

Spotlight

December 2016

聚光



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*“Behold, the Virgin shall be with child and bear a Son, and they shall name Him Emmanuel, which means “God is with us.”
Matthew 1:23*

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

The Gift

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” (1 John 5:11-21)

December is always my favourite month – the Advent Season, Christmas, catching up with friends and fellowship. Yet this is also a reminder for me that it is the birth of Jesus, fully divine and fully human, who gives us the gift of life. Cherish every moment of life and the people around you.

During this festive season many of us often busy ourselves with the presents to get, the parties to host and the clothes to wear. What about our spiritual journey in this Advent Season? Has there been spiritual growth this year? When was the last time you went for the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Are we able to put aside our pride and forgive others? Are we able to take time and truly be present for our family and friends? Are we able to see the small blessings in our lives?

The Advent booklet is one way of spending time with your family in prayer and in reflection. Do something together as family, listen and share with them your Christmas reflection/ stories. Spend time with your family and affirm them with words, actions and love.

Be a friend to someone. How about donating gifts or clothes to those in need – those in SVDP, orphanage, old folks home or someone you know who is lonely or in need. Invite a friend or a colleague whom you know who may be all alone to join in at Christmas Mass or a meal at your place with your family.

As a community, pray for one another. One of the gifts you can offer this season is the gift of prayer. If you are not in any ministry, how about joining one to grow in your faith and to contribute. It is always a joy to serve the Lord. You will experience the gift of gratitude, humility and teamwork.

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

Twin Hearts Reading Room (Library)

Saturday 4.00 – 5.50pm & 7.00 to 8.00pm
Sunday 8.30am to 1.00pm & 6.30pm to 7.00pm
Weekdays (Mon to Fri) 9.00am to 11.00am
All are Welcome!

MASS WITH HEALING SERVICE

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

Eucharistic Adoration

*“Could you not watch
one hour with me?”
- Mark 14:37*

**EVERY THURSDAY
AFTER 6PM MASS
IN CHURCH
ALL ARE WELCOME**



CAR PARK LOTS IN CHURCH COMPOUND

Parishioners please be informed that during the weekend Masses, no announcement will be made if your car is blocked. This is to show reverence to our Sacred Mass. Please be considerate when you park

ADORE THE LORD IN HOLY ATTIRE



Journey With Jesus (JWJ)
Information Night

Come and listen to find out about the “Journey with Jesus”
programme.

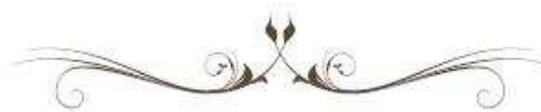
Date: 3 January 2017

Place: St James room, Damien Centre, BSC

Time: 8pm

**To register, please call or sms your name and mobile number to
Paul @96907435**

All are welcome. Light refreshments will be served.



**St. Joseph Tamil Prayer Group is Celebrating Advent
on
18th December (3rd Sunday)**

Tamil Mass Starts at 6.00pm

Advent Celebration Starts at 7.30pm

(Dance / Singing / Games / Prizes)

Followed by Fellowship

Location: Damien Hall

For queries contact Wilfred @ Hp 96705734

PPC 2016-18 Theme : “Evangelising the Family”
– A Mindset Challenge
by PPC Core Team & Ex-Co

The Parish Pastoral Council (“PPC”) consists of representatives from all organisations in the Parish. The PPC, after reviewing the results of the survey forms and the feedback from the Parish Assembly in 2015, followed by the two PPC meetings in June and October 2016, saw very worrying trends. We hope with the cooperation and participation of parishioners and all current organisations, we will be able to start reversing these trends over the next few years. Most of these trends are not new but collectively, have now taken on greater urgency. Arising from that, the PPC had collectively discerned that the theme “**Evangelising the Family**” will help us all to tackle the challenges at individual, organisational and Parish levels.

The “Family” we are referring to includes the extended family, care-givers & relevant neighbours.

Much of what follows in this article is “work in progress” and limited space here does not allow sharing of details. However it is important for the Parish to be informed of this new and important initiative.

There will invariably be certain training and acquisition of relevant skill-sets to be able to carry out the intended objectives. The roll-out will not start with a big bang. Much of what is needed is a re-orientation of mindset of every parishioner in carrying out existing activities/programmes towards Evangelising the Family; reviewing the current commitment of each organisation; moving away from activity or task-orientated outlook. Being convinced at the heart-level that the challenges must be met and buying into the proposed actions are needed for any individual or organisation to be convicted that this effort is a worthy investment.

