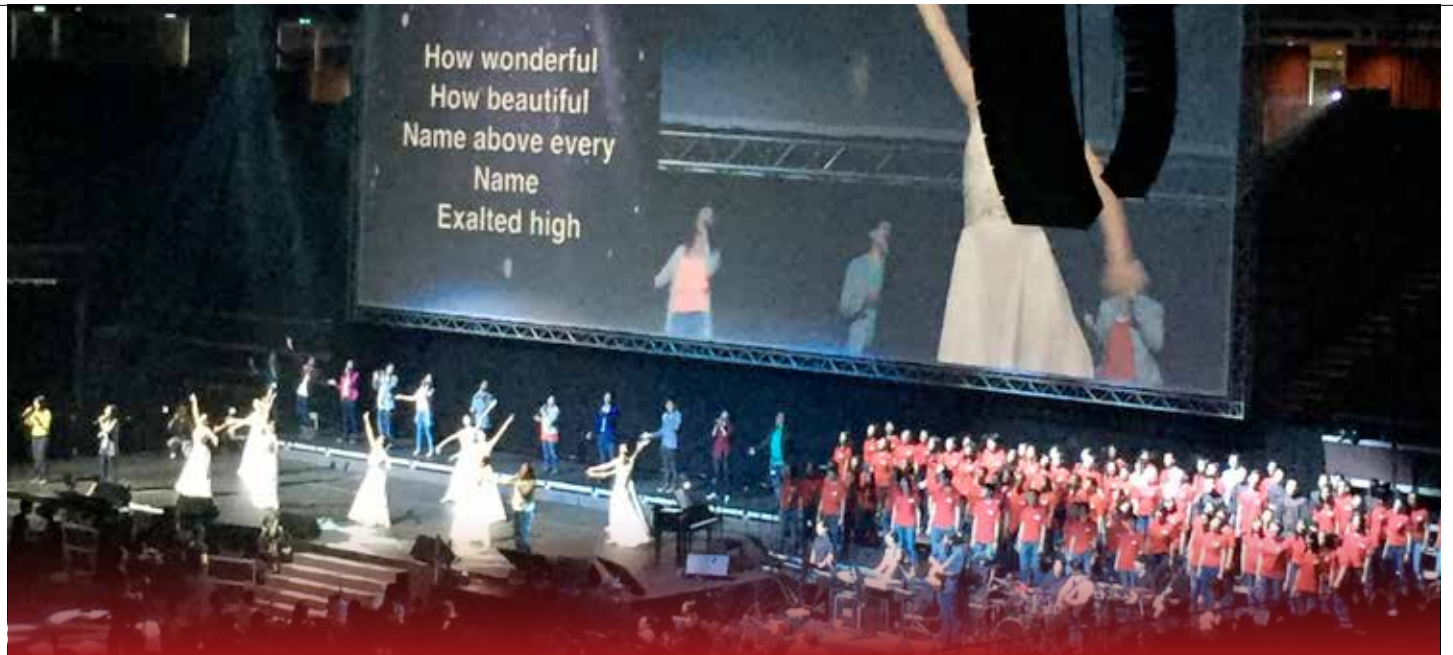
After the meal, the parishioners moved to the piazza. Led initially by Fr. Luke Fong and then by Fr. Cary Chan, the congregation started paying homage to the nation by singing National Day classics such as 'Count on Me Singapore', 'Stand Up for Singapore', 'Home' and 'Where I Belong'. Also played during the sing-along was Corrinne May's new music video 'Bless Our Singapore', which she sang for the first time during the SG50 mass on July 4.

While this was going on, several parishioners both young and old took turns to proudly

announce their devotion to the Catholic faith. They joined the #proud2bCatholic movement by taking photos of themselves holding a piece of paper on which was written their name and the words "Proud to be Catholic". The photos were then uploaded on to Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. The priests in our parish also joined them later in this exercise, which is an evangelisation movement initiated by the Archdiocese.

