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SUNDAY NOVEMBER 23, 2008

SINGAPORE 50 CENTS / WEST MALAYSIA RM\$1.20

M.I.C.A. (P) No. 071 / 01 / 2008

PPS 201 / 5 / 2009 (028001)

Vol 58

No. 24

## Archdiocese launches Catholic business network

**SINGAPORE** – Working professionals and business owners of all types now have a place to network and support one another while striving to live out the Church's social mission in the world.

More than 100 working Catholics, about twice the expected number, attended the official launch of Catholic Business Network (CBN) on Oct 30 at the Oxford Hotel's Skylight Cafe.

Participants helped themselves to glasses of plentiful red wine, which helped keep the conversation flowing.

Elizabeth Ng, a stockbroker in her 50s, shared with UCA News how the evening provided her the opportunity to meet an old friend she had not seen in more than five years. They spent the evening catching up and sharing their career and faith journeys, she said.

Echoing the comments of many who were present, Ignatius Chew, 58, termed CBN "a good idea". It is "especially good for younger people", because in a setting where everyone is Catholic, "people tend to be kind to each other", the former

businessman said, adding that this is not always the case at similar secular events.

As an initiative of laypeople, Archbishop Nicholas Chia commented during the launch, the network "will be very helpful in the promotion of moral values in society". In his view, this is beneficial for the Church as well.

Archbishop Chