



Disciples Making Disciples



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Theotokos: Bearer of God

Solemnity of Mary,
the Holy Mother of God
1 January 2023

Num 6:22-27

Gal 4:4-7

Lk 2:16-21

This Sunday, we celebrate the divine maternity of Mary. For Christians today, that Jesus is God is central to our faith, and it therefore follows that Mary is the Mother of God. But these were controversial issues – both theologically and politically – in early Christendom.

Around 400AD, the nature of Christ was still hotly debated. A faction of Christians, known as Arians, believed that Jesus was a 'created' being and his divinity was therefore 'lesser' than his Father, who alone was infinite, almighty, and eternal. The First Council of Nicaea in 325AD quashed this heresy by adopting the Nicene Creed, which held in its original formulation that Jesus was "the Son of God... begotten not made, of one substance with the Father". However, Arianism continued to hold sway among a significant segment of early Christians.

Enter in Nestorius, a priest from Antioch who became the Archbishop of Constantinople (428 to 431AD). A firm opponent of Arianism, Nestorius nonetheless attempted to find a middle ground. In doing so, he promulgated a heresy of his own – that while Christ was truly God, he was born of Mary (only) as a man, rather than the divine Word (i.e. Logos) who existed before Mary herself. Nestorius accordingly argued that Mary was merely the *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer), not the

"And, indeed, if the Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary is God, assuredly she who bore him is rightly and deservedly to be called the Mother of God. If there is only one person in Christ, and this is Divine, without any doubt Mary ought to be called, by all, not the mother of Christ the man only, but *Theotokos*, or God-bearer."

– Pope Pius XI, *Lux Veritatis* 39



Theotokos (God-bearer).

Amidst competition between Alexandria and Constantinople – two out of five sees of the Pentarchy in early Christendom – this theological dispute became politicised. Nestorius' fiercest opponent was the Patriarch Cyril of Alexandria, who accused Nestorius of severing Christ's divinity from his humanity, thereby denying the reality and integrity of the Incarnation. Following Cyril's appeal to Pope Celestine, Nestorius was instructed to recant his teachings on pain of excommunication.

However, Nestorius went on a counter-offensive, convincing Emperor Theodosius II to convene a general church council at Ephesus before the Pope's ultimatum could take effect.

This was imprudent on two counts. First, Ephesus itself was a special seat for the veneration of Mary, where the *Theotokos* formulation was popular. As Nestorius himself later noted, Cyril's followers managed to "[rouse] up a disturbance and discord among the people with an outcry, as though the emperor were opposed to God".

Second, Nestorius acted against the advice of even his supporters and fellow Antiochene tradition representatives, such as the Patriarch John of Antioch, who had urged him to submit to the Pope's judgment. While John

had maintained his support for Nestorius in the Council of Ephesus of 431AD, he eventually reconciled with Cyril in 433AD.

In *The Formula of Reunion*, a letter that Cyril wrote to John to forge ecclesiastical unity, both Patriarchs thus confessed that Jesus Christ was "the only begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man... begotten before all ages from the Father according to his divinity... born of Mary the Virgin, according to his humanity, consubstantial with his Father according to his divinity and consubstantial with us according to his humanity, for there became a union of two natures. ... According to this understanding of this unmixed union, we confess the holy Virgin to be Mother of God..."

In 451AD, the Council of Chalcedon affirmed the Council of Ephesus' declaration that Mary held the title of 'Mother of God'. This was again reiterated by Pope Pius XI in 1931 as a dogma of the Catholic Church through his encyclical *Lux Veritatis*.

As we continue to celebrate the miracle of the Incarnation during Christmastide – the birth of Christ, who is the Word made flesh and God made man – let us also remember that Mary is his mother and offer her the reverence and honour due to her. And let us emulate her, as this Sunday's Gospel text records, by "treasur[ing] these things and ponder[ing] them" in our hearts.

Announcements

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



HOLY FATHER'S PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY FOR EDUCATORS

We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.



FR BEN AWAY NOTICE

Please note that Fr Ben will be on leave from 2 Jan to 9 Jan.

SCAN QR CODE FOR MASS HYMNS

www.sfxchurch.sg/mass



FAULTY/DAMAGED CHURCH PEWS?

Spot any faulty or damaged pews in church? Scan the QR Code to share with us at tinyurl.com/SFXFacilitiesReport



PARISH OFFICE CLOSURE

Please note the Parish Office operating hours:

- Sat 31 Dec: 9.30am - 1.30pm
- Sun 1 Jan & Mon 2 Jan: Closed

SALE OF CHINESE NEW YEAR COOKIES

The Altar Servers will be selling Chinese New Year cookies on **7 - 8 Jan** and **14 - 15 Jan**. Please come and support them at JP II Hall and the front porch of Church!



Wishing All Our Parishioners A Blessed New Year!

Christmas FIESTA
30 DECEMBER 2022

Thank you!

Fr Ben and Fr Nat would like to say a big thank you to all volunteers for your support and being a welcoming face of Christ to all who attended our CHRISTmas Fiesta. It would not have been possible without your generosity in service, talents and resources!