To top off the night in fantastic style, the parish provided 'fireworks' in the form of sparklers which were handed out to the children who had a great time running around waving them. It was a true vision of what Singapore and the Catholic Church was all about, a bright and sparkling future. ♥





Experiencing the SG50 Mass

By MATTHEW TAY

BY the time the SG50 mass ended, the common feeling echoed by many who had watched the proceedings that Saturday was: "Proud to be a Catholic".

There were two other events on either side of the mass on July 4, which was attended by nearly 10,000 Catholics at the Singapore Indoor Stadium.

Despite the venue hosting a WWE Live event less than 48 hours before, the hardworking committee from the Archdiocese of Singapore transformed the Indoor Stadium into a house of the Lord for Catholics from across Singapore to attend the celebration to mark Singapore's golden jubilee and give thanks to God. The five-hour-plus event was split into three segments, celebrating the past, sanctifying the present and envisioning the future.

Parishioner Janice Teo, who was lucky enough to receive tickets to the event, said: "I just wanted to be part of this celebration to give praise and thank God for the blessings He has given our country."

'Our Catholic Light', a 30 minute video about the history of the Catholic Church in Singapore, was a crowd favourite. Said Germaine Kwek, who attended the event with her RCIY community: "It struck me that our faith has contributed so much to the foundation and progress

of Singapore. As Catholics today, we should also do our part for society, just like how the early Catholics had done for Singapore. Most importantly, I saw God in each of the Catholics through their passion to serve, their perseverance in spite of difficulties and their love for all."

Janice echoed her sentiments. "The video was enlightening and made me feel extremely proud to be a Catholic!"

The video was followed by a tribute to deceased and senior priests. This was followed by Archbishop William Goh's address and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's speech. Singer-songwriter Corrinne May, sang her way into the hearts of all present with three songs which included one she wrote specially for the SG50 mass titled 'Bless Our Singapore'.

The mass, which was the second segment, was celebrated by Archbishop William Goh along with a large number of priests. "As we celebrated mass together, there was a sense of unity and love. That feeling was absolutely amazing," Germaine recalled.

The final segment featured, as MC Joe Augustine called it, an explosion of creative talent with our very own seminarian Brother Nicholas Lye, joined by various parish youths in this celebratory segment.

Sharing his experience on

how he got involved in the SG50 mass, Brother Nicholas said: "The organisers of the SG50 Mass had approached the seminarians as a sign of solidarity and collaboration between priests, religious and the laity. Given that I was involved in some dance performances back in my school days, I was rather open to the idea of being a part of the performance."

Brother Nicholas also recalled the enthusiasm of the youths he worked with. "Rehearsing with the youths who displayed so much energy and passion and joy really rubbed off on me and made me equally enthusiastic and excited about this event, even though I struggled a little to remember the steps and move my stiff arms and legs that had not danced for more than 10 years!"

Brother Nicholas also spoke about nerves before the final performance. "Despite some being worried about their dance skills, once it was time to get on stage, the whole atmosphere just took away all our worries and fears. It was certainly an evening to remember for those of us who had the opportunity to be on stage and really give glory to God through our dance, and being instruments of God to help everyone share in the joy," he said.

Many Catholics are still talking about that day. ❤️

Giving Back to “Builders” of Singapore

By MATTHEW TAY

WE all live in beautiful houses and apartments but we seldom realise that it took a lot of people months of work in harsh sunny conditions to build them. Recognising the contributions of these “builders”, the Society of St. Vincent De Paul (SSVP) and the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrant and Itinerant People (ACMI) worked with our church as well as Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier and St. Mary of the Angels to get together to hand out gifts to migrant workers in our midst. This was part of Singapore’s SG50 Jubilee celebration.

During the weekend of the July 24-25, collection boxes were stationed outside the church at the end of every mass for parishioners to contribute to the SG50 migrant workers food basket. At every Mass, the priests of our church shared their thoughts on the importance of the job that the migrant workers do for us. Fr. Luke Fong even took it one step further, personally carrying the donation box

after mass. A total of \$17,650.45 was collected.

