

Spotlight 聚光

December 2017



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“Be on
guard! Be
alert!”

You do not
know when
the time
will come

Mark 13:33

使 命 宣 言

我们，圣体堂区共融团体，愿成为基督圣体活的标记，尽力担当主基督祂舍己牺牲生命，为今日世界所付出的爱之标志与媒介。

MISSION STATEMENT

As the parish-community of the Blessed Sacrament, we want to be a living expression of the Holy Eucharist, by trying to become both a sign and an instrument of Christ's life-giving and self-sacrificial love in the world of today.

Submission of articles by the 12th of the month. Email your article to: **anghweeshen@gmail.com**

Please include your name, contact number and address. The editorial team reserves the right to edit any articles for publication.
Maximum article length: 450 words

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Editor's Desk

God Is With Us

“Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.” (Leviticus 26:11-12)

It is the time of the year where children look forward to receiving presents, families and friends gather together for festive meals and places for decked with Christmas decorations and lights. Yet what is the true meaning of Christmas?

Fully divine and fully human, Jesus was born in a manger in Bethlehem. In the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, instead of coming to earth with fanfare, He was born among animals. His first visitors were shepherds from the fields. Jesus led His life in humility, grew up to sacrifice His life on the cross for us sinners. By His passion, death and resurrection, He returned to His Father's side in power and glory.

The birth of Jesus this Christmas also signifies Jesus entering into our lives but only if we choose to let Him reside within us. Let us prepare ourselves in this period of Advent to welcome Jesus into our lives. A time of reflection, a time of forgiveness and a time of thanksgiving to the people around us. Be at peace with yourself, be a generous giver and give thanks for graces you have been showered upon.

This Christmas why not do something extraordinary? How about visiting the sick in the hospital; singing Christmas carols to the aged in the nursing home; preparing a meal for the poor; donating books, clothes to those in need or even spending time in prayers for those who are struggling in their lives.

In the month of December, on behalf of Blessed Sacrament Church and the team at Spotlight, we wish each one of you a blessed and joyful Advent Season. Merry Christmas.

God Bless
Patricia Ang

Announcements

Mass With Healing Service
Every 2nd Friday of the month
Mass with Healing Session @ 8pm – Damien Hall

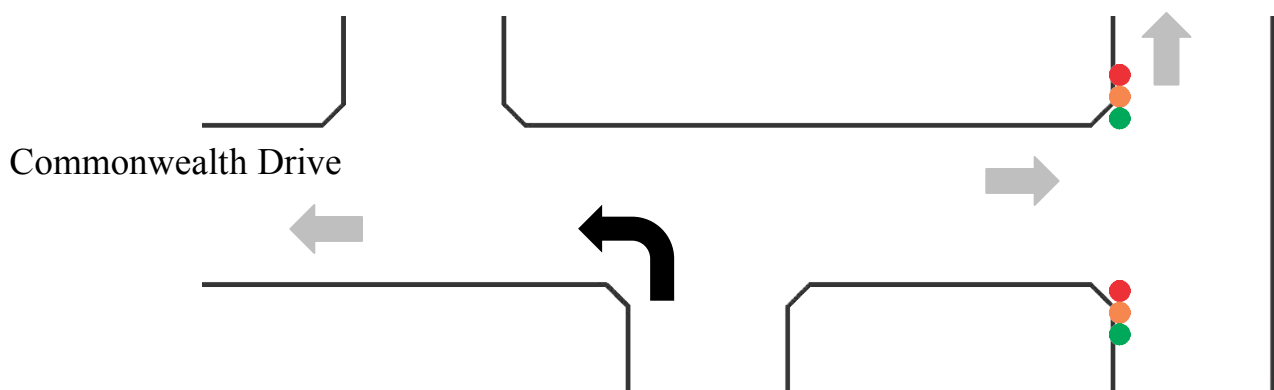
FAITH FORMATION IN BSC

Matthew: The King and His Kingdom is an exciting 24-session DVD-based study (presented by Jeff Cavins) that explores the life and mission of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. *Matthew* demonstrates how the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Christ, who establishes a New Law and inaugurates the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. This study will help participants understand who Jesus is and what His life and teachings mean for us today.

This course will commence on Tuesday 16 January until 17 July 2018. Time 7:30pm at Damien Hall, Church of the Blessed Sacrament. Cost of Workbook is \$55/-. To register please email bsc.pastoral@catholic.org.sg or bsc.bat01@gmsil.com. Closing date of registration is 23 Dec 2017.

NOTICE

Parishioners who drive, when leaving after Mass, please turn left along Commonwealth drive. This is to prevent congestion in the church compound. Thank you for your co-operation and understanding



TAMIL NIGHT VIGIL

DATE : 02 December 2017 (Saturday)

TIME : 9.30PM to 5.00AM

PLACE : Blessed Sacrament Church – Damien Hall

MASS starts at 10.00PM

CONFESSION starts at 9.30PM

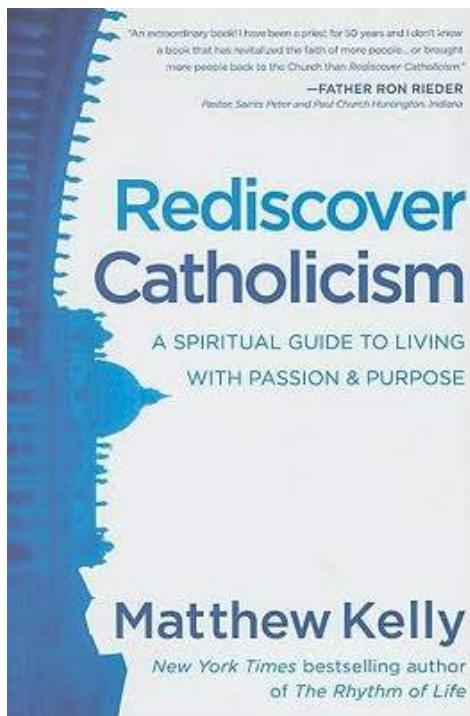
**Mass / Confession / St. Joseph Prayer & Rosary / Divine Mercy Prayer /
Intercession Prayer / Bible Sharing / Testimonies**

ADVENT CELEBRATION

St. Joseph Tamil Prayer Group is organizing Advent Celebration on 17th December 2017, Sunday at Damien Hall. **TAMIL MASS STARTS AT 6.00PM (Instead of 7.00PM - Change in Mass Timings)**

Advent Celebration starts at 8.00PM (Dance / Bingo / Singing)

Dinner will be served. All are welcome to join.