Without affecting the core focus of worship at Masses or current Parish wide events, suggestions received are being reviewed on how they can promote “Evangelising the Family”.

Our Parish Priest and Spiritual Directors are also meeting the organisations in groups to align singular spiritual direction and synergise efforts. The biggest challenge will be to embrace a fresh mindset of collaboration between organisations in each of the identified 3 Tracks. The organisation partners in the Tracks are not static. There will be more Tracks coming in play as we journey with this theme.

Track 1 - Pre-Marriage Couples; Newly Weds; Young Parents; Infant Baptism

For various reasons, a growing number of newly married couples finds living up to the demands of a Christian married couple overwhelming. Formation of newly wed couples is lacking.

There is much joy and anticipation in looking forward to the baptism of a baby in the family. Beyond the ceremony, we need to come alongside with the new family with a better preparation process and follow through. Evangelising a new family is a process that must involve members of the Parish over a longer period of time.

As a start, we intend to start forming a community of Family Circles from newly-weds and families. For pre-marriage couples, continuing formation and assimilation into a support community has been identified as a needed action.

(If you are able to assist in this Track, please contact John Tallas at johntallas@gmail.com)

Track 2: Children/Youths Attending Catechism & Parents; Single-Parents; Divorcees

The parents with their children attending our catechism classes present a good opportunity for collaboration among various organisations for formation of these families. This will not be easy but a challenge we must meet if we want a vibrant and steadfast Parish community in 10 or 20 years' time.

Challenges faced by divorcees and single parents need to be addressed. Collaboration between certain groups are needed to journey with our brothers and sisters in this situation in a constructive and empowering manner.

(If you are able to assist in this Track, please contact Joseph Lee at leewankai@gmail.com)

Track 3: Bereavements; The Chronically Ill; Senior Parishioners

With the current demographics of our Parish, it is perhaps not surprising that many organisations expressed interest in this Track. Many families consist of a mix of Catholics; lapsed Catholics and non-Catholics.

Journeying with the elderly, the chronic ill and their family and care-givers does not come naturally for most of us. Yet the situation presents a rich opportunity for evangelising the family.

The same goes for bereavement in a family. Engaging the grieving beyond the prayer sessions at a wake has been identified as a need that requires the planned and concerted efforts involving the collaboration of several organisations. The journey during such crisis time will take several months and with our limited resources and manpower, effective evangelisation can only be achieved by the combined effort of many of us.

(If you feel you can assist in this area please contact Ray Christian at ray@performa-intl.biz or at [98559402](tel:98559402))

Let us continue this faith adventure together with Jesus and in collaboration with one another, for we are “the salt of the earth and the light of the world” (*Matthew 5:13-16*).

A MOMENT OF YOUTH

WHAT DOES CHRISTMAS MEAN TO YOU?

“The birth of Christ means new hope, that sinners can find refuge in the birth of Jesus. That sins may be forgiven now that the world has received its Saviour! The Chosen One who will save us from everlasting death” – *Jason Dass, 20*

“The birth of Christ is something that reminds me to be thankful, a joyous event that is celebrated annually. And an important reminder of the sole reason why we are here today.” *Abegail Arendayen, 17*

“It means the coming of Jesus and having the time to spend with your family and friends. It is also time to reflect on the year we have had as we prepare for the new year that God has given us.” – *Ewin Teodoric, 14*

“It means that a leader is born. He is proof that God exists and that miracles do happen if we believe and have faith in Him. It is also a reminder that Jesus is also like us in that He is 100% human but He is also 100% divine.” – *Noel Vikram, 15*

“Christmas is a time to celebrate the love of Jesus in us. It is also a chance to share this love with those around us so that they too can celebrate this love with us.” – *Jamie Teo, 18*

Revisiting the Christmas Narrative

by Isabelle Ilankovan

We have heard the Christmas narrative countless times and practiced Christmas traditions each year so much so that it will forever be a part of us. However, just like how we are often called to stop and remember the reason for the season, have we also stopped to consider how biblical our version of the Christmas story or our Christmas traditions are? Perhaps to trigger a curiosity to understand why we believe what we believe, here are some simple Christmas myths:

1. Mary travelled to Bethlehem on a donkey

While there is some truth in this, given the 60 miles or more of rough terrain that Joseph and Mary probably had to travel, it is more likely that they had a wagon attached to the donkey for a more comfortable ride.