Later, on Aug 8, around 45 youths from our parish Youth Ministry (YM) made their way to Westlite Dormitory in Mandai to help pack, transport and distribute the food baskets to the various dormitories. IHM took charge of one block that consists of 12 floors which house around 5,300 workers.

When asked how this food basket project reached the church, Shiam Jerome, one of the IHM YM coordinators said: “We were actually recommended to SSVP. It was actually a little by chance that it got directed to us.” He added: “I think it’s always essential to be kept rooted and realized how blessed we are. These migrant workers give up their lives back home to come here and work.”

Ivy Lam, another YM coordinator, agreed. “It is important that we acknowledge the migrant workers’ contributions to our society. They are responsible for literally laying the bricks and paving the roads for us which their own family



members don’t get to enjoy.”

Francis Xavier, one of the youth volunteers, spoke of his delight in participating in the event. “It is a good way to be of service to the community,” he reflected. “Many workers have a less than favourable living condition, so doing this food basket is a way to give back and be of good service to those who built our country.”

This was also a good learning opportunity for the volunteers. “Youths today are living in a very blessed generation and such outreach activities will make them realise how blessed they are,” Shiam added. “Also working together as a community helps bonding among the youths.”

Chimed in Ivy: “Not forgetting that they could see a bit more of the Catholic Church at an Archdiocesan level!” ♥



Left: Volunteers packing the food baskets. Middle: Fr. Luke helping to collect funds. right: Members of the Youth Ministry who helped to pack and distribute the food baskets

Welcome Kit



Every third Sunday during mass, starting August, our priests welcome those who are new to the parish. They are then handed a Welcome booklet prepared by the church.

The booklet contains essential information that anyone new to the parish will need. In addition to mass timings, it has brief descriptions of our priests, information on baptism, catechism, who to contact in case of a death in the family or if someone needs last rites and several other useful bits of information. These booklets are placed at the entrance of the church. This is for anyone new visiting the church and wishes to know more about our parish. ♥

Why we need to build an IHM community

By JOYCE TAN

IN 1 Corinthians 12, it is said that everyone is gifted by the Holy Spirit with different gifts and talents. It is meant for different kinds of work and service, though always in the same Lord. As such, St. Paul points out the need for everyone to come together as one community in the Lord, bringing individual unique gifts to the service of the one Body. This is the essence of the communitarian nature of Christianity, similar to the ancient Jewish cultural belief that everyone is part of a family.

However, much of community life that the early Christians practised was unfortunately lost as Christianity spread throughout the world. In the modern context of the Church in Singapore, the lack of time and unwillingness to commit are commonly cited reasons contributing to the absence of a vibrant community life. Recognising this, the Archbishop has embarked on a plan for the diocese to build a community of disciples. Similarly, reflecting on the situation in the parish, the Parish Pastoral Council felt that there was a need for parishioners to come together as one community. There



The Acts of the Apostles identifies three marks that a community should have: prayer, sense of belonging, and formation. The first, prayer, involves worshipping and praising God always; the second, having a sense of belonging to one another in community and contributing to the life of the community; while the third entails forming believers in the faith. In being more intentional at building communities among parishioners, the parish hopes to model after these characteristics.

According to Fr. Adrian: "A good community is one in which members come together to share their lives and faith, and are there for one another. The main thing is to be centered on Christ, although we can start off first with a more social approach. We want to have prayer and worship, and to pray for one another".

Currently, the parish is starting off with social activities to draw parishioners together. For

example, there are monthly parish nights, which has programmes such as Bingo night and prayer sessions. On August 29, the parish had a workshop on group facilitation skills. This month there will be a parish retreat, while a session on the importance of building community and what community is will follow

in October. The retreat and the community session in October are expected to be catalysts in building communities, and attempts will be made to form communities based on interests or time availability.

In addition, ministries are also encouraged to form communities among their existing members. Although they are currently not communities yet, ministries bear semblance to and have a sense of community. Finally, the parish also hopes to reach out to parishioners who are Sunday Catholics, to encourage them to be part of the life of a community.