Book Review

At a time when many Catholics are disillusioned, questioning their faith, and filled with doubts about the relevance of Catholicism in the modern world, the voice of one man cries out to the world's largest faith community with a clarity that is rare and inspiring.

A reader says Kelly discusses the modern philosophies that have greatly eaten away at Catholicism: individualism, hedonism, and minimalism. I can see those philosophies well represented in my own life, so I could easily make a connection, and that helped to make the entire book very relevant.

I'd like to pretend other people need to hear this book's message more than I do but honestly, I am not doing a thing to help the Church or my faith in my daily life. Mr Kelly's book offers reasons why that could be as well as suggestions and encouragements - not demands, not rules - on how to evolve into a good, inspiring, active Catholic, and that is a very valuable message.

JOIN BSC LITURGICAL MINISTRY

Welcome! Liturgical ministry is an excellent opportunity to fulfill your baptismal call of service to one another. Our liturgies should utilize the talents and gifts that God has given this community to the fullest extent. Whether participation is through "behind the scenes" preparation and planning or through a public role of service within the Mass, parishioner contributions help our liturgies to be truly life-giving celebrations. Please prayerfully consider joining one of these ministries.



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CHOIRS

Sunset Mass

9am

10.45am

5.30pm

Young Adults Choir

7.30am

5.00pm (Novena)

Lumen Christi Chorus

Blessed Sacrament Choir

St Francis Music Ministry

Santa Maria Choir

St Cecilia Choir

Holy Infant Jesus Choir

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Note To Readers: *His Grace, our Archbishop William Goh. His Grace's Pastoral Letter on Community Building (Part 1) was reproduced in November issue of Spotlight. Here is Part 2 of the Pastoral Letter. You can also refer online : <https://www.catholic.sg/pastoral-letter-building-community/>*

Pastoral Letter on Building Community An Essential for the Work of the New Evangelisation

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In many of his letters, St John Paul II underscored the importance of communion in the mission of the Church. In his encyclical to the Church in Asia, he wrote, “communion and mission are inseparably connected. They interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, so that ‘communion represents both the source and fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion.’” (Church in Asia, 24). Again in his apostolic letter at the beginning of the new millennium, he reiterated, “It is in building this communion of love that the Church appears as ‘sacrament’, as the ‘sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the human race’. The Lord’s words on this point are too precise for us to diminish their import.” (NMI 42)

Indeed, the goal of evangelization is communion. The Church is called to be a sacrament of love and unity in the world. “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). St John also wrote, “...we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” (1 Jn 1:3) Rightly so, if our mission is to bring all into communion with each other in love and unity through our fellowship with the Holy Trinity, then we must seek every means to preserve, protect and foster communion in our workplace, Church ministries, organizations, parishes and archdiocesan bodies, whether they are full time workers, volunteers or helpers.

Conversely, the greatest threat to the mission of the Church is not from external factors such as secularism, relativism, materialism and consumerism. The greatest enemy of the Church’s mission is from within. It is the clergy, religious and the laity. We are divided among ourselves and fighting with each other; so that we have no more strength or passion to focus on our mission and the needs and sufferings of the flock under our care and the lost sheep in the world. This is what Jesus was warning us in the gospel when He said, “If a

kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.” (Mk 3:24f) And He concluded, “But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.” (Mk 3:27) Accordingly, not only must we strengthen our communion and unity in our common mission for the glory of God, but we must also bind up the enemies of unity within our house.

Indeed, as Archbishop of the Catholic Church in Singapore, it is my duty and my role as chief shepherd of this archdiocese to unite the whole Church, clergy, religious and laity, so that we can all accomplish this mission of communion in communion. Everywhere I go, it breaks my heart to see and hear of so much division within the Church, from the Church organizations to the parishes and the archdiocesan offices. There is so much misunderstanding, lack of communication, trust and hurts that have been experienced in the process of working for the Church and for Christ. How often do I receive letters of complaint because of grievances, injustices, discrimination, abuses, scandals and the dictatorial attitudes of those in authority! So many workers, volunteers and Church members have been so deeply wounded by the Church they love and serve. As a consequence, many have either left the Church ministries or even the Church completely, because of the loss of faith, disillusionment, anger and resentment.

In view of this absolute pre-condition for the work of evangelization, the archdiocese has, through the Office of the New Evangelization, sought to focus all Church entities, organizations and ministries to give attention to the work of building a spirituality of communion among themselves and wherever they are, in the workplace, in the Church, in the parish and in our homes. St John Paul II wrote, “Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up.” (NMI 43)

Before we focus on how we should foster the spirituality of communion, we must first come to grasp the causes of division among ourselves. What causes division?

Primarily, it is because of pride. More often than not, we are not conscious that when we do something, apparently a service to the community, it is entangled

with our own need for appreciation, recognition and acceptance. Many of us are unconsciously working for our own ambition although we proclaim with our lips that we are serving God and the community. Few offer their services without some hidden agenda, of which they may not even be aware because of the lack of self-knowledge between their conscious desires and their unconscious intentions.

Indeed, the ancient sin of pride, the Old Adam, remains in us. This is seen in wanting to do our own will and always singing the famous song of Frank Sinatra, “My way!” Egoism is always the big obstacle to communication and working together in humble service, deferring to each other in charity. The problem is that everyone wants his or her view to prevail over others. Everyone wants others to listen to him or her rather than find a consensus and seek to work with each other for the common good of all. Without humility in service, we cannot work together and collaborate with each other.

Quite often too, it is because of self-interest. We are doing things to protect our turf, our comfort zone and our convenience. We are not willing to change or make changes or accept correction because it entails disrupting the status quo. Some of us like to cling on to our office and our position for fear that others who take over would not do things the way we like and the things we want. We still want to be in control. Hence, to retain our rein over others, we cling to power and office.

Quite often, we see cronyism also at work in the Church and in organizations. Many who wish to volunteer their services are marginalized and excluded because they are a threat to the status quo and the likes and whims of the leader. Cronyism breeds jealousy, frustration and stifles growth and initiative. Indeed, if one finds that their organization is not growing well and lacking in dynamism, it is because the leaders are holding office for too long! Worse still, they only recruit into office those who are able to ‘carry’ them.

Consequently, such an attitude will only encourage gossiping and backbiting. We should not be surprised that authorities and leaders who are not receptive to differing views or are not able to engage in humble, open and sincere dialogue, in total impartiality and objectivity are the ones most prone to promoting cronyism. Because of fear and lack of legitimate avenues for venting and expressing their unhappiness, the weak and disgruntled will resort to gossiping, slandering, rumour mongering, making presumptions, and causing more misunderstandings, hurts, injustices and injuries to each other. So long as there

is no objectivity, there is no way to verify facts and seek clarification. Uncharitable words and actions will only worsen the problem and make the issue more protracted.

All these will give an opportunity to the devil to have a foothold in us. This is what St Paul wrote, “Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil.” (Eph 4:26f) When someone is serving in the ministry or working in Church with lots of resentment, anger and unhealed hurts and wounds, and because these feelings will not go away with time, the Devil will exploit these ill feelings to fester into revenge and hatred.

What then is the way forward? Once again, St John Paul II wrote of the necessary pre-requisite before ministry to build a spirituality of communion. How can we promote and foster this spirituality of communion?

First and foremost, we need to underscore and remind our Church workers and ministry members to put personal and communal prayer in the forefront of all their activities. St John Paul II wrote, “It is an essential demand of life in Christ that whoever enters into communion with the Lord is expected to bear fruit: ‘He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit’” (Jn 15:5). So true is this that the person who does not bear fruit does not remain in communion: “Each branch of mine that bears no fruit [my Father] takes away” (Jn 15:2). Communion with Jesus, which gives rise to the communion of Christians among themselves, is the indispensable condition for bearing fruit; and communion with others, which is the gift of Christ and his Spirit is the most magnificent fruit that the branches can give.” (Church in Asia, 24)

I have already written earlier that prayer must come before ministry and that every Church ministry and organization must get their members and workers to pray as they work and serve in the Church. It would be good to refer to this pastoral letter again. No prayer, no ministry! Personal and communal prayer is indispensable for the fruitfulness in our mission. The failure to pray is an indication of pride, thinking that we can accomplish the mission of Christ without His help and without His grace. Church workers and volunteers must make time for their personal prayer life and make time to pray with the members of the community. It cannot be left to chance but it must be organized and we must stay disciplined and not compromise our prayer life.

Secondly, there must be a deeper love for the Word of God. Every Catholic must be imbued and be immersed with the Word of God. He or she must be praying the Word of God every day alone in meditation and contemplation; and

with others in the community, especially in small groups, whether in the office, neighbourhood, ministries or just among friends. By regularly sharing the Word of God together, we begin to feel with and for each other in our struggles to be more faithful to the gospel; and in edifying each other by sharing how Christ has helped us in our daily life, we inspire each other to see Christ in our daily life.

Thirdly, we must create opportunities for bonding among workers and ministry members. Fostering communion cannot be left to chance. We must create venues and occasions deliberately. There should be time for community prayers during the day, occasional meals out together, as a group or in small groups, celebrating each other's significant and memorable events of their lives, e.g. birthdays and anniversaries, visiting each other and their loved ones when they are sick or in bereavement, etc. Whilst it is not the best, we must have "organized joy." Initially, it might seem artificial but later on, natural joys will take place when people get to know each other, trust each other, and enjoy each other, seeing the goodness in each other and not just their few imperfections. When there is love, we will overlook the faults of others. Any correction will be done purely out of love without self-interest and with sensitivity, respect and charity. Of course, ideally, members should also take initiative in organizing informal gatherings among themselves, like going for a walk or for a drink.

Fourthly, to build community we need to create structures for dialogue. Without dialogue, there will always be misunderstandings and friction. So every organization and every department in each organization and parish must have proper structures in place, not just for show, but to promote open, sincere and meaningful dialogue. We should never fear the truth about ourselves and our organization, for the truth will set us free. In the archdiocese, we have tried to engage different groups and organizations and institutions so that there will be greater alignment in our vision and mission for the whole archdiocese instead of each organization doing their own thing and sometimes at odds and against the overall direction of the archdiocese.

We must always avoid being parochial minded, always thinking of our own group, parish or organization because we are Catholic, meaning, universal and one body of Christ, the Church. A Catholic who is only concerned for his organization or even his own parish or even diocese is not Catholic. A Catholic supports the universal Church beyond his particular parish and diocese. Every group must be in sync with the organization, and every

organization with the parish, and every parish with the archdiocesan offices and every archdiocesan body with the council of priests and all consultors and senators with the archbishop. There should be regular periodical community, ministry or staff meetings to brief members of the community and also to iron out challenges and difficulties. Where necessary, structures must be reformed and updated to meet new challenges. Keeping to customs and old structures for the sake of sentimentalism will cause the Church to be redundant. There are no sacred cows that we cannot sacrifice to God for His greater glory, regardless how attached we are to past traditions and customs.

Fifthly, where there are differences and conflicts, there must also be established avenues for proper recourse for justice and settlement. There must be transparency, objectivity and total impartiality in the handling of grievances and resolutions. However, it must be done with charity, sensitivity and justice. Following the command of our Lord, difficulties with errant members of the community must first be dealt personally between the two persons concerned. When dialogue fails, then they must get someone among them who can mediate and find a happy solution. Only when this fails, should we bring it to the authority which is always the last resort, not the first instance, to seek justice.

In this archdiocese, we have in place a “Process for Conflict Resolution” which is found in the archdiocesan website. Please read it again. I would like all to follow the proper channels for complaints so that all complaints can be dealt with in Christian justice and charity. The archbishop and the archdiocese do not entertain anonymous complaints as justice demands that those accused must be given a chance to clarify themselves. What I have done for the archdiocese, I expect the rank and file in the parishes and ministries to also have in place proper channels for settling misunderstandings, quarrels and differences.