Church of St Francis Xavier

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'. Please write 'Mass Collection' behind the cheque. Mail cheques to **63A Chartwell Drive, Singapore 558758**.

CANDLELIGHT ROSARY PROCESSION IN HONOUR OF OUR BLESSED MOTHER

Come meet us on **Fri 13 Jan, 6.30pm** at JP II Hall for the rosary procession within the church grounds. You may bring your own waxless candle.



LANDINGS: WELCOMING RETURNING CATHOLICS

If you or someone you know is seeking for a way to come home, we welcome you to come listen to testimonies of how others have returned through Landings! For more information, please email singapore@landings.org.sg or visit www.landings.org.sg.

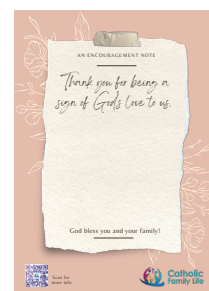
Date & Time: Fri 13 Jan 2023, 7.30pm - 9.30pm
Venue: Church of St Ignatius - Ignatius Hall, Level 1 (120 King's Road, S268172)
Register: <https://landings.typeform.com/returned>
(Registration closes by 9 Jan 2023)



CATHOLIC FAMILY LIFE: LOVE OF THE FAMILY

Catholic Family Life has prepared a Family Card for parishioners to write an encouragement note to encourage and affirm another family if they have been an inspiration to you in the way they live out their vocation of family life.

Raising a family can be challenging and lonely at times, yet families are the very places we often witness the beauty of love, joy, and sacrifice. Let's be one community in supporting each other to build love-filled and faith-filled families, affirm a family this weekend! Please do take a card outside JP II Hall and share your message of love and hope to a family.



IN THE MONTH OF DEC 2022**WEDDINGS**

We congratulate the following couples:

1. Chok Ke Bin, Christopher & Madeleine Tan Lai Mun
2. Justyn Nathaniel Goh Maoru & Natalie Wong Jiayan
3. Toh Cheng Yun Gabriel & Judith Lim Puay Ling
4. Joshua Ng Gim Kay & Lee Si Tie Brittany
5. Chen Jun Howe, Timothy Harvey & Casandra Phua Wei Chee

CONDOLENCES

We offer our prayers to the families of the following who have returned to the Lord:

1. Goh Teck Siam Alice
2. Nadine Preadeau Lamy
3. Chan Pou Meng Theresa
4. Ravi Das S/O of Paul Anthony Dass
5. Rose Koh Kar Kian
6. Mrs Catherine Olive Moss nee Woodford Olive
7. Andrew Tan Hock Lye

BAPTISMS

We welcome the following:

1. Chia Rui Jie Thomas Cayden
2. Titus Kaile Tan
3. Hailey Anne Lum Yan Yuet

***Celebrating
Christmas –
the reason for
the season!***





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

The Nativity Story



It was a special Christmas for Peter, Ashlyn and Claire who were all newly baptised this year. It was all hands on deck for their entire family, as Claire took on the role of Mother Mary for the Christmas pageant with Peter and Ashlyn supporting in the background.

"It was a good chance for us as a family to get closer to the Lord through re-enacting the story of Christmas to understand the true meaning of Christmas. The Children's Liturgy team thought out the whole process meticulously which made it easy to participate for both the children and parents. The team was extremely helpful in making Claire feel assured and ready for the role. The choir members' amazing voices set us into the mood of Christmas from the rehearsals to the actual day itself." - Ashlyn (Claire's mother)

"When I was asked if I was keen to take up the role of Mother Mary, I was surprised and happy. The first time I heard the choir sing during the rehearsals, it was beautiful and angelic. On the actual day, I was excited and nervous at the same time. When the choir started to sing, I started to feel more comfortable in the role. All in all, the pageant was a success and it's a special way to celebrate my first Christmas as a Catholic." - Claire

"I truly feel blessed and thankful for his love and the opportunity to grow our faith. I was able to celebrate God's love with the birth of Jesus and give thanks for his gifts of peace, love and eternal life." - Peter (Claire's father)



MASS TIMES

WEEKDAY MASSES

Mon - Thu:
6.30pm

Tue - Sat:
6.30am

Fri:
8pm

WEEKEND MASSES

Sat: 5.30pm

Sun: 7am, 9am,
11am, 5.30pm
(There is currently no
Confession before Mass)

**MASS ON PUBLIC
HOLIDAYS**
9am

CONFESSION

Contact Parish Office to
make an appointment.

Fri:
4pm - 6pm

Sat:
10am - 12pm

OPENING HOURS

MAIN GATE

Mon - Sun:
5am - 11pm

PARISH OFFICE

Mon - Sat:
9.30am - 6.30pm
Sun: 8.30am - 1pm
Closed on Public Holidays

ADORATION ROOM

Mon - Sun:
7am - 11pm
Closed on Public Holidays

LIBRARY

Sat:
Closed

Sun:

8am - 1pm

COLUMBARIUM

Mon to Sat:
10am - 6pm
Closed on Sundays and
Public Holidays.

ANOIDING 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

Spiritual preparation is held on the last Friday of every odd month. Baptism is held on the first/second Sunday of the following month. For registration, please refer to our website.



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 and outside JP11 Hall. 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