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Disciples Making Disciples

Experiencing Joy in His Time

Gaudete Sunday
15 Dec 2019

Is 35:1-6A, 10
Jas 5:7-10
Mt 11:2-11

In today's gospel, we find a verse that seems quite odd. John the Baptist had apparently sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Having already encountered Jesus before being imprisoned by Herod, why would John even send his disciples to clarify if Jesus was the true messiah? Was John really not convinced that Jesus was the messiah and why did he doubt?

John knew Jesus well since Mary and Elizabeth were cousins (cf Lk 1:36-38). He had acknowledged Jesus as the "anointed" one when he told the crowd that one mightier than he will baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire (cf Mt 3:11). At the Jordan River, he had affirmed Jesus' holiness saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and yet you are coming to me?" (Mt 3:14).

John possibly had doubts as he was expecting a fire-and-brimstone messiah like all of Israel. He had preached about this exacting messiah saying, "Even now the axe lies at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't bring forth good fruit is cut down, and cast into the fire" (Mt 3:10). John baptised using water, but he said the messiah would baptise with "the Holy Spirit and fire" (Mt 3:11). Also, "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing floor. He will



"People are made for happiness. Rightly, then, you thirst for happiness. Christ has the answer to the desire of yours. But he asks you to trust him."

- Pope St John Paul II

gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire" (Mt 3:12).

Instead of a fire-and-brimstone messiah, Jesus had revealed himself as one who was merciful and compassionate, reaching out to those who were sinners, the lame, the blind, and the lepers, the poverty-stricken and even raising the dead. The messiah that John was expecting was far from what Jesus was. He was expecting a messiah who was like David, an authoritative figure and a warrior who would restore Israel to its former glory so as to cast down all the injustices and evil.

Similarly, we may have expectations of God. We expect God to deal with injustices that we face but it seemed that those who are "evil" in our eyes are rewarded instead. Why does God allow the righteous to suffer? Why isn't God answering our prayers? We have been so generous, why doesn't God reward us generously too? We have been faithful to him, yet he has not given us our dream job, life partner or children...

In today's second reading, James emphasised patience repeatedly (v7, 8, 10). We are not to be like Sarah who, at 76 and still childless despite being promised a child by God (cf. Gen 16:1 - 2), took matters into her own hands by

having a child through her slave, Hagar. We are often like Sarah. When our prayers are not answered in our time frame, we take matters into our own hands. Rather than patiently waiting for God to act, we "short-circuit" his greater plan for ourselves. Do we have joy when we take matters in our hands or do we feel empty, as if something is missing?

The 3rd Sunday of Advent is also known as Gaudete or Rejoice Sunday, reminding us of the joy that the world experienced at the birth of Jesus as well as the joy that the faithful have reached at this midpoint of Advent. This joy is also experienced when we entrust our lives to God especially in the areas where we find it difficult to surrender, trusting that God fulfills his promises in his own time and not when we take matters into our own hands. As God has promised in Is 60:22, "I, the Lord, will swiftly accomplish these things when the time comes." God desires our happiness and joy, but we need to trust his plan that all happens in his time. Pope St John Paul II once shared "People are made for happiness. Rightly, then, you thirst for happiness. Christ has the answer to the desire of yours. But he asks you to trust him."

Announcements

For announcements in the bulletin, send your requests to mmm@sfxchurch.sg by the MONDAY before the weekend, 2359hrs

SECOND GIFT COLLECTION

This weekend, there will be a second collection for the GIFT (Giving in Faith & Thankfulness) campaign to build a more vibrant, evangelistic and missionary Church. GIRO forms, cheques or cash can be sealed into GIFT envelopes and dropped into the collection bags that will go around. Spare GIFT envelopes are available at the Parish Office. Please give generously for the vision of the archdiocese. More info is available at gift.catholicfoundation.sg

PENITENTIAL SERVICES IN SERANGOON DISTRICT

All services are held at 8pm.

- Thu 12 Dec - Church of The Immaculate Heart of Mary
- **Mon 16 Dec - Church of St Francis Xavier**
- Tue 17 Dec - St Anne's Church
- Wed 18 Dec - Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Thu 19 - Church of the Transfiguration
- Fri 20 - Church of St. Vincent de Paul

PIETA MEETUP

PIETA is a support group for bereaved parents who seek God's comfort, wisdom and hope through prayer and reflection on the WORD OF GOD. Our next monthly session is on **Tue 17 Dec, 7.30pm** at **Agape Village**, Toa Payoh Lorong 8.