Sixthly, we must have constant renewal in leadership. Leaders must constantly be on the lookout for new leaders to replace them once they are in office. We should never allow a leadership vacuum to happen. Bad leaders are those who allow themselves to be in office without any replacement. They must be actively forming and mentoring leaders to take over their office so that there will be constant renewal. Leaders who have served their term should not drop out completely after their service is over but offer their expertise in other areas where the Church needs them. So leaders must not, if possible, stay too long in office. They must humbly tender their resignation so that there is constant

renewal of leadership. There should be a term of office and no one should hold office for too long. Otherwise, cronyism will enter the Church and this will hamper creativity and renewal.

On my part as the archbishop, I am already seeking out who can take over my office when the time comes for me to retire. My hope is that I do not have to finish the full term which ends at the age of seventy five. Of course, this requires the consent of the Holy Father. I pray that a younger, more holy, dynamic, prayerful, discerning, wise, dedicated, selfless and visionary priest with a passion for Christ and His Church will be ready to take over from me when the time comes. As far as I am concerned, my task is to upgrade the infrastructure and put a system of governance in place so that the future archbishop can simply focus on the work of evangelization. It is my conviction that when someone can do the job better, then it is time and also an obligation for me to step aside and retire from my office! I am always conscious that I must place the interest of the Church before mine. It would be tragic if one day I become an obstacle for the progress of the Church. God forbid!

As leaders too, since we are keepers of the vision and responsible for the unity of our group or organization, we must promote collaboration, not micro manage our organization. There should not be any form of dictatorial control over the group but we must work together in a collaborative ministry. We must promote the principle of subsidiarity and empowerment of our members and staff. There must be room for making mistakes and for improvements. Instead of uncharitable remarks, we must encourage words that give life and heal, not destroy. St Paul reminds us, “Let no evil talk or harmful words come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.” (Eph 4:29f) The way of encouragement, affirmation and appreciation will go a long way in promoting collaboration and joy in ministry and service. Leaders must take personal interest in each and every one of their staff or member under their charge, their well-being, their spiritual life and capacity for growth in their ministry and work. They are shepherds in their own right, caring for the weak, strengthening those who are strong and healing those who are wounded.

For this reason, leaders must give special attention to the weak and hurting members of their community and organization. Attempts must be made to reach out to them, to hear their stories without being judgemental or defensive.

With an open mind and humble heart, we must seek to engage them. They need our love and understanding and, most of all, a listening ear and an empathetic heart to feel with them in their struggles and to empower them by giving them light in understanding their problems, compassion in their weaknesses and empowerment in the talents that they have. In this way, we heal the wounds of such members and they will become more loving, forgiving and less divisive and negative.

Above all, all those serving in the Church must frequent the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation. They should spend time before the Blessed Sacrament in adoration, thanksgiving and praise. They, especially the leaders, should make time for annual retreats of five days' duration to recharge and reconnect with the Lord. It would be good that staff and ministry members have a reconciliation service once or twice a year, whether with or without a priest for the sacrament so that there could be forgiveness and healing. The humility to ask for forgiveness, especially on the personal level, helps to heal wounds and bring about forgiveness from the heart.

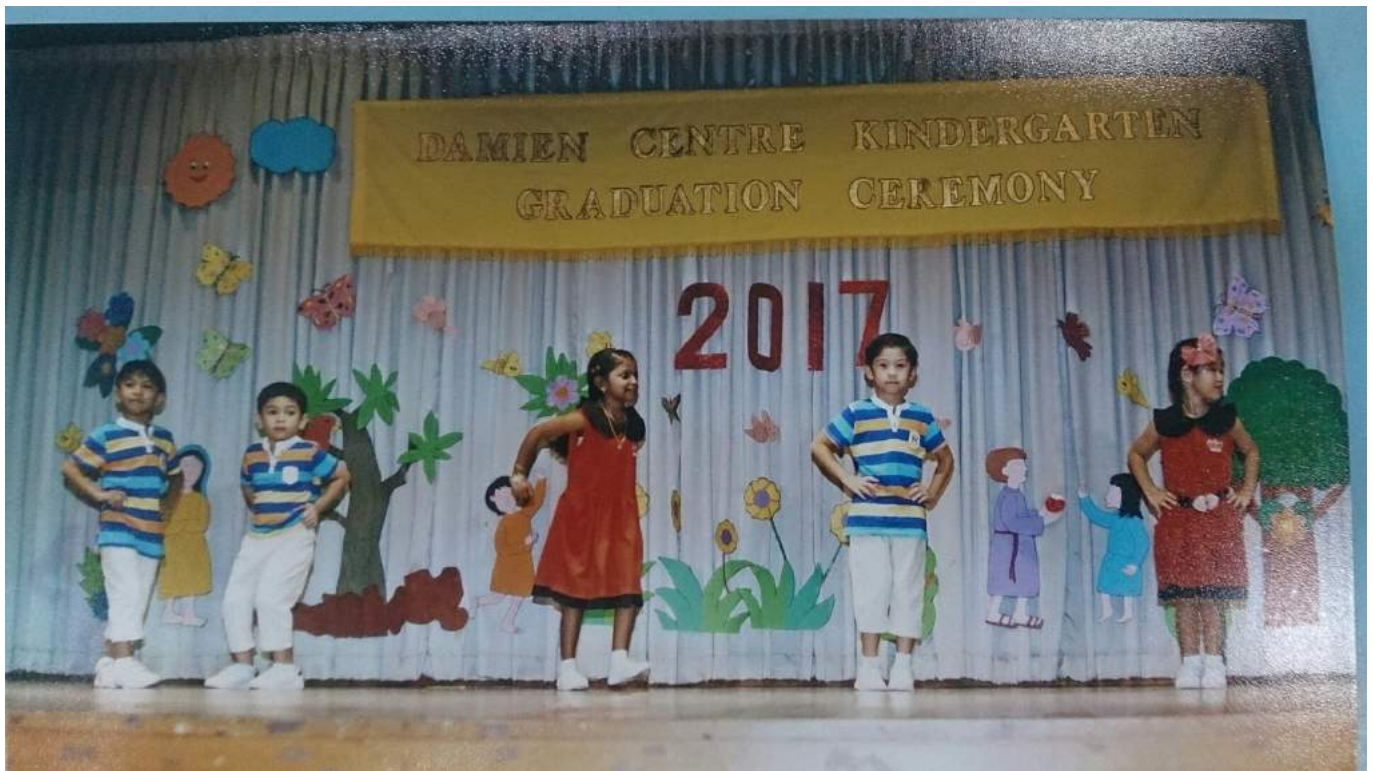
In the final analysis, leaders must walk the talk. Be mentors for future leaders by serving humbly and selflessly. Don't ask members to do what you cannot do or are not doing. At the end of the day we need leaders who are prayerful, full of faith and dependent entirely on the Lord. Members must pray for their leaders and leaders in turn must pray for those who are working for them and with them. Prayer, fasting and mortification will help a leader to grow in holiness and allow God to make use of them and work through them.

