

PARISH ASSEMBLY 2013 REPORT



Living Our Faith Today

On 10 March 2013, over 200 parishioners gathered together at Tanah Merah Country Club for our annual Parish Assembly. With the theme of “*Living our faith today*”, the objective was to come together as “One Church, One Family” to reflect and discuss how we can live out our faith in response to current trends and challenges (“One Mission”). The discussions focused on addressing the pastoral needs of a) the less fortunate in our parish and community; b) our families and c) our parishioners from overseas. The key points and ideas from the lively discussions are captured below:

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” (1 Cor 12:26)

Journeying together with those who are less privileged was the most popular topic chosen by participants during registration. In small group discussions, the 90 participants who chose this topic explored how we can reach out to those in our parish and in the neighbourhoods around us. Within the parish, it was suggested that there should be more effort to welcome the elderly, sick and lonely at Masses and other church events. It was also suggested that we could publicise a list of things/services (eg. groceries, baby-sitting/tuition services) that our needy parishioners would need in the Parish Bulletin/ Holy Family Connection or via the Neighbourhood Christian Communities (NCC) network, to give parishioners the opportunity to respond to such needs. This could be led by the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) or the NCCs. An alternative suggestion was to form a central body within the parish, preferably led by a trained social worker, to coordinate efforts to identify and support parishioners and families within the parish boundaries who need extra help. To reach out more effectively to those in our surrounding neighbourhoods, it was suggested that we should collaborate more with SSVP, the Marine Parade Family Service Centre and the Hope House. It was also suggested that we should develop a “Social Mission Roadmap” for our youth to instill the sense of social mission from a young age. Activities such as home-visits with SSVP and fundraising for charitable causes, could be incorporated into catechism classes and the activities of youth communities.

“Family, become what you are!” (John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*)

There was great interest and passion surrounding the topic of helping our families to become “intimate communities of life and love”. In particular, participants focused on the need to help parents live out their role as the “first catechists”. It was suggested that there should be more **formation** through workshops and resource materials targeting parents to help them understand their role and to encourage them to incorporate **prayer** into their daily family life (eg. starting with grace before meals and morning/evening prayer). It was suggested that formation should start early by targeting newly-weds and young parents when they come for marriage preparation and infant baptism. The Couple Empowerment Programme (CEP) was suggested as one formation programme.

There were calls to require parents to get more involved in **catechism** sessions such that the focus is on the formation of the whole family, rather than just the children. It was also suggested that the catechism syllabus should include topics that youths struggle with (eg. the existence of God, homosexuality, dealing with parents) so that our youths can related their faith and values to what they see happening around them and deal with it in a Christian way, with the support of their parents. It was also suggested that priests should use the pulpit to explain the Church's teachings on thorny issues, with simple "take-away" messages for families.

Another common idea was to **build communities** among families in the same life-stage, eg. newly-weds, young parents, parents with children that are in the same catechism class, so that they can provide support for one another. There could also be more family-friendly activities (eg. Family movie nights) and facilities (eg. playgrounds).

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35)

Mindful that a sizable number of our parishioners come from overseas, 40 participants discussed how we can make them feel more welcome and tap on the gifts that they bring with them. It was suggested that there should be a "Welcome Team" which would lead other parishioners, especially, NCC and ministry members, to welcome newcomers to the parish, particularly those from overseas, and encourage them to play an active role in Mass (eg. involving them in the Offertory) or other church activities. Building on this, it was also suggested that there should be a "Connect Group" to maintain regular contact with newcomers to get to know them better, both in terms of understanding their needs and challenges as well as their gifts and talents. This would then enable us to provide better support and for them to become more aware of the opportunities to serve the parish, in the spirit of being One Church. It was also recognized that those from overseas have diverse backgrounds, and hence there may be a need to set up more communities, in addition to the current Filipino group. To celebrate and showcase the cultural diversity within the parish, it was suggested that there should be an International Day where foreigners and locals can come together for Mass/prayer and fellowship over food from the different cultures.

The new Parish Pastoral Council (2013-2015)

The new members of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) were also introduced at the Parish Assembly. The PPC Office Bearers and Executive Committee members were subsequently elected on 24 March 2013. They are:

Office Bearers: Fr Patrick Goh (President); Lena Quek (Chairperson); Lawrence Miranda (Vice-Chair); Gwen Andres (Secretary); Terrence Sim (Asst. Secretary)

Executive Committee: Vivien Theseira (Chairperson); James Lim (Vice-Chair); Susanna Kulatissa (Secretary); Sharon Lee (Asst. Secretary); Anne Seet; Catherine Low; Graeme Ortega; Joanne Goh; Joyce De Costa; Matthew Koh; Pauline Pakiam; Peter Jong; Andrew Lin

General Councilors: Fr Damian De Wind; Fr Donatien Davaine; Nicholas Ho; Audrey Wee; Frank Lim; Mavis Ng; Damian Boon; Connie Yeo; Duane Ang; Anne Long; Jessie Ooi; David Yeoh; Lucia Peh; Indra Lean; Stephanie Low; Josephine Valles; Rhodora P. Panes; Michael Tan; Francis Goh; Joseph Sze; Rosalind Lee; Derrick D'Souza; Carlos Furtado; ; Rocky Chan; Bernadette Tay; Marcus Wong; Francisco Furtado; Stephanie Sim; Kenneth Chew; Sheila Ann Eber; Rodney Ee; Phillipa Maynard; Simon Fruen; Violet Rosario.

Let us pray for and support our new Parish Pastoral Councilors as they evaluate the ideas and feedback from the Parish Assembly and work out the steps our parish should take over the next few years.