Ultimately, the aim of building communities is to develop communities of disciples, as it is in communities that discipleship is given expression. Discipleship involves carrying our crosses behind Christ daily in responding to God's love. Together with the rest of the diocese, it is hoped that the Church in Singapore will eventually be a community of communities, of disciples. ♥



was a sense that the ties between parishioners sometimes felt distant, and various ministries tended to work in silos without engaging other ministries or the parish as a whole. In addition, many "Sunday Catholic" parishioners were not involved in any church group, both ministries and communities alike.



IHM Snapshots

By AGNES CHUA



Biblical Apostolate Team: The team conducted a course on Study on Peter - Cornerstone of Catholicism. IHM is the first parish in Singapore to conduct this course presented by Dr Timothy Gray from the Augustine Institute, USA. This study explored the life of Peter – the fisherman who Jesus entrusted with His Church to become one of the most remarkable characters in the New Testament, and all of history. ♥



Lectors: The Lectors had their commissioning recently. They renewed their commitment to proclaim the Word of God at this year's Bible Sunday anticipatory mass. Sumptuous food and great fellowship followed. ♥



Epiphany: The new academic year has started for our Tech & Learn programme. The group wants your prayers for the Teach n Learn mission in the Riau Islands. The photo shows Grade 7 students at the start of their new academic year. ♥



Jollies: The group organised a trip to the Gardens by the Bay for our Jollies friends and members on Aug 4. The members had a wonderful trip, all thanks to the group's volunteers. ♥



RCIA: Our RCIA inquirers attended a half-day retreat on Aug 22 led by Sr. Elizabeth Sim to prepare for their Rite of Acceptance as Catechumens on Aug 30. ♥



Archdiocese event at IHM: Servant leaders of various ministries and communities discussed the role each can play in bringing forth the new evangelization as one united parish ♥



CPG: The group conducted the Life In The Spirit Seminar which ran for eight weeks. It consisted of praise and worship, talks, discussions, prayers and sharing. ♥

Preparing to receive Jesus

By JOYCE TAN

ON June 7, Primary 3 children from the parish received their first Holy Communion during Mass. Beautifully and smartly decked out in their white attire, the children looked radiant and excited to receive their first Holy Communion.

Behind the scenes, the Primary 3 catechists had worked hard to prepare them for this Sacrament. A two-day camp was held on June 5 and 6 to impart the meaning of the Eucharist. With the help of the Youth Catechists, the camp was packed with activities such as art and craft, skits, singing, games and reflection. Parent volunteers came forward to help prepare and serve food for the young children. During the camp, the children also received the Sacrament of Reconciliation, making their first confessions after doing an examination of conscience. Similar to many other children who described the camp as a fun one, Justin Tan, 9, said that he had particularly enjoyed the many play activities and skits. He added that although he felt nervous at first to receive Holy Communion, he overcame the fear.



This experience of preparing the children brought much meaning for the catechists. Two catechists, Michelle and Eveline, expressed an “immense joy” in journeying with, and seeing the children, including the active ones, pray silently in the adoration room. They were also heartened to see parishioners – catechists, parents, and youth –

coming together as a community to serve and bring Jesus to the children. In turn, they felt that the children showed greater interest in wanting to know more about the faith.

The catechists warmly welcome anyone who would like join in their mission of planting the seeds of faith in these little members of God’s kingdom. ♥

Behind the scenes of a Confirmation camp

By COLIN LEE

UNKNOWN to many, a team of nine has been holding monthly meetings above the church canteen since February. The objective of its members: To provide the best possible camp experience for our Sec 3 confirmands at the end of the year, in preparation for an intimate encounter with Christ during the sacrament of Confirmation.

Drawing inspiration from the Archdiocesan vision and Fr Adrian Yeo, who is spiritual director for the camp, the team shared how it has been working hard to integrate and reinforce the building communities initiative of our parish into the programme.

“The Youth Ministry is the logical next step for the young person’s continuing formation and so we do our best to integrate

youth ministry members into our programme. Hopefully, after having had a foretaste of a caring, loving community that lives out the Gospel message, teens will make their landfall in various youth communities in IHM after confirmation,” expressed Roy, Catechist coordinator (secondary) and a member of the planning team.