Let me conclude with the exhortation of St John Paul II, "Many things are necessary for the Church's journey through history, not least in this new century; but without charity (agape), all will be in vain." It is again the Apostle Paul who in the hymn to love reminds us: even if we speak the tongues of men and of angels, and if we have faith 'to move mountains', but are without love, all will come to 'nothing' (cf. 1 Cor 13:2). (NMI 42) Lastly, St John Paul II warned us, "Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, "masks" of communion rather than its means of expression and growth." (NMI 43). Together with Christ and Mary in the work of New Evangelisation, I remain your servant of the gospel,

Archbishop William Goh

Graduation Ceremony and Concert 2107

by Stella Lee



Damien Centre Kindergarten (DCK) held its graduation ceremony and concert on 27 October 2017. It was a momentous occasion that teachers, parents and children excitedly looked forward to. There is no greater joy for parents as when they see their children performd on stage, give speeches or act as emcees for the day. It is also a time to recognise the outstanding work of the staff and the continuous support of parents.

Some 250 parents, family members and representatives of the School Management Board (SMB), Fr Thomas, Fr Johan and Ms Stella, gathered in Damien Hall for the ceremony to begin at 3pm. The principal, Mrs Hilda Martin, welcomed the guests and gave them an overview of the day's programme. Then Fr Johan, Secretary of SMB, led the opening prayer.

Three children from K2, Victoria Lau, Joel Yee and Hashini Bharath Kumar, gave the welcome speech in English, Mandarin and Tamil. They recounted their joyful experiences in DCK where they shared priceless lessons, take on challenges and blossom into engaged and enthusiastic lifelong learners. They thanked their teachers and parents for their roles to facilitate the process.

The stage was set to fill the air with action songs performed by children from Pre-Nursery Joy and Love. Thereafter, Fr Thomas, Supervisor of DCK, delivered the opening speech. He thanked God for His watchful blessings of an uneventful school year and teachers and parents who worked collaboratively to achieve the desired outcome of preschool education: nurturing early learners and giving every child a strong start. He emphasized that families play an equally important role in the development of their children. Parents are instrumental in their children's personal growth and attitudes towards life. The partnership DCK has forged with parents and stakeholders contributed significantly in making learning more holistic and effective for children to be future-ready, think critically, access options and make sound decisions. The ethos of this caring school culture has supported the SMB, teachers and parents in the quest for a high quality preschool education.

The fun-filled day continued with children from Nursery, K1 and K2 giving their best in mesmerizing Chinese and Indian dances. Three skits were staged by children from K1 Grace and K2 Humility and Honesty. The "instant actors and actresses" narrated their stories fluently and with gusto, earning applause from the audience.

The highlight of the day was the graduation of children from K2. It was their moment of pride and achievement to receive certificates from Fr Thomas and Ms Stella, Assistant Supervisor. Parents were beaming in delight to see their children complete a milestone and make transition from preschool to primary one.

A parent representative, Mrs Vivian Ng, was invited to share her daughter, Victoria's learning experiences in DCK. She thanked the dedicated teachers for their genuine interest in nurturing the young and active minds and preparing them well for primary one. She affirmed that the conducive and safe school environment as well as the enriching and holistic curriculum had provided Victoria with opportunities to build self-confidence, learn social skills and develop learning dispositions to succeed at every stage. She is happy and looks forward to attend school every day.

The concert ended at 5pm with the finale. All the children made their appearances on stage and sang three action hymns – "*The Lord is my Shepherd*", "*Little hands to work for Jesus*" and "*He got the whole world in His hands*".

Most parents view preschool graduation as the completion of a milestone when their children have successfully gone through an importance phase of study that lays the foundation of lifelong learning. The concert was a good opportunity to showcase children's musical talents, build confidence and self-esteem at a tender age. The whole process of this occasion is a learning process for children to enhance their skills to communicate, coordinate and to work harmoniously with one another.

“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”
Preschool graduation is a time to celebrate. It takes a big heart to shape a little mind.

Our SMB's hope is for DCK to continue and provide affordable and quality preschool education to the community, to bring the best learning experiences to children, not only academically but also to develop them in areas such as the aesthetics and creative expression, environmental awareness, motor skills and self and social awareness.

DCK is founded on the importance of building core values and a strong foundation for children's future learning. We support early childhood educators to create and deliver quality learning experiences for children. We are proud that all our children from Pre Nursery to K2 participated in the concert and put up an enjoyable and wonderful performance to impress the guests. To our K2 graduants, we congratulate them on their achievements. Your studies might be over. But the process of learning will never end!



Remembering the Light
by Isadora Lee

I wonder what images come to mind on the mention of a “Memorial Mass”. For me, a converted Catholic, who have not attended many funeral or memorial Masses, my concept of a memorial Mass is one associated with the movies - when a protagonist dies and then someone closely related gives a touching eulogy.

But last night, I attended one for the very first time, and this person is very close to my heart. To be honest, I had not imagined attending it. I had initially dismissed it, because it wasn't like he was ever tangibly present on Earth. At least, not to many people. And I would not have been able to give any eulogy, because I really don't know what a person he would have been. All I know would have been what kind of person I hoped he would be, and how I would have endeavoured to bring out the best in him.

The timing of the Mass was not ideal for us - it was too early a dinner and too late a bed time for the children. It didn't help that the location was not close to where we lived, which meant a longer commute with distressed children, and what made it worse was that, it was pouring as we set off. I was starting to regret my decision on the taxi ride.

