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Disciples *Making Disciples*

When Is Your Christmas Day?

4th Sunday of Advent
19 Dec 2021

Mic. 5:1-4a
Hebr. 10:5-10
Lk. 1:39-45

On this last Sunday before Christmas, as our Advent journey comes to an end, our hearts and minds are naturally focused on what Christ's birthday means. The readings over the last few weeks help us understand how our lives must change when we accept our Lord as Saviour. The messages of salvation, repentance, sacrifice, love and hope are deeply embedded in these readings and central to our faith.

But it can also be daunting to come to terms with them, especially when the stories revolve around events that happened more than 2,000 years ago. The world has changed much since and our lives are so different now from those early Christians. How can their experience be relevant to us?

Today's Gospel reading of Mary's visit to Elizabeth answers the question perfectly. It is a timeless story of two women's complete understanding of God's intention and their role in fulfilling his will. We do not need to know the history of the place, or to ponder the deep theological meaning of St Luke's account. God's message to us through this encounter goes straight to the heart of what it means to answer Christ's call.

The story is plain enough. Mary has been visited by the Angel Gabriel and told that she would bear a child to be named Jesus, the Messiah whose coming had been foretold in the Old Testament.

The angel's announcement was a shock for Mary as she had consecrated her virginity to God and she and Joseph were to have a celibate marriage dedicated to God. But Mary's obedience to God was steadfast and her response was anything but tentative: "I am the handmaiden of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me." (Lk 1:38)

She makes the journey to her older cousin Elizabeth who is also miraculously pregnant with child at an old age. When they meet and upon Mary's greeting, Elizabeth felt the unborn John the Baptist within her leap with joy and she was filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:41). Mary's joyous greeting to her cousin brought forth a divinely-inspired knowledge in Elizabeth: "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." (Lk 1:42)

In response to the clear presence of God in their midst, Mary could not help but burst out in a song of praise to the Lord, now known as the Magnificat.

This is such a wonderful Christmas story because it celebrates everything that the festive occasion is about.

Mary's obedience and submission to God is an inspiration to all of us. She is rightly called Christ's first disciple because she believes first even before fully understanding what she is called

to do. This is possible only because her love for God is central to her life and overwhelms everything else. But Mary is also human and she needed the counsel of another person to help her through this difficult period. In Elizabeth she found her soulmate. The two women's support and love for one another strengthen their faith. This is exactly as God intended.

"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." (Rom 5:5) Our journey to get closer to God is not unlike Mary's and Elizabeth's. Both their children, John the Baptist and Jesus Christ went on to fulfil God's will in even more dramatic ways that changed the world forever.

This too is part of God's plan. When we submit to him, it not only brings us closer to him but it influences other lives which may lead them to do even greater things for the faith.

The Christmas message in Mary's story is that every one of us carries the unborn Christ in us.

She was happy to carry the one who will fulfil God's plan for salvation.

Will we do likewise and allow Jesus to be reborn in our hearts?

When we do, we would have truly celebrated the Christmas Day of our life.



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Announcements

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

PARISH OFFICE CLOSURE

Please note the opening hours of the Parish Office:

- **Fri 24 Dec:** open from 9.30am - 12noon
- **Sat 25 Dec:** Closed

GIFT COLLECTION

This weekend, there will be a call for contributions for the GIFT (Giving in Faith & Thankfulness) programme to build a more vibrant, evangelising and missionary Church. Please give generously to support the organisations and projects of the archdiocese by making a monthly giving pledge. You can give via PayNow (UEN: **201231391K**) or drop your contributions into the GIFT donation box. More info at catholicfoundation.sg

TEMPORARY ONLINE MASS OFFERINGS

Please submit your intentions **1 WEEK in advance** and wait for the Finance Department to contact you. They will provide you with a "Reference No", MO xxx (eg MO 001). Key in the given reference number upon making payment via PayNow (**T08CC4033J**).

INTERCESSORY NOTICE

There will be no intercessory prayer session on **Fri 24 Dec**.