2. There was no room in the inn

In those times, they didn't have hotels or motels like how we would imagine an inn to be like. In fact, travellers stayed in the upper rooms of people's houses. So if the inns were full, it meant that nobody had a spare room to offer. Also, in the Bible, there is no mention of an innkeeper.

3. Mary and Joseph were sent to a stable

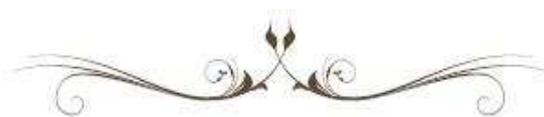
We often imagine a physical wooden structure filled with animals and straw but actually, the animals used to be kept in the houses on the main floor. If there were a stable it was attached to the house itself and not a separate building far from the house. The bible doesn't really mention a stable either, the only indication of animals being around is the mention of a manger which is used to feed animals. Either way, our King was still born in a humble place.

4. There were three kings and they arrived on the day of Jesus' birth

Again, the Bible doesn't really mention how many of them there were but these men were known as magi which means 'wise men'. The Bible mentions three gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh. So there could have been ten or twenty wise men for all we know. Also, considering that they came from the east, these men would have had to travel a very long distance. All we know is "they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother" (Matthew 2:11). Besides, King Herod later orders the killing of children under two years old

after being tipped off by the magi. So Jesus could have been older when the magi finally reached Him.

While there may be other interpretations of ancient Jewish culture and answers to some of these myths, perhaps this could be a stepping stone for you to understand further some of your beliefs and traditions. But no matter how the narrative is told, when all the man-made traditions are stripped away, there is one eternal truth: A baby boy, born of a Virgin, this day in the city of David. A Saviour; Christ the Lord. Have a blessed Advent.



A Family's Spiritual Journey Towards Christmas

by Caroline David

As a kid, I still remember how I looked forward to Christmas, not because of presents (as I hardly got any) but the joy that I saw on everyone's face. Coming from a humble background, my family lived in a rental flat in the early years of my life. My mother would cook briyani not just for our family but also for my neighbours to share that joy with them. Upon reflecting on their generosity, I realise that my parents had to save enough to share this special occasion with others. This also meant it was a time to give without expecting.

When I started my own family, we got sucked into the worldly way of preparing for Christmas. Time before Christmas was spent on buying presents, clothes, cleaning and decorating the house and other activities with hardly any time reflecting on the spirituality of Christmas. The true meaning of Christmas got lost and the children grew up with the expectation of presents during Christmas.

A breakthrough came about 8 years ago when my family did not have an elaborate Christmas celebration as my mother-in-law had passed away. As Indians we mourn the death of our loved ones for one year. That year we decided to celebrate Christmas differently. I picked up

the idea from the Advent booklet for that year and discussed it with my husband and my sons. We decided to set up a Jesse tree instead. Initially, I was apprehensive as I thought that the boys would find the project lame and give up after the second week. Much to my surprise, the boys, one being a teen and the other a preteen, were enthusiastic. Each day we took turns to create an ornament to decorate the tree. These ornaments were nothing to praise about as they were simple pictures hand drawn and coloured on paper. Nevertheless, each picture beautifully retold the stories in the Bible that led to Jesus' birth. Each time a picture was hung on the tree, the person who drew it would explain the meaning of the ornament to the rest of the family. This brought a deeper appreciation of the celebration and our faith. When Christmas came we had the most beautiful Christmas tree ever. No lights, no ostentatious ornaments, no fancy bows or ribbons but simple meaningful pictures that told the story of our Lord. The tree became a talking point for those who visited us.

Since then Christmas has taken a new meaning for my family. Each year we try to do a simple project. One year each of us saved money from the allowance given as a form of sacrifice during Advent to sponsor a meal at St Joseph's Old Age Home. The whole family was involved in serving and talking to the elderly and even feeding those who were unable to do so. Last year my family participated in the Advent Wreath Workshop organized by Family Life Ministry. The true meaning of a wreath was discovered and shared as a family. Lighting the candles during family prayer brought much joy as the boys continued to light the candles and reflect on the Advent Readings though my husband and I were away for a period of time.

