



THE MANNA

Church of St Francis Xavier

63A Chartwell Drive,
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Disciples
Making Disciples



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Liberated by Grace

2nd Sunday of Advent
10 Dec 2023

Is 40:1-5, 9-11
2 Pt 3:8-14
Mk 1:1-8

The season of Advent invites us to an openness to God as we prepare for Christmas, the historical moment when the Christ was born to dwell among us and renew us from within.

In last Sunday's readings, we were given a message of hope to trust in the power of "the gifts of the Spirit" (1 Cor 1:7). We were encouraged to fix our gaze on the ultimate horizon at the end of time when our Lord Jesus Christ will return and be fully revealed in his glory.

On this Second Sunday of Advent, we hear from Second Isaiah, whose theology centres on "a new exodus". Second Isaiah announced a liberation for the Israelites who were suffering from decades of bitter exile in Babylon, "Comfort, comfort my people...Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended." (Is 40:1-2)

Though Isaiah's prophecy seemed to have been immediately fulfilled in the year 539 B.C. when the Jews were finally liberated from captivity, it more profoundly anticipated a type of liberation that would be accomplished with the coming of Jesus.

There is no other place in the whole of scripture in which the words of Isaiah about the "voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths,'" was fulfilled — except with John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ.

Not only did Isaiah then foretell the identity of Jesus as the promised

liberator, but his prophecy becomes an invitation to all of us, to the new Israel, the people of the new covenant, to prepare to embrace the only true and lasting liberation which Jesus came to save us from — that which is from the bondage of sin.

It is because of this deeper meaning of Isaiah's words that this reading has been chosen for Advent, and is well summarised in a quote by Theodoret of Cyr, an early church father from 393-466 A.D:

"The true consolation, the genuine comfort and the real deliverance from the iniquities of humankind is the incarnation of our God and Saviour." (*Commentary on Isaiah*)

How can this message today reverberate and touch a world crippled by moral and material slavery, worn out by poverty and hunger, by sickness and disease, and all who are suffering from grave and systematic injustice?

Pope Benedict XVI asserts that Jesus, through His death and resurrection, had "inaugurated an exodus that was no longer solely earthly, simply situated in history and therefore temporary" (7 Dec 2008, Angelus). Rather, Jesus' liberation was one that was "definitive". It granted to all men "the transition from the kingdom of evil to the Kingdom of God, from the dominion of sin and death to that of love and life". This extended human hope "beyond the legitimate expectations of social and political liberation because what Jesus began is a new humanity that comes 'from God' but, at the same time, germinates on our earth, to the extent that it lets itself be fertilized by the Lord's Spirit".

He went on to say that while this universal perspective guides the Church and her faith today, a belief in God, in His plan of salvation and at the same time, striving to build

His Kingdom as we "make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Is 40:3) are tasks for us. While justice and peace are "gifts of God", we are required to be "the 'good ground' ready to receive the good seed of His Word and walk toward the 'new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells' (2 Pt 3:13)".

So let us celebrate Advent as a devout and joyful anticipation and readiness for Christ's final coming. Jesus has not only come in history and will come again in the future in glory. Let us also be grateful that he continues to come into us in our daily Eucharist.

As we move another week towards Christmas, let us clear a path for God's grace and make our hearts a new Bethlehem. Let us pray for the grace to have an inner transformation that leads to a renewed relationship with the Lord.



"The true consolation, the genuine comfort and the real deliverance from the iniquities of humankind is the incarnation of our God and Saviour."

- Theodoret of Cyr

Announcements

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



**SCAN QR CODE
FOR MASS HYMNS**
www.sfxchurch.sg/mass

FAULTY CHURCH PEWS?

Spot any faulty or damaged pews in church?

Scan the QR code to share with us at tinyurl.com/SFXFacilityReport



SSVP COLLECTION

With your kind donations last weekend, SSVP was able to raise **\$7,057.00** for our Friends-In-Need. We thank you for your generosity and continued support of their activities.

Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP)

- OCBC Bank Account No:
686 596 768 001
- PayNow UEN: S61SS0149B

INTERCESSORY

Come storm heaven with us in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Date: Mon 11 Dec
Time: 8pm - 9.30pm
Venue: Mount Tabor Adoration Rm

REMINDER: CRUCIFIX CRAB PLUSHIE COLLECTION



For all the children who have participated in the Library's activity and have yet to collect your Crucifix Crab Plushie, please collect your Plushie from St Jerome Library after Mass.

THE EMMANUEL EXPERIENCE: CHRISTMAS CONCERTS

Join us for "The Emmanuel Experience" at the Auditorium this Christmas Season! Our Music Ministry will be staging 2 performances of Christmas carols. Bring a non-Christian friend and let them experience the joy and wonder of Christmas through music. Don't miss this opportunity to spread the message of love and hope. For further enquiries, please contact the Parish Office to find out more.