But in the end, even though we were late (!), I have to confess I was glad we went. Really glad. As I cried to the voice of Corrine May, and was consoled by my 4-year-old who gently used her small hands to wipe the tears off my face, I felt comforted. Somehow, it was like a closure that I needed. I wanted my two children to always remember this sibling who almost got to join the family but had to be called back to God. I wanted them to always remember him. In whatever way possible. As I listened to Fr John-Paul's homily about how the living and the dead are in fact just on different ends of the continuum of eternal life, and that one day, we will all see each other again, I didn't feel so sad.

At the Memorial Mass, I saw the familiar faces of the Pieta group, and I thanked them for organising this special event. Many other families were also present, all gathered to remember their beloved children who have gone before them. As the slideshow played on, and I saw many of the pictures of the deceased - some of whom had died as children or as adults - I can only say, my heartache pales in comparison to theirs. This was a fetus who I barely knew, but there, imagine, the children who had been with you half your life, or maybe all your life, suddenly ceasing to exist.

No, I don't mean to say grief should be compared. It is just that sitting there, watching the many tea lights symbolic of each of the deceased, blaze in their special holders, and being around everyone whom is just somewhat like you, makes you realise you are really never alone, regardless of your plight.

My friend once said this to me, that as Christians, “we are just broken individuals trying to hold each other up”. I want to thank the Pieta group, because the work they are doing really feels that way.

And as we close the month of November - a month which started with two Holy days commemorating the deaths of saints and souls - I hope that you too will rise from whatever loss you may have experienced. It will be hard, that I know, because I too haven't risen. But slowly and surely, we will all be healed. Slowly and surely, we will find meaning in the loss. Slowly and surely, new life will come. Because we remember that death is but a stage all man needs to go through, and that we, who are God's children can live, because Jesus first died for us.

Pieta is a community support group under the Archdiocese, consisting of bereaved parents. They meet every 4th Tuesday of the month in Agape Village for support sessions, and I myself had attended one when I just had my miscarriage.



Feast of the Holy Innocents- 28 December

by Jacqueline Lee

The Feast of the Holy Innocents throws the elements of murder and evil into the Octave of Christmas, during which we are reminded of the realities of life with Jesus. Immediately after the joyous celebration of Christmas Day, the following are commemorated in the Church's calendar:

<i>26 December</i>	<i>Feast of St. Stephen, Protomartyr</i>
<i>27 December</i>	<i>Feast of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist</i>
<i>28 December</i>	<i>Feast of the Holy Innocents, Martyrs</i>
<i>29 December</i>	<i>Memorial of St. Thomas Becket, Bishop and Martyr</i>
<i>31 December</i>	<i>Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph</i>
	<i>Memorial of St. Silvester I, Pope</i>
<i>1 January</i>	<i>Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God</i>

The Holy Innocents and Sts. Stephen and Thomas gave up their lives for Jesus. The Holy Family and St. John lived in exile for our Lord's sake. Sts. Silvester, Thomas and John defended the faith against those who were out to destroy it.

When Jesus was just over a month old, Mary was told: “Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:34-35)

Thus, the challenges we might face in dedicating our lives to Jesus are laid out with the celebration of His birth.

The story of the Holy Innocents highlights the contrast between light and darkness. On one hand, His coming meant tidings of great joy for those who were waiting in hope and expectation for the Messiah. On the other hand, it was bad news for those who were not ready for the light of Christmas.

Herod is another highlight of this feast and stands for everyone who is not for Christ, but that does not refer to just all the “bad guys” we can think of. In his reflection on the feast, Fr. Steve Grunow of the Word on Fire Catholic Ministries urges us to look *in ourselves* to see if we recognise Herod there. This story is a “warning” for us because there are “parts of ourselves” that we prefer to keep away from Jesus. He asks: “What aspects of our own lives and the lives of others are we ready to destroy because of our refusal of Christ?”

(read his full reflection here:

<https://www.wordonfire.org/resources/blog/the-feast-of-the-holy-innocents/1284/>)

While this is a most pertinent question for each of us to answer, it is encouraging to remember that Herod is not the main character of the feast. The Holy Innocents are the ultimate heroes as they triumph together with Jesus, so the Church celebrates with them in their glory in heaven. Among the many artworks inspired by their story is William Holman Hunt’s painting *The Triumph of the Innocents*, where they are depicted as angel-like beings joining the Holy Family on their flight to Egypt.

Indeed, while we need to examine our lives to identify areas of sin and evil, we are a Church of life and hope. Jesus’ birth is certainly good news of great joy, and the accompanying good news that we learn from the Feast of the Holy Innocents is that when we stand for Jesus, He brings us to the eternal joy of everlasting life with Him.

A Thanksgiving Letter

By Kelley D'Cruz

As little kid growing up, my mother used to make sure that my family went for the Novena every Saturday. I would try to listen despite always being fidgety, but my favourite part was always when the priest read out the Petitions and Thanksgiving letters. There was something about the stories I heard that drew me in; I even remember some of them till today. I also remember it bothering me a whole lot that there were always more Petitions than there were Thanksgiving letters (the priest would announce the total number of Petitions, Thanksgiving and Private & Confidential letters received in the week).

So for my very last Spotlight Article of the year, I have decided to write a Thanksgiving letter to God. In writing this letter, I don't intend to boast; rather I intend to use this platform to simply thank my God, something I may not have even thought of doing properly had I not been in the Spotlight team.

Dearest Father,

I look back at all this past year has given me, and as I close my eyes and recall so many details of so many incidents, I can't help but tear.

Physically and emotionally, You threw at me hurt after hurt. To take it upon myself was enough, but I had to watch the people I love the most be torn down as well.

I started to meet people who would help me out of this hole I seemed to be falling down so rapidly, and just when I felt myself mending, those very people left.

Now as the year is almost to an end, I question what the point of all this was. And at this very moment as it dawns on me, I can't help but smile.

You gave me a family of amazing people; I could have never chosen better for myself. They are exactly what I need, and I want to thank You for them because without them, I would not be alive and well.

You gave me struggles along the way, but I have toughened up so much and been so much better at handling my problems. I have never felt so much hurt prolonged in a span of a year, but You showed me just how strong I can be; You showed me how blessed I am to have an immense amount of emotional support around me, and You showed me how strong You will always be for me - for it is not my strength that got me through the year, but Yours.

You showed me through the pain of losing someone, how to simply be happy for them and always wish them well, and trust that You will take care of them.

For teaching me all these beautiful lessons, I thank You.