Advent is here again. Is Christmas preparation going to be only about spring cleaning, baking cookies, buying new clothes and presents for each other? As parents what would we like to teach our children about Christmas? Bring the true meaning of Christmas to your children by getting the whole family involved in a spiritual journey. The Advent booklet may be one way to start it off!

Advent – Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord!

by Jacqueline Lee

The Advent season sometimes tends to be downplayed, with social preparations for Christmas taking centre stage instead. Then, Christmas just comes—and goes—too quickly.

Advent in the Church’s Liturgical Calendar

Our Catholic year is organised into the Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter seasons, and Ordinary Time, with Advent known as “the little Lent” because it mirrors Lent’s spiritual preparation for a momentous celebration and is a penitential season. It is a time of prayer and fasting, to prepare properly for Jesus’ coming. Advent is also the start of the Church’s Liturgical Year which is how the Church marks time.

During Advent, we reflect on the centuries of longing for the promised Messiah, as expressed by the prophets. In Jesus’ time, we have Simeon and Anna living long holy lives, awaiting His coming. Further afield, the Magi studied the stars in great expectation of the birth of the new King.

How can we give our Lord the place He deserves in our Advent preparation, while the world around us busies itself with Christmas shopping, decorations and music? Here are some suggestions.

★ Stock up on heavenly treasures more than on Christmas presents.

From the lectionary, we can find more than stockings full of heavenly goodies, to spiritually strengthen our Advent.

Advent Mass readings

On the First Sunday of Advent, we hear of Jesus’ final coming, which we also anticipate with great hope, and then about John the Baptist’s ministry on the Second and Third Sundays. After these weeks of preparation, we move on to the Nativity narratives. The Old Testament readings throughout Advent are taken from the prophets writing about the coming Messiah and the Messianic age, while the New Testament readings tie in with these Advent themes.

Micah and Isaiah, “Christmas Prophets”

Some of the well-known references to Jesus’ coming are found in the Books of Micah and Isaiah, contemporaries whose calls came during the time when

Israel and Judah were flourishing but had long forgotten that their allegiance should be solely with God.

Micah warns of the consequences of deserting the one true God but also speaks of hope and the new King who would bring a time of peace. He exhorts the people to remember God's covenant and to live it.

“But I shall look to Yahweh, my hope is in the God Who will save me; my God will hear me.” (Micah 7:7)

Isaiah warns Judah against turning to political allies instead of being devoted to God. The rulers do indeed decide to depend on their allies and the people pay the price for it. Amidst the death and suffering, he speaks of hope and looks towards a time of peace and justice.

“The wolf will live with the lamb, the panther lie down with the kid, calf, lion and fat-stock beast together, with a little boy to lead them... No hurt, no harm will be done on all my holy mountain, for the country will be full of knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:6-9)

★ Bare our souls in God's presence before we get too caught up with baubles and glitter.

John the Baptist preaches repentance as the way to prepare for Christ's coming, and to those who ask him, “What must we do?”, he says, “produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (*Luke 3:8*).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that “interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end to sin, ... it entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of His grace” (*CCC 1431*). The Church reminds us of the need for spiritual spring-cleaning, to set things right for a joyful and holy welcome for Jesus, and provides us with the means to do so.

To help us in this, the Advent penitential services for the West District churches will be held from 12 to 16 December. In addition, confessions are heard at Blessed Sacrament Church after all weekday Masses and before all weekend Masses.

The message of Advent reaches beyond the season as well. St. Charles Borromeo, in a pastoral letter on Advent, writes:

“Christ, Who came once in the flesh, is prepared to come again. When we remove all obstacles to His presence, He will come at any hour and moment, to dwell spiritually in our hearts, bringing with Him the riches of His grace.”

★ Pray and sing the great Advent and Christmas prayers and hymns instead of giving too much attention to bells, snowmen and reindeer in song.

The O Antiphons

From 17 to 24 December, the Church prays the “O Antiphons” in the Vespers and in the Acclamation before the Gospel. This practice, dating back to the 4th century, expresses our deep need for our Saviour. Each day, He is addressed with a Messianic title: *O Wisdom, O Lord and Ruler, O Root of Jesse, O Key of David, O Morning Star/Rising Dawn, O King of the Nations, O Emmanuel.*

Prayers and hymns from Luke’s Gospel

The Gospel according to St. Luke provides hymns and prayers that can be our daily songs through Advent and Christmas.