Sat 16 Dec, 7.30pm:

**Emmanuel: Come
Let us Worship**

by St Augustine Music Ministry

tinyurl.com/SammChristmasConcert



Sat 23 Dec, 8pm:

Enter His Presence

by the SFX Youth Choir

tinyurl.com/SFXYCConcert2023



ADVENT PENITENTIAL SERVICES IN SERANGOON DISTRICT

- Fri 15 Dec, 8pm - Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Mon 18 Dec, 8pm - Church of the Transfiguration
- Tue 19 Dec, 8pm - Church of The Immaculate Heart of Mary
- Wed 20 Dec, 8.30pm - St Anne's Church
- **Thu 21 Dec, 8pm - Church of St Francis Xavier**
- Fri 22 Dec, 8pm - Church of St. Vincent de Paul



ADVENT PRAYER TREE

What better idea than to give someone in need the gift of intentional prayer this Christmas? Just as we did last year, think of someone to pray for - either to return to Church or be open to knowing the Lord. The prayer tags will be available for you to write your prayers and hang onto our Advent trees. **As a community of faith, we will pray for all these intentions throughout Advent.**

| Christmas Eve (Sun 24 Dec) | Christmas Day (Mon 25 Dec) |
|--|----------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children's Pageant: 8.30pm (livestreamed)• Vigil Mass: 9pm• Midnight Mass/Mass during the Night: 12am | 9am, 11am, 4pm |

SFX CHRISTMAS PAGEANT RECRUITMENT

The Children's Liturgy Ministry is calling upon both the young and the young-at-heart to take part in this beautiful celebration. Our enchanting Christmas Eve Pageant will unfold on **Sun 24 Dec at 8.30pm**. Let us all come together to make this Christmas truly magical! Scan the QR Code or sign up at tinyurl.com/SFXPageant2023.



Practices will be on **11 Dec, 13 Dec, 18 Dec and 20 Dec (Full Dress Rehearsal) from 8pm to 10pm**. For enquiries, please contact Cathie at 9846 1199.

ST JEROME LIBRARY

The "Straits of Singapore", as signed off in St Francis Xavier's letters was Francis' last stop before he arrived on Sancian Island, China, at the end of August 1552. Francis wrote five letters dated between 20 July and 1 August, 1552 from the Straits.

These letters addressed mainly his missionary hopes for China and his concern for the Christian communities established in Japan and the Moluccas (Indonesia). He asked that any missionary to Japan should be "learned and well read...some clever man able to learn the Japanese language" while a missionary to the Moluccas should be "a man well furnished not so much with learning as with virtue; for in the Moluccas goodness of life is required more than learning" (20 July, 1552).

In this first letter from the Straits of Singapore addressed to the Rector of the Jesuit College in Goa, he also asked for the formal excommunication for Don Alvaro (son of the famous Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama) as he had tried to stop Francis' mission to China out of personal jealousy. Francis saw formal excommunication for those who obstruct the spread of the faith as needed for their salvation - to "bring them to themselves, and lead them to seek a remedy for the wounds of their souls".



The five letters are now mounted up at St Jerome Library. Come by and get a glimpse of the zeal and personal concern of St Francis Xavier for those involved in his missionary work, especially for "John the Japanese". St Jerome Library is open Sundays 8am - 1pm. For this weekend, the Library will also be open after the evening Masses.

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE FEAST DAY MASS: HONORING THE PATRONESS OF UNBORN CHILDREN

Organised by Pregnancy Crisis & Support - a service of Catholic Family Life. We invite all parishioners to join us at Church of Saints Peter and Paul in celebrating the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The celebration will begin with Pro-life Rosary at 5.15pm followed by the Eucharistic Celebration at 6pm. There will be a Healing Prayer and Blessing of Pregnant Women after the mass. Our Lady of Guadalupe, Pray for us!

Date: Tue 12 Dec
Time: 6pm
Venue: Church of Saints Peter and Paul

"Each child has a place in God's heart from all eternity; once he or she is conceived, the Creator's eternal dream comes true."
Amoris Laetitia, Pope Francis

SFX Feast Day Celebrations

This year's Feast Day celebrations had 3 "home-grown" priests come back to celebrate mass during the Triduum, Eucharistic Adoration and the appearance of a soft Charybdis feriata and an informative exhibition on our patron saint.

Our own sons from the parish - **Fr Terence**, **Fr Samuel** and **Fr Jude** were our celebrants during the Triduum. And each night's homily theme dealt with the Heart of the Disciple, Formation of the Disciple and Reaching Out as a Disciple. **His Eminence Cardinal William Goh** was present to celebrate with us on Sat and reminded all present of our parish tagline. He joined and mingled with parishioners and also delighted some young ones with a very unusual plushie.