He went on to echo the view of the church, that the entire parish plays a part in the process of community-building so that our young will be rooted in vibrant and loving communities, in which their faith may flourish.

With meeting frequency quadrupled since August, it’s all hands on deck to manage session presenters, logistics and pre-camp events (with associated preparation); all these while incorporating previous years’ feedback to better

serve the needs of everyone.

While not always obvious, the preparations leading up to confirmation camp, are varied and complex. “The camp is a joint effort between Secondary Catechism and the Youth Ministry, in a special relationship that we work hard to cultivate for the benefit of all the youth,” explained Roy. To prepare all involved for the actual camp experience, a total of five pre-camp sessions were planned spanning end-August to November, of which only two involve the confirmands themselves.

The Confirmation camp will be from Dec 11 to 14 and the team humbly seeks all your prayers and support. Anyone interested in being involved in the formation of our youth can reach Roy or Ivy, respectively, at catechism@ihm.sg and youthministry@ihm.sg. ♥

Spreading Christ's love through music

By DENISE JULIA TAN



It did not take long for the residents of the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) to warm up to The Alpha Music Group. The group had gone to visit them along with the members of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul on June 27. While the group's performance had already turned into a mass karaoke session that Saturday morning, one carefree soul, who got up to dance on stage, turned the gig into a party. Dozens more joined the band on stage while the rest gleefully sang along, with sheets of lyrics in hand, as the band continued to belt out familiar tunes such as *Xin Ma Lai Qing Ge*, *Chan Mali Chan* and *More Than I Can Say*.

Formed by IHM parishioners Edward Lee, Andy Hoe and Benel Png of the Alpha Course Praise and Worship group in mid-2014, the

eight-piece band cites its experience at IMH as one of the most memorable. Today, the band comprises of Lee on the keyboard, Hoe, Ren Lim and David How on guitar, Teddy Oon on the Cajon, Eric Chia and Bernadette Koh on the ukulele, and lead vocalist Png, who also plays the guitar. The youngest band member is in his late 30s and the oldest in his mid-60s.

"After playing for the Alpha course, the three of us (Lee, Hoe & Png) thought that it would be good to share our little talent by bringing joy to some people through our music and entertainment while waiting for the next Alpha course the following year," said Mr. Lee. The Alpha course involves thought-provoking sessions for anyone wanting to explore the Christian faith.

The band, which usually meets

on Sunday evenings to rehearse, is focused on its sole objective of bringing joy to the disadvantaged in the community. It is available exclusively for hire to perform at charity gigs.

Despite facing technical challenges as non-professionals and occasionally struggling to schedule rehearsals, the band hopes to continue to grow together in strength and aims to reach out to more residents in various homes and inspire them to find out more about Christ through its songs and actions.

"As we reached out to shake their hands, knowing we were Christians, they warmly responded 'God bless you'," said Mr Lee, recounting his experience at IMH. "Witnessing their joy in simplicity truly lets us see the face of Christ in them." ♥

Bringing Christ to the Sick

By PATRICK JONAS

THE Ministry to the Sick was set up in our parish when Fr. James Yeo was the parish priest.

Prior to that during Fr. Barthoulot's time, he would visit the sick and house-bound parishioners on the first Friday of every month or whenever they made a request. After the ministry was formed, visiting the sick and the house-bound became a weekly affair as there were enough volunteers who were willing to take Christ's healing love to the sick.

The role of the members has not changed over the years. Assistant coordinator of the ministry Maria Khoo says: "Members continue to witness Christ's love and compassion

for the sick and homebound parishioners. They enable them to feel that they still belong to the Body of Christ and that Christ's Church still cares for them."

But this has its challenges. "Some of our members have to take public transport to give Holy Communion to the house-bound, sometimes even in rainy weather," says Maria.

Currently, there are 33 members in this ministry and their average age is around 60. Catherine Chua, Agnes Goh and Aurelia Ang have been with the ministry since its inception.