- ***Hail Mary*** – The Angel Gabriel (Luke 1:28) and Elizabeth (Luke 1:42-43) greet the Mother of our Lord.
- ***Magnificat*** (“magnifies”) – Mary sings praise to God (Luke 1:46-55).
- ***Benedictus*** (“blessed”) – Zechariah praises God for His faithfulness and His saving plan (Luke 1:67-79).
- ***Gloria in Excelsis Deo*** (“glory to God in the highest”) – The angels exuberantly welcome Jesus at His birth (Luke 2:14). This is echoed by the crowds who welcome Him when He enters Jerusalem (Luke 19:38).
- ***Nunc Dimittis*** (“now dismiss”) – Simeon sings of Jesus as the fulfilment of God’s promises (Luke 2:28-32).

May our Advent joy and hope rise above the merriment of the world’s “Christmas”, as we welcome Jesus in our true celebration of Christmas:

***O Come, divine Messiah,
The world in silence waits the day
When hope shall sing its triumph
And sadness flees away.***



Let Us Not Forget Our Friends In Need (FiNs) This Christmas

by BSC SSVP Exco

With less than two months left before we bid farewell to 2016, perhaps some of us might want to take stock of what we did or what we missed doing over the last couple of months.

Interestingly, we had a case that came to us for financial assistance in early January. Sixty-four-year-old Mr. Tan (not his real name) came with a friend. You might ask why he did not come alone. Mr. Tan suffers from hearing and speech impairment so he brought along his friend, someone who knows him well enough to speak on his behalf. Mr. Tan resides within the BSC neighbourhood. He takes care of his 93 year old mother who is wheelchair bound as well as an intellectually disabled older brother.

We were told he was charged in Court for drug trafficking and released from prison in 1994. Whilst in prison he felt sad and despondent and unable to help his mother and brother. When he came out of prison, he was employed as a cleaner earning a meagre monthly income. He was also resourceful and managed to get a short term financial help from Comcare. Their financial assistance to the family expired in March this year.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul immediately adopted Mr. Tan and his family members and gave them monthly cash assistance. We also made arrangements with 'Willing Hearts' to provide daily lunch for them from Monday to Saturday. During his lunch break, Mr. Tan would pick up the packet lunch from church and bring them back to his home.

We might feel happy for this bread winner but also worried that he might be bullied by his colleagues at work because of his impairment. Spiritually, we uplift him and all of our FiNs in our daily prayers. Mr. Tan eventually stopped working due to a bloated stomach and swelling feet. He is receiving medical attention.

This is just one case we are highlighting in Spotlight. Currently we are helping 47 families residing within the Blessed Sacrament Church boundary. There could be more families seeking SSVP's financial aid in the years ahead.

Presently our objectives are two-fold:

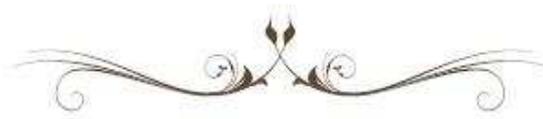
1. Providing more for the needy, the elderly and the marginalized residing within the purview of the Church of the Blessed Sacrament.
2. Partnering the poor and living the faith.

In closing we wish to say a 'BIG THANK YOU' to you for your generous monetary contributions you have given us over the years. This Advent we hope to give a little extra to our needy families.

Please make your Cheques payable to: SSVP Blessed Sacrament.

We wish you and your family

A JOYOUS, BLESSED CHRISTMAS & A HAPPY, PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!



Mission Sunday *by Fr Damien Society*

St Damien was a missionary priest who went to Molokai (island of lepers) to serve the lepers by building houses and parish. The sick were cared of, and the dead were given a proper burial.

As part of Mission Sunday, Fr Damien Society invited two sisters, Sr Lydia and Sr Ale SS.CC (same order as St Damien) to share about their vocation and what they do in serving in the slum areas of Bagung Silang Philippines. They shared about their work at all the weekend masses on 22 and 23 October. They also gave a presentation at length in the hall, on the works and on the funds needed. Those who attended were generous with their donations and also parishioners during that weekend Masses.

Fr. Damien Society also supports 100 children from the elementary school in Bagung Silang and the milk nourishment programme for 1200 children.

Another project that took place on Mission Sunday was the collection of 5 cent coins. This project of collecting 5 cent coins have been going on for a couple of years. The money collected is used to help with funds for the hospice children in Uganda and is run by Dr Anne Merriman. We were surprised with the generous contribution by so many parishioners and we collected about \$427. (Thank you everyone who have donated).