The Charybdis feriata or the crucifix crab made an appearance in the form of a plushie that was given out to 30 lucky children who had taken part in a colouring/drawing and quiz activity organised by St Jerome Library for children under 12.

Those who wanted to know more about St Francis Xavier were able to browse and read through an amazing exhibition showcasing his life, visionary work and the countries he visited during his missionary endeavours. There was even a real life (stuffed) specimen of the crucifix crab.

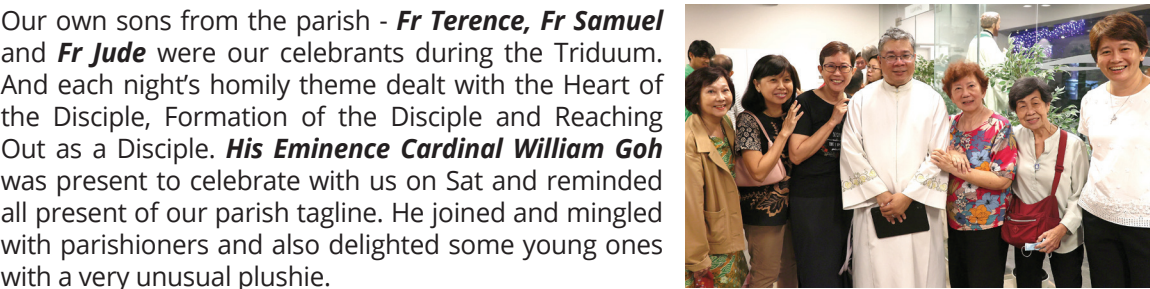
Do look out for more pictures and details on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/sfxchurch.sg.



"One of the key points that I took away from the 3 days was that the call to discipleship is to learn to listen to Him. Our call involves far more than just being involved in ministries or activities. We may be involved but we may not be fruitful if we do not listen to the One who wants to disciple us. Discipleship also entails the daily dying to oneself so that we can be converted and conformed into His image and likeness." - *Colin Sng*

Raphael Ng who just celebrated his 6th wedding anniversary had this to say:

"My takeaway from Fr Jude's homily is when he said that marriage is not about settling down, it is about rising up to our mission....It is helping your partner reach heaven one day. Then Fr points at the crucifix and reminded us that this is the gold standard of love."





Looking for more Information?
visit www.sfxchurch.sg

Mass for the Sick

The annual Mass for The Sick, a parish-level event, was organized by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) under the guidance of its new President, Raphael Chew.

SSVP members, along with the assistance of parish volunteers, energetic youths and the 9am choir, collaborated to ensure the Mass became a special and inclusive experience for all participants. With a turnout of 120 individuals, the event featured the administration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation by Fr Benedict, Fr Edward, Fr Vaz, Fr Nathaniel, Fr Jerome, and Fr Garcia, accompanied by the Anointing of Holy Oil for Healing and Protection by Fr Benedict, Fr Edward, Fr Jerome, and Fr Nathaniel.



Fr Ben, in his insightful homily, reminded the congregation to recognize Christ as the King, and also to recognise the presence of Christ in the least of our brothers and sisters and to respond with love and compassion for "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Following the end of the Mass, attendees enjoyed refreshments and were treated to the lively tunes of a band to entertain the young at heart and all present.

"I thought you guys did such an incredible work with the transportation. I cannot thank you all enough. My mother (83 years old) sounded so happy when she got back from Mass called me to share that she knew Alfred Goh from MFTS Volunteer for Transport. He was so nice and patient with them and kept me informed from when he was picking them and dropping them off. God bless you all for such wonderful work.

My dad (84 years old) called me separately to tell me that he met some of his old warden friends. I think it was great that they got to meet up too as he has not been out much due to his visits in & out of hospital. It has been a long time since I heard so much gusto in their voices. So yes! Thank you all again. You guys are the best. Please keep up the great work."

Bridget (daughter of Evelyn & Paul Leong)

"Thank you for making me a part of this life-giving endeavor. May the good Lord continue to grace everyone abundantly! Thank you, all volunteers. What a blessing! Praise God!"

Susanah Cheok (MFTS Volunteer)



"Yearly, I attend the Mass when I was staying at Gardens, but after having moved to Tampines, I thought I was unable to attend. So when Marcella Lee (from SSVP/ Elders Group) called and said that transport could be arranged, I was delighted, as I am suffering from knee pain. I enjoyed myself meeting up with old friends and being entertained by real good music."

Susanna Lim (Elders Group)



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

Closed on Public Holidays
after 9am Mass

BACK GATE

Mon - Sun:
5am - 1am

Closed on Public Holidays
after 9am Mass

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

Sun: 8am - 1pm

COLUMBARIUM

Mon - Fri:
10am - 6pm

Sat - Sun:
8.30am - 6pm

Closed on Public Holidays

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

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 JPPII 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