The ministry is looking to add younger members who can drive. It also needs more dialect-speaking or Mandarin-speaking members. Those

interested to join the ministry are advised to speak to Fr. Adrian.

The ministry has, since 2008, been organising the Bone Marrow Donor Programme registration and the bi-annual IHM Bloodmobile Outreach to serve the wider community and also to promote community bonding among its members through these activities.

Before she signed off, Maria had a request.

"Some of our elderly, mobile but house-bound parishioners would like to attend Sunday Mass, at least once a month. We hope some caring male volunteers will come forward to help in transporting them to the church and back." ♥

Rain or shine, they are there for the sick

by DENISE JULIA TAN



FOR more than 15 years, the Ministry to the Sick has been bringing a different form of healing to afflicted parishioners. While hospitals and medicine cater to the ailing body, the MOS brings Christ and spiritual comfort into the lives of the faithful who are house-bound.

This ministry has 33 dedicated members and they look after the spiritual needs of more than 60 house-bound parishioners. This includes giving them holy communion weekly, fortnightly, or monthly and on Feast Days, and praying with and for them. This requires much preparation on the part of the members.

"Prayers on the day before the visit and upon receiving the Holy Eucharist help immensely in putting me in the right disposition to do my best," shared ministry member Aurelia Ang, who is a retired teacher and a busy grandmother in her 60s.

Scheduling visits with the house-bound can also be tricky as they are often occupied with other medical appointments and therapies. Members also have to set aside time to attend mass before their visits as they have to collect the Eucharistic hosts and deliver them the same day. It is a formal process that includes presenting to the priest a photo ID, along with a pyx and the indicated number of Eucharistic hosts needed for the day.

"Each time I visit the home of the sick, I'll call the family in advance to let them know what time I'm

coming. They'll prepare the home altar and candles to get ready to pray with me. It's a great joy to see the family pray together," shared current co-ordinator of the ministry, Francis Teo, 64.

Mrs. Ang added that caregivers of those receiving the Holy Eucharist usually join in the prayers if they are Catholic and the visits also open a "golden opportunity to evangelise and show by word and action how we love and care for others".

"During our visits, we give a listening ear and update them on parish activities or events in the liturgical calendar. We also pass them the church bulletins or the Catholic News if they're able to read. We continue to pray with them when they become too sick to receive the Holy Communion and we attend their wakes/funeral mass should the Lord call them home," said assistant co-ordinator Maria Khoo, also a retiree in her late 60s.

In cases where illnesses render the house-bound incapable of receiving the Holy Communion, members usually go straight to praying the Profession of Faith and the Act of Contrition. This is the same for those who speak dialects or are too sick to go through with the standard prayer that takes about 25 minutes.

"Whenever possible, active participation in the prayers is encouraged – be it in English or dialect. The lilting Teochew prayers are music to our ears. After physical or emotional improvement, the

spiritual desire for the Sacrament of Reconciliation or anointing usually follows. That gives me great pleasure in arranging a visit by a priest. Many a time, the Lord takes them home fully reconciled and at peace," shared Mrs Ang.

Mrs. Ang is one of the longest-serving members of the ministry, having joined in 2000 when the then parish priest, Father James Yeo, introduced it to IHM. She still remembers the first visit she made to two elderly brothers, which she describes as both nerve-wracking and awesome.

Despite the foul odour, unhappy faces and claustrophobic and untidy rooms that Mrs. Ang and her fellow ministry members often face, she says "the feeling of being sent makes it all tolerable".

The most rewarding aspect of being a member of the ministry are the grateful smiles, healing and conversion that the members witness, all the while becoming close friends with the communicants or even being accepted as family members.

"To enjoy doing this work, I need to open my heart to allow God to work in me. I may think I'm doing a great job when in fact, we're learning the values of life through the sick... I'm prepared to give myself to show love to all the sick and their care-givers," said Mr Teo.

Parishioners seeking help for their house-bound relatives may approach the church office for assistance. ♥



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