A Not-So-White Confirmation

by Kelley D'Cruz

With my sister having gone through the Sacrament of Confirmation just this November, it brought me back to my Confirmation almost five years ago. At the time, there were few things that ran through my mind as I prepared to go through this Sacrament.

Firstly, I was finally 'graduating' from Catechism class. Secondly, I had the opportunity to add a name of my choosing when getting confirmed. Thirdly, it was my chance to splurge a little and buy myself a new white outfit for the special day. Of course, I did prepare myself spiritually for the Sacrament, but I'll admit that more often than not, the unimportant details of the day took precedence. So this year, when I heard from my sister that her class of Confirmands were told they could dress in any colour, I was a little taken aback and decided to do some research; was wearing white a necessity when going through with this Sacrament?

I learnt three things, or perhaps was reminded of three things, that I'd like to leave with the 23 newly confirmed in our parish.

1) ***Of the seven Sacraments the Catholic Church recognises, three are an initiation that welcomes one into the family of Christ; Baptism, Communion and Confirmation.*** So being confirmed is like saying a louder 'yes' to our Lord than we did at Baptism. This affirmation does not come easy though, because what I realise now is that being a Catholic, having said yes all those years ago, proves to be no walk in the park - it requires constant prayer.

2) ***During Confirmation, the Confirmands are anointed with chrism or holy oil by the Archbishop. This gesture signifies that we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in order to be more closely conformed to Christ, God's 'Anointed One.'*** To be frank, when the oil was being placed on my forehead those five years ago, I did not fully understand its significance.

- 3) *When one is confirmed, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are received (That of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord) – what does this mean?* He makes Himself present in our lives. It is He who prays, forgives, infuses hope, cares for the needy, creates communion and instils peace in our lives. These gifts we receive and pray to live out is Him doing His works in us.
- 4) *At Baptism, we wear white to signify our dignity and purity as we are born again in Christ Jesus – which is probably where we got the idea to be dressed in white for Confirmation as well.*

The books vary in answers too, which makes the answer rather simple; confirmands need not be in white specifically. However, we should keep in mind that Confirmation is a Sacrament that happens only once in our lives. It is a wonderful celebration, so why not look the part?

The uproar that stirred within me about the Confirmands not needing to dress in white dwindled when after looking more into this beautiful Sacrament, my attention was focused on its true significance.

So to all the newly confirmed, I would like to leave you with a quote Pope Francis gave in a speech. *“Thank the Lord for the grace of our Confirmation, that, filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, we may always mirror Christ’s presence in our relations with others, our openness to those in need and our living witness to the Gospel message of joy and peace.”*

Congratulations to the newly confirmed!

Childlike Faith

by Stella Lee

“I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” *Matthew 18:3*

One of the wonderful things of being a follower of Jesus is that there is nothing wrong with being childlike. In fact, childlike faith is something Jesus looks for and delights in. Every new born believer in Christ is childlike in faith. It is a challenge how to remain childlike in faith once we grow up.

If you watch children interact with others and the world around them, there is a blur between childlike and childish. Both qualities endear children to us but as they age, will they maintain the innocence of their childlikeness while outgrowing the petulance of their childishness?

Our heavenly Father has the same purpose for each of His children. He wants us to be ever childlike in our faith relationship with Him while continually putting aside our childish self-centred way.

Here are some qualities of childlike faith every Christian should aspire and seek to nurture regardless of their age.

Joyful

A child's joy is in the people they love being with. David, the great king and Psalmist, wrote frequently of the joy of being in the presence of the one he loved. *“In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.”* Psalm 16:11.

Like a child smiling gleefully at the sight of their parents, you can smile gleefully at the knowledge of God being with us for He has promised to never leave nor forsake us. Living in God's presence is the source of true and lasting joy that will be independent of our circumstances.

Carefree

Children are free to live in the present with no concern for the future. They can focus and reveal in the moment because they are not entangled by the complications and distractions of this life.

John the Baptist is a good illustration of this childlike quality, considering the simplicity of his life, his wilderness home and diet, his narrow focus of ministry, his unwavering message of repentance and his freedom from fear of man.

Imaginative

Children see possibilities where many see problems. Their imagination knows no limitation. The world is their stage where their dramatic creations are enacted without self-consciousness. Creativity is best nurtured in a child's world of unconditional love and acceptance that is free of critique.