I look back at all my realisations, and I have nothing in my heart but gratitude for giving me another year to live, for giving me another year to spend with my wonderful family and friends, and for always watching over me.

Thank You for Your undying love for me - a simple girl who can be stubborn at times, but who is filled with nothing but happiness and love in her heart in this very moment.

Amen.



The Gifts *by Patricia Ang*

December is my favourite month of the year. It is a time of Christmas celebrations, fellowship and welcoming the birth of Christ. As one gets older, presents diminish in importance. Rather it is the presence of family and friends that are the true gifts that I cherish. Here are three gifts that I would like to share with you this Christmas.

Gift of Friendship

I have been blessed with a circle of friends in my journey of life. These friends include friends from my studies, my travel holidays, my work, my church community and friends with common interests. Friendship is a two way relationship – it takes time to know and support each other. It takes effort to keep in touch. My friends who have been with me have been my pillar of support through the years. They are there to provide me with advice, prayers, encouragement and friendship.

Be a friend to someone. At times people need a listening ear for their issues they are facing, prayers for health, studies, work and family life. Be in a community where one learn and grow together. In the ministry of Spotlight, I have seen the support of writers who set aside time to write/ edit articles, the binding team / secretariat who come together to print and bind Spotlight and the church community who prays and contributes articles when possible.

Gift of Time

Time flies and indeed it is coming to end of the year. At times we wonder what have we accomplished this year. Most of the time we tend to look at our achievements. Have we taken the time to reflect how have we grown spiritually? Have we put God the centre of our lives or do we only go to God when we are in trouble? Have we used our gifts and talents to build up the church of God?

This year I made an effort to spend more time with God – more in terms of attending daily Mass, attending theology and Bible classes, praying in the Adoration room. In the line of work that I do, deadline is utmost importance for clients. At times the turnaround time to produce articles can be so short that as I reflect back, it is amazing how I deliver the articles. Time management is crucial and it is also important to plan ahead. However I discovered that when I give God the time to do His work or be in prayers, He gives me back the time to settle my other matters.

Gift of Gratitude

At times it is not easy to love the people around you. Friends who form judgement of you and say insensitive remarks. People who take you for granted for the time and effort put in and whatever one does is never good enough for them. There are times of disappointment in jobs when one meets unreasonable clients or those who are late in payment oblivious to the fact one also has to pay the monthly bills. Amidst the struggles and challenges, I am grateful for God Who is always there beside me. He sustains me with His grace and provides me my daily bread.

I have learnt to look at the positive side of things and be grateful for each experience. Staying in contentment instead of being envious of others, thereby making oneself more miserable instead. I have learnt to be trust and depend on God daily.

So this Christmas, what are your gifts to God and your loved ones?



Women from the Bible, Biblical Revenge & Jubilee Years

by Ronaldly

I. Women from the Bible

Two months ago, I wrote about an infamous woman in the New Testament who became a Saint. This month, I will introduce another woman, this time from the Old Testament. I doubt if many have heard of her, or even know her name. Jochebed was a Hebrew woman and the mother of Moses. After the birth of Moses, she lived in obscurity.

Jochebed gave birth to Moses at a time when Rameses II, the Pharaoh of Egypt decreed that all first-born Israelite babies be killed. It was genocide. Rameses II felt threatened and he did not want the Hebrew population to multiply especially when they had a God Who promised to free them from slavery.

Jochebed left Moses in a watertight basket made of bulrushes in the shallow of the Nile. Baby Moses' sister Miriam, waited and watched. She saw Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to bathe and when Pharaoh's daughter found the baby in the basket, wrapped in a blanket, she took pity on him as this Israelite was doomed to die. Miriam then dashed forward, offering to find an Israelite wet nurse to care for him. Moments later, she produced Jochebed and unknown to the Egyptians, mother and son were reunited.

Moses was the great liberator whom God used mightily to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to freedom. (*watching Cecil B DeMille's "The Ten Commandments" a couple of times, we fall into the trap that Moses was actually Charleston Heston and his persecutor was Yul Brynner - but that's Hollywood.*)

II. Biblical Revenge

Whilst reading the Old and New Testament there are two teachings that seems incongruent. It has baffled me for a long time and I am sure it has confused you as well.

In the Old Testament in Exodus 21:24 God gave the law to Moses and said "But if there is injury, you are to take life for life, eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.."

In the New Testament Jesus the God of love and forgiveness in His discourse which is part of His Sermon on the Mount said in one of the most famous verses in the New Testament, "And turn the other cheek". (*Matthew 5:39*)

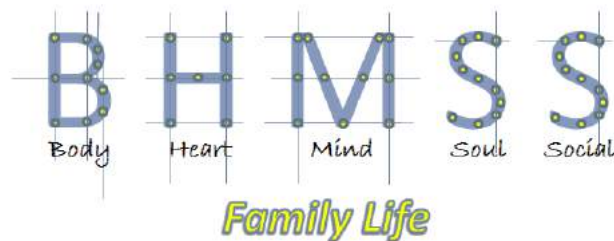
What it really meant in Exodus 21:24 is that the Jewish law of "talion" or retaliation, is intended to curb unbridled revenge by insisting on proportionate compensation. It proclaims, promotes and prevents cruel and barbaric punishment prevalent in ancient countries. The rule made the punishment fit the crime just as we have in our court of law. If the punishment meted out is too harsh, the defendant through his lawyers can appeal against sentence and vice versa if too light, they can appeal for a harsher sentencing to fit the crime.

In Matthew 5:39 as mentioned above, the law of retaliation ("an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth) was intended to restrict vengeance and to keep violence within limits. Here Jesus tells His followers to even forgo the limited retaliation so as to interrupt the whole cycle of revenge.

III. Jubilee Years

In both the Jewish and our present Catholic tradition, we celebrate a festival called the Jubilee year held once every 50 years. The last one was celebrated in the year 2000. The essence behind it is “forgiveness” Debts are to be written off and in the Old Testament, the Master has to free at least one of his slaves to let him gain his freedom.

In the last year of Jubilee, in a service, the Vatican closes all its doors and the Pope stands outside and knocks three times (sounds familiar with Tony Orlando’s song) with the end of his Papal staff for the doors to be opened signifying the rededication and renewal of the Church. We were all reminded to write off all our debts owed to us. For many of us, the reverse is more true and practical. With this explanation, I now don’t have to worry about practicing to turn the other cheek in fear of losing more teeth!