Contact us via email at pieta.singapore@gmail.com or visit facebook.com/PietaSingapore

GIFTED: CHRISTMAS CONCERT BY SFX YOUTH CHOIR

The SFX Youth Choir will be staging their annual concert 'Gifted' on **Sat 21 Dec, 8pm** in the **Main Church**! Tickets at \$20 are on sale this weekend after all masses. There will be no phone bookings but for any queries, please contact Ignatius Ng 9664 2127. All proceeds will go to the SFX Renovation Fund. Grab your tickets today to avoid disappointment.

NO ACCESS TO COLUMBARIUM

As we have not obtained the Temporary Occupation Permit, our columbarium remains closed until end January 2020. For safety reasons, nobody should enter the columbarium and the construction site, unless authorised. The Church will not be responsible for injuries sustained arising from unauthorised entry. We seek your cooperation and thank you for your understanding and patience.

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Vigil
(Tue, 24 Dec)
Pageant 5pm
Family Christmas Eve Mass 5.30pm
Carolling 8.30pm
Christmas Eve Mass 9pm
Carolling 11.30pm
Midnight Mass 12mn
There will be light refreshments and fellowship outside Kindergarten after Mass, all are warmly welcome!

Christmas Day
(Wed, 25 Dec)
9am, 11am, 5.30pm

NEW YEAR'S MASS SCHEDULE

New Year's Eve
(Tue, 31 Dec)
6.30am, 6.30pm, 10.30pm
Countdown to 2020 - 10pm
Join us for a time of reflection and thanksgiving for 2019 as a parish community in the Main Church. This will be followed by the Countdown Mass where we can give thanks to God for the past year, and where we can offer to God the new year ahead. There will be light refreshments and fellowship outside Kindergarten after Mass, all are warmly welcome!

New Year's Day
(Wed, 1 Jan)
8.30am only

LANDINGS: WELCOMING RETURNING CATHOLICS

Landings presents **Returned!**, a testimony event. If you or you know someone who is exploring a reconnection with the Catholic faith, we welcome you to come and see.

What to expect:

- Testimonies by Landings participants
- Sharing about how Landings work
- Conversations over refreshments

Date: Fri 10 Jan 2020

Time: 7.30pm - 9.30pm (registration from 7pm)

Venue: CANA (55 Waterloo Street #03-01, S187954)

Register at: bit.ly/2QdcyFY or scan the QR Code

SCAN ME



The Landings programme at Church of the Holy Spirit will commence on **Mon 10 Feb 2020**. We invite Catholics seeking a reconnection with the Faith and those interested in this ministry to participate in this 10-week programme. Interested participants will need to register. **Registration closes on 27 Jan 2020**. Please email returning@landings.org.sg or find out more at www.landings.org.sg.

ADVENT PRAYER TREES

What better gift for Christmas than the gift of prayer? Let the Holy Spirit guide you in praying intentionally for someone this Advent - either to return to the Sacraments, or to be open to knowing our Lord and receiving the Greatest Gift of JESUS this season! **Write their name(s) on a tag and hang it on the prayer trees near the sanctuary in Church.** As a faith community, we will pray for all these intentions throughout Advent.

Welcome Fr Vinukumar

I am Fr Vinukumar, from the Catholic Diocese of Marthandam, India. I was born on 23 June. After completing my school studies, I joined the seminary in 2005. I was ordained on 3 January 2015. I served as an assistant priest and then as a Parish priest in my home diocese. Now, I am very happy to work in the Archdiocese of Singapore. I came here on 9 December in the Church of St Francis Xavier. I am happy to see you all around in my new ministry. I dedicate everything for the greater glory of our Lord, Jesus Christ.



RCIY: Witnessing Christ & Sharing Love

In early November, a group of RCIY inquirers and facilitators visited St Theresa's Home and Agape Village. The visit to the home was particularly well timed as we had just learnt about the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and had a session on social justice.

After an introduction to the history and mission of the Home, we spent the morning interacting with the residents playing Bingo, having tea and a karaoke session. Some of the residents gamely took the microphone to sing along with much enthusiasm! As this was a first time for some of us to a home, we were challenged to overcome our awkwardness which fell away as we struck up conversations and listened to their personal stories. We felt very privileged to have had this chance to share the morning and it warmed our hearts to see them smiling and happy.