Joshua, Israel's military commander, had a unique privilege of being trained in God's creative ways of winning battles. He had seen miraculous victories won by arms lifted in prayer and seven day marches. It so stirred his faith and imagination that when he found himself in a battle where he needed more time, he simply commanded the sun and moon to stand still. *"There was no day like that before it or after it when the Lord listened to the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel."* Joshua 10:14.

Insistent

Often children can be persistent. They never tire of asking questions and making requests. Like the widow with the unjust judge, children think that if they are insistent enough, they will get what they want.

When Bartimaeus, the blind man, heard Jesus was passing by, he began to shout repeatedly like an insistent child. "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The people rebuked him and tried to silence him but he shouted all the more. He was so insistent that Jesus could not help but stopped and addressed his need. "Go, your faith has healed you." Mk 10:46-52.

Spontaneous

Children are always ready for a new adventure. They do not want to be put off until tomorrow what they believe can be done today.

Peter's childlike spontaneity delighted Jesus. As a result, Peter was the only one to walk on water and the first among the apostles to declare who Jesus really was. "Christ, the Son of the living God." Mt 16:16.

Trusting

Children trust without hesitancy. They are oblivious to danger and fearless in their exploration.

The Apostle Paul put himself in perilous situations all for the cause of the Gospel. Since his conversion, he had entrusted himself to God as a child to his father. He never wavered from that childlike trust. He knew that even in the darkest hour, his Father would never let him fall.

Transparency

Children are not good at hiding their flaws, their wrong doings or their emotions. What they see is what you get. They are quick to reveal what they think and what they feel, to confess what they have done, and to receive what they need in terms of forgiveness and comfort.

In Lk 7:44, 50, the sinful woman shamelessly appeared at the Pharisees' dinner in order to make her life right with Jesus. With a repentant heart, she washed His feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, kissed them and poured expensive perfume on them. It was a poignant scene of true nature and transparency. "Your sins are given." Jesus said. "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Are these childlike qualities evidence of faith in your life? Which are most prevalent? Why not ask God to make you more childlike in your faith and reflect on one of these qualities each day?

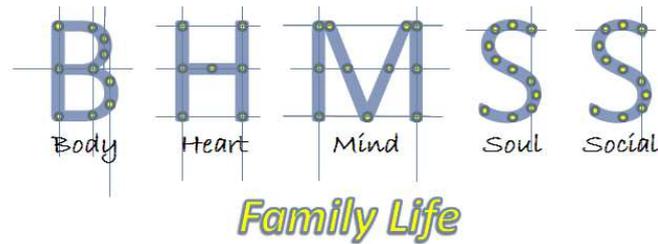
Living for the Poor

by Fr Remi



- Both readings today make references to money. Saint Paul writes to the Philippians with fond memories of his early days of the Good News, when they were the only ones who helped with gifts of money.
- Jesus gives an advice of using money to win friends, such that when it no longer has any effect upon people, those friends you have gained will welcome you into the eternal dwelling. It is really a peculiar advice coming from Jesus, especially when read out of context.
- This statement was given with the contrast of the sinners (tax collectors) and the righteous religious leaders (Pharisees and scribes) as the background. As the sinners were all crowding round to listen to Jesus, the righteous complained saying, '*This Man welcomes sinners and eats with them.*' (Lk 15: 1-2)
- Jesus responded by telling parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son, and the cunning move of an estate manager of a rich man. To me it doesn't make sense that Jesus is actually praising the dishonest behaviour of an estate manager. What is the message then?

- The key comes from Jesus' statement: *“For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light.”* (Lk 16:8) Just as the others are using money for their gain, Jesus is advising the children of the light to use money to win souls. But beware that *“No servant can be the slave of two masters... You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.”* (Lk 6:13)
- In reality one can either be obsessed by wealth and become a miser, or possess wealth and being generous for good purposes. It is a matter of priorities. When we deal with money, we need to make a decision of being the master of it, or becoming its slave.
- As life experience tells, practicing may not be as easy as saying. Many times we like to stay in the grey area, sitting on the fence of indecision. But as a person said: *“One can only sit on the fence so long without hurting.”*
- We therefore need to make a stand towards money and wealth, and for that we need a clarity of vision. Poverty is one of the three vows that we embrace in living a consecrated. We strive day to day to be detached from wealth and power that it gives, yet wisdom whispers that there is no need to be allergic to money.
- What does the vow of poverty mean to us? Does it mean we have to live like the poor? How poor should we be? This is an open question for a heated discussion on relativity. But here is my point. Living **like** the poor has its merit, but living **for** the poor is more demanding.
- To live like the poor, one needs to imitate their living in scarcity, while to live for the poor demands that we need to keep ourselves fit in order to serve. It demands wisdom to use money wisely to keep ourselves healthy.
- Amen.



‘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

Holistic Sex Education

“...Education in love as self-giving is also the indispensable premise for parents called to give their children a clear and delicate sex education. Faced with a culture that largely reduces human sexuality to the level of something commonplace, since it interprets and lives it in a reductive and impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with selfish pleasure, the educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training in the area of sex that is truly and fully personal: for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person--body, emotions and soul--and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love...”

(Familiaris Consortio, #37)

Perhaps, one of the main reasons why sex education continues to be an awkward topic in most families lies in our inability to comprehend or communicate that the inmost meaning of sex is actually the *gift of self in love*. The sexual act is a means towards this end.

What does it mean to gift oneself based on love? We came to the realisation that unless we as parents gift ourselves as an act of love in every interaction throughout the days, weeks, years...sex education will likely stop short at the level of the sciences; at the level of a moral discourse; or at the level of social mores. Neither of which, has the ability to take the conversation to the inmost meaning of what it

means to gift oneself out of love. To be able to provide authentic examples to our children, our children need to visualise self-giving love manifested in daily family life.

In addition, we also came to the realisation that respect for human dignity and the opposite sex starts with one's self-worth. If we are able to help our children accept and build their self-worth, we will be able to take the next step to help them understand what it means to respect another person for who she or he is. And, once our children understand what it means to mutually respect human dignity, will we be able to start a meaningful conversation on sex and what it means to gift oneself to the other as a holistic sex education that includes the sciences, morals and social mores. Perhaps, we need to start looking at our spouses today and truly love them for who they are. For this will be the simple first step to love the other over self.

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



Book Review

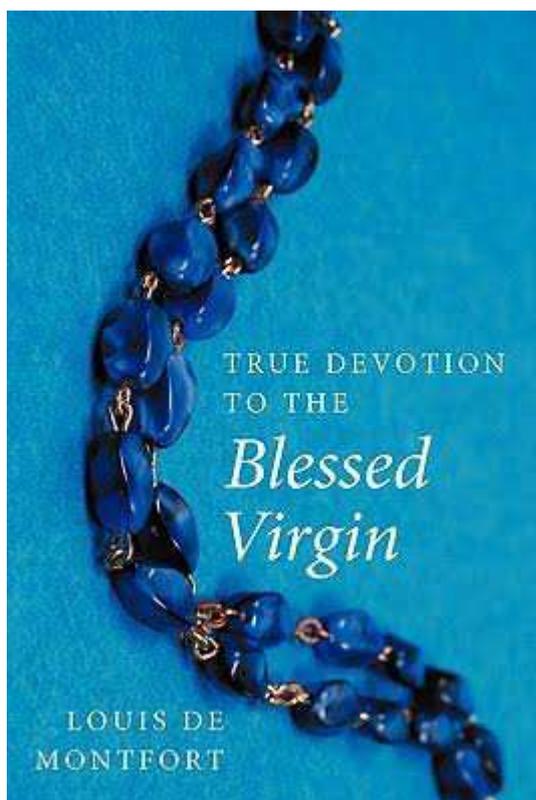
By Jean Lim

True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin

This was written by St Louis Marie de Montfort and it is perhaps the most important book about Marian devotion. Pope John Paul II, now St John Paul, had said that this book marked the turning point in his life.

This book was seen as divinely inspired and it shows us the short, perfect and secure way to Heaven. Now, who does not want to go to heaven?

One is not truly Catholic if one has no devotion to Mary.



Congratulations to our winners for last month's issue: **Timothy Silvester Mali & Ophelia Lim Ker Wei**. 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. _____

Christmas Crossword

Make all the words fit into this crossword.
 Each word is only used once.



- JOY
- LORD
- MARY
- JESUS
- KINGS
- GLORY
- PEACE
- JOSEPH
- ANGELS
- CHRIST
- MANGER
- SAVIOUR
- SHEPHERDS
- BETHLEHEM