ADVENT PRAYER TREE

Thinking of what to give that special someone this Christmas? Why not give a gift of intentional prayer? Just as we did last year, think of someone that you want to pray for - perhaps to return to Church or to be open to knowing the Lord. Prayer tags are available outside JPil Hall for you to write your prayers. Do drop them into the box located outside JPil Hall/ Parish Office.



January Mass Bookings

[HTTPS://MYCATHOLIC.SG](https://mycatholic.sg)

Tue 28 Dec, 12pm

1st booking of all weekday and weekend Masses, usual policy of 1 weekend Mass, and 5 weekday Masses per booking session.

Fully Vaccinated/PET Masses (180pax):

- **Fridays:** 8pm • **Saturdays:** 5.30pm
- **Sundays:** 9am, 1pm

Things to note:

- All Masses will be held in the Main Church. Entry for 50 persons Masses will only be via the Plaza.
- Mass bookings/cancellation may be made **1 hour** before Mass.
- Vaccinated parishioners should refrain from booking unvaccinated Mass slots.

MASSES FOR FULLY VACCINATED/PET INDIVIDUALS:

Admission Criteria:

- ✓ **Fully Vaccinated**
14 days after 2nd dose of Pfizer/Moderna/WHO EUL vaccines.
 - ✓ **TraceTogether**
Check in via TraceTogether token/app.
 - ✓ **Pre-Event Testing**
Taken from MOH-approved test provider. No earlier than 23 hours before Mass.
 - ✓ **Children aged 12 years and below**
can participate in Pre-Event Testing (PET) or Vaccinated-only Masses. The total number of children allowed is no more than **20%** of worshippers present for the Mass.
 - ✓ **Vaccination Proof**
ONLY local vaccination certificates or Health Hub vaccination proof are accepted.
 - ✗ **Other Vaccines**
- Self-test Kit
- For more information on the MOH guidelines, visit www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19/pet



MASS COLLECTION

Your continuous generosity and donations will help contribute to our Parish's daily operations. You can make your offerings via the following options:

1. **PayNow** - Launch the PayNow service on your bank's app or online website. Select "Send via Unique Entity Number (UEN)" and enter "**T08CC4033J**". Proceed to check entity name - **Church of St Francis Xavier**, then key in amount. Lastly, key in the reference - Mass Collection.
2. **Cheque** - Payable to 'Church of St Francis Xavier' and write 'Mass Collection' behind the cheque. Mail cheques to **63A Chartwell Drive, Singapore 558758**.

ADVENT JOURNEY WITH SFX CHILDREN'S LITURGY

The Fourth Sunday of Advent is on **19 December!** Join us on the SFX YouTube channel at 9am and start the activities with us. You may also choose to do it at a leisurely pace during the week.

Please share the spirit of love this season by donating a food basket for a family registered with the Society of Saint Vincent De Paul (SVDP). There are 23 families. Please contact Monica (9691 0599) or Craig (9451 8256) to let them know that you will be donating a gift basket. **Please place your gift basket in St Jerome's library, from 20 - 22 Dec and SVDP will distribute the gifts to the families for Christmas!**



Materials needed:

Activity 1

- Crepe/craft paper
- Vanguard sheets
- Stapler or glue

Activity 2

- Variety of canned food and goodies
- Reused basket/tray
- Cellophane paper
- Ribbon for tying

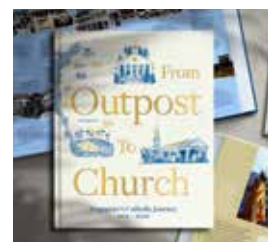
SFX PENITENTIAL SERVICE

Check-in registration will close 10 minutes after service begins and attendees are to stay until the end of service.