The second half of the outing was to Agape Village where we had a tour around the premises and heard more about the work of the various charities under Caritas. It opened our eyes to how the social mission arm of the Church evangelises in action, reaching out to all in need, and not just to Catholics, thus building God's kingdom through acts of service to the less privileged and marginalised. The visit was an extension of lessons learned at St Theresa's - how we can each be the face of Christ to others and share the good news in practical ways by sharing our resources - not just materially but also with our time and talent. It was a half day well-spent, and gave us an opportunity to put into practice one of the corporal acts of mercy by visiting the sick and elderly. Indeed they are all part of the body of Christ, as are the beneficiaries of the various charities served by Caritas - and are entitled to our love and care.



"My outing to St Theresa's Home was an eye-opening experience indeed. It was my first time at a Home. I felt a little helpless initially as I did not really know how to interact with the residents. Yet, in the short time there, I learned a valuable lesson - how to be present to someone personally - just by listening to them and taking an interest. It went a long way to adding a bit of joy to their day. Listening to them share their stories and seeing how grateful they are for life despite their circumstances, touched me and also gave me joy. It was also sobering to be reminded that there will come a time when our own bodies will also fail us and so we should cherish our health and the time we have. Life is frail and in our old age, we too will be more dependent on others for care of our well-being." - Jerald

"After the outing, I found myself reflecting on how important it is to not just strive for my own happiness in life because bringing happiness to others also makes me happy and fulfilled.

God first loved me, so that I can better learn how to love others. I was so grateful that our Lord used me as an instrument to share His love with the elderly. Knowing about the initiatives by Caritas like ACTS has also opened my heart and eyes as I can bring God's love to others beyond our borders. Just as God loves us unconditionally, we too, as His chosen disciples, can strive to also do the same, in our own little way." - **Queenie**



Third Week of Advent: Joy

Today is known as Gaudete Sunday. The term Gaudete refers to the first word of the Entrance Antiphon, "Rejoice".

As Christmas draws closer, check out the infographic below on ways to savour Advent and to prepare for Jesus' arrival.

4 WAYS TO SAVOR ADVENT



Seek reconciliation

Go to Confession and invite your friends and family to go as well during the Advent season.



Volunteer your time

Serve lunch at a local soup kitchen before you head to your family celebration.



Make homemade presents

Invite your friends and family to make home-made gifts. It can be a nice, personal gesture with your loved ones.



Don't use up all your Christmas spirit

For Catholics, Christmas begins (it doesn't end) on December 25. Keep your sense of expectation alive for the "Octave of Christmas".

SOURCES

Our Sunday Visitor (www.osv.com) • "How to savor Advent" Perpetual Learner (www.advenus.wordpress.com) • "5 Tips for Living Advent"  CatholicLink



Looking for more Information?
visit www.sfxchurch.sg!

Mass Timings

WEEKEND MASSES

Sat Sunset:
5.30pm (Novena at 4.45pm)
Sun: 7am, 9am, 11am & 5.30pm
Confession 15 mins before Sunday Mass

WEEKDAY MASSES

Mon - Fri:
6.30am & 6.30pm
Sat: 6.30am

MASS ON PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

8.30am **only**

HOLY HOUR

8.30pm, every first Thurs of the month except PH

Opening Hours

PARISH OFFICE

Mon - Fri:
9am - 9pm
Sat: 9am - 7pm
Sun: 8am - 1pm

ADORATION ROOM

Temporarily closed

LIBRARY

Temporarily closed

COLUMBARIUM

Temporarily closed

CANTEEN

Temporarily closed

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The sacrament can be administered to any Catholic awaiting serious surgery, suffering from serious illness or weakened by old age. Anointing may be given before admission for the anticipated medical procedure. Contact the Parish Office to request for a priest. In emergencies, priests of the church nearest to the hospital can be contacted.



INFANT BAPTISM

Baptism of Infants is held every 2nd Sunday of the odd month at 4pm in the main church. Preparation session for both parents and godparents is held the Sunday before at 3.30pm in the SFX room. For more information please check with the Parish Office.



FUNERAL

Please check with the Parish Office for priest availability and Mass timing before confirming the timing at the crematorium. For prayers at the wake, please contact the Parish Office.



MARRIAGE

Contact the Parish Office 12 months before your intended date to book the church premises and ensure that your presiding priest is able to make that date. Church unavailable from 1 Nov 2018 due to renovations.



MASS OFFERING

Mass offering envelopes are available outside the Parish Office and Church. Submit your envelopes at least two weeks in advance of your intended date. Please write the names clearly, and in block letters.



VOLUNTEER & SHARE YOUR GIFTS!

If you're interested in content curation and design layout, contact mmm@sfxchurch.sg