‘You must love the Lord your God with all your **heart**, with all your **soul**, with all your **strength [body]**, and with all your **mind**, and **your neighbour [social]** as yourself.’ ‘You have answered right,’ said Jesus. ‘**Do this and life is yours.**’ - *Luke 10:27-28*

Creating in the image and likeness of God

“...Scientific and technological progress, which contemporary man is continually expanding in his dominion over nature, not only offers the hope of creating a new and better humanity, but also causes ever greater anxiety regarding the future. Some ask themselves if it is a good thing to be alive or if it would be better never to have been born; they doubt therefore if it is right to bring others into life when perhaps they will curse their existence in a cruel world with unforeseeable terrors. Others consider themselves to be the only ones for whom the advantages of technology are intended and they exclude others by imposing on them contraceptives or even worse means. Still others imprisoned in a consumer mentality and whose sole concern is to bring about a continual growth of material goods, finish by ceasing to understand, and thus by refusing, the spiritual riches of a new human life. The ultimate reason

for these mentalities is the absence in people's hearts of God, whose love alone is stronger than all the world's fears and can conquer them. Thus an anti-life mentality is born..."(Familiaris Consortio, #30)

When we deprive our God-given abilities to create things of our own hands in our daily lives, consumer mentality is born. Bit by bit, day by day, we consume more of what we could have created for ourselves and for others. When days and months become years, we risk becoming habitual "takers" and "buyers" that is characteristic of consumerism. On one hand, we may not have all the time, resources and know how to create everything for ourselves. On the other hand, it is also equally extreme to partake in consumerism in all aspects of our lives without second thoughts. Be watchful, as such a widespread culture of consumerism within and outside of our families will normalize "what is in it for me" or "anti-life" mentalities in both ourselves and our children.

Perhaps, a way forward for all of us out of this cycle of consumerism is to once again get in touch with our God-given creative nature to make things for ourselves and for others. Create a culture of outward looking activities like "making" and "creating". Teach and show our children that they too have God given abilities to create things for themselves and for others. Make time to bond through baking, cooking, building and Doing-It-Yourself (DIY) whenever and wherever we can. Learning how to do so will also help us get in touch with our childlike natures for discovery and fun. And, when we produce more of what we have as a gift for others, we transform inside out into a life-giving community through the work of our hands. Just as God did as creator of heaven and earth.

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To share your thoughts, email us – bhmssfamilylife@gmail.com



Humble and Penitent

by Fr Remi

We have heard this story of the conversion of Matthew many times, so let us do something different. Let us imagine we were him. If you were Matthew sitting at the custom post while Jesus passes by and tells you: "Follow Me." Would you get up from your seat and follow the Master?

I am intrigued to know more about tax collector as a profession. I think they would be comparable to our modern day custom officials, and for that it is easy to

understand why they are unpopular. Hatred of paying duties is part of human nature. I saw a video of a woman being asked to pay tax by a custom officer for an expensive handbag she bought overseas. It is very obvious that she was reluctant.

Did Matthew think his job was bad? Maybe, but maybe not as bad. It was a profession, and everybody needs to eat and live. Just like a pickpocket who got caught by a priest in a bus in Rome. When asked to return the wallet she stole, the thief scolded the priest instead: "I also need to eat. I also need to live." At least the tax collector is a profession justified by law.

Perhaps what made a tax collector's life miserable was the social stigma¹. He was not accepted by his own people. He would not be as free and comfortable in the synagogue, for example, and deep in his heart he knew that he asked the people more than the tax requires. But he needed the money to live.

Still, it was quite a brave resolution for Matthew to respond to Jesus' call. As a learned man, he did not know what life would be like when he followed this travelling Rabbi, but there was hope in him now to live a more meaningful life. Not merely surviving, but really living a life. He was not being judged as a sinner; he had been given a second chance. Little does he know that his account on the life of Jesus would be so important for the Church.

The story of Matthew can reawaken in us the story of our own vocation. How we find friendship with the Lord. How He stuns us with the power that He possesses, and inspires us with His sacrifices. How we do not know what future promises, but we trust Him anyhow. Nevertheless, the struggle does not end with our "Yes". The journey of repentance continuous on.

Jesus' response to the Pharisees holds the key to repentance. "*Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do.*" (Mt 9:12) He gives a new worldview to the concept of purity in the Jewish-Levitical belief. It is not the Lord who becomes impure, sitting in a table with sinners, but the sinners who become pure through the communion at the table with Him.

What does the self-sufficient and self-assured man know about sin and divine mercy? As long as the "righteous" has not become conscious of being a sinner he cannot be saved by Jesus. For there is no pardon when there is no regret and conversion of heart. The Lord's pardon is a gift we give ourselves for being humble and penitent. Amen.

¹ Social stigma is extreme disapproval of (or discontent with) a person or group based on socially characteristic grounds that are perceived, and serve to distinguish them, from other members of a society.

Congratulations to our winners for last month's issue: **Alyssa Low Hui Ying and Esther Tong**. For a chance to win a special gift, please submit your entry to the church office by the 12th of this month. (For children 12 years & below - not for the Spotlight team & their families.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact No. _____

The Spirit of Christmas

The crowds asked John, "What should we do?" John told them, "If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn't have any. If you have food, share it with someone else." Luke 3:10-11 (CEV)

Words are taken from Luke 3:7-11 (NLT).



I C P W Y O H P P S V Q V S A
A G T R F Q W R R O H G A X F
L H O U O K V P L O O I O Y U
C Z U P R D P U T O V R R O U
H Z F N Q N U C R X T E T T D
U F O F G E E C E U W S E P S
I R O Q M R J D E Q E R C F D
P U D S C N Y Q J K A K D E Q
C I U E U F Y S A H U R H T R
I T X M L Z E N S W A R N E D
S I N S I G S I O U W C V Q P
H E X Z V I S R M T W O I W A
K E O A E V B F C R O W D S Q
T O A R L E D R E P E N T N O
Z G L Q O H B O B A P T I S M

baptism	give	poor	share	tree
crowds	good	produce	shirts	turned
food	hungry	prove	sins	two
fruit	live	repent	snakes	warned