Tue 21 Dec:
8pm - 9.30pm

CATHOLIC 200SG COMMEMORATIVE BOOK

Learn about the first missionaries who planted seeds of faith as they set up schools, soup kitchens and churches. Be moved by how our early Catholics kept the torch of faith lit through the desperation of the war years, and passed it through the generations to build the Singapore Church we know today. Hear how our priests and religious were called to serve and listen to how our Catholics are being stirred to continue the mission ahead. This commemorative book is available for **\$30** at the Parish Office during office hours, while stocks last! Please bring exact cash amount.



When The Bells Chimed



The Saturday evening Mass on 11 Dec was a special occasion as it marked the climax of the Catholic200SG celebrations, with Mass held concurrently across all 32 parishes of the archdiocese.

At 6pm, all the bells in the 32 churches chimed in unison, reminding us of our 'oneness' in Christ and how far we have come since 1821 when Father Laurent Marie Joseph Imbert landed on Singapore's shores. Archbishop Goh's homily encouraged us to continue

what our predecessors have done, to build a gracious, compassionate and inclusive society, one that cares especially for those who have no one to care for them.

In the pre-Mass segment, we were serenaded by the melodious voices of a few of our choir members. It was a joy to finally be able to hear what has been missing for the last 2 years, sweet voices lifted up in prayer, praise and thanksgiving to our Lord.



L8 Retreat

A 3 day non stay-in retreat was held for our L8s (Sec 2s) from 10 to 12 Dec in our newly renovated parish hall and parish centre premises. After experiencing zoom online sessions for the year, many of the teens were initially sombre and unsure when they checked in. But there was a discernible difference after 3 days as they got to know each other and their facilitators better.



Many of the teens got to know their friends better and also connected with their facilitators over the 3 days of inputs, sharings and reflections. This was what some of them had to say:

"The retreat was better than I expected. The facils were very caring and down to earth. Fr Cornelius' homily was refreshing and I appreciate Mass better now. Thank you to the whole team for putting this together"

Issac Xavier

"My facils, Daniel and Zach, were nice, funny and interesting to talk to. I also gained a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith and received some extremely useful life advice."

Kieron Cheo

"It was a peaceful time for me and provided a safe place to talk about past experiences and fears. I am very thankful for this experience and it was made more memorable by the people I met"

Andrew Tay

"I went into this retreat unsure about the outcome and whether it would change my life at all. In the end, it turned out better than expected and I am genuinely surprised that if you put in the effort to try and meet God, it will happen. Although my life may not have changed drastically, I believe this retreat has made me a better person in so many ways."

Dylan Tio

"The retreat was spiritually healing for me. I reconnected with my friends and with God. I learnt more about who God is to me and how to pray. My facil also prayed over me and that felt good as I have never had someone pray for me before in front of me."

Megan Teo

"I had fun during the retreat. I also learnt how to get closer to God and about the different parts of the Mass."

Jayden Chin

The L8 catechists and the Catechetical ministry would also like to extend their gratitude and appreciation to all the facilitators, logistics, music and intercessory prayer teams for their love and guidance to the young teens, who will always remember how God works in wonderful ways.



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

Mass Timings

WEEKDAY MASSES

Tue & Thu:
6.30pm

Fri:
8pm*

WEEKEND MASSES

Sat Sunset
5.30pm*

Sun: 9am*, 11am,
1pm*, 5.30pm
(There is currently
no Confession
before Mass)

*Fully vaccinated/PET Mass

**MASS ON PUBLIC
HOLIDAYS**
9am

HOLY HOUR
Suspended until
further notice

Opening Hours

PARISH OFFICE

For pastoral care services (e.g. anointing, funerals etc), you may contact before coming at the following hours.

Mon - Sat:
9.30am - 6.30pm
Sun: 8.30am - 1pm

ADORATION ROOM

Closed until further notice

LIBRARY

Closed until further notice

COLUMBARIUM

Mon to Sat:
10am - 12pm, 2pm - 4pm
Booking via
<https://tinyurl.com/SFXColumbarium>

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



For more information, please contact the Parish Office for Baptism of Infants.

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.

MASS OFFERING



Mass offering envelopes are available outside the Parish Office. Submit your envelopes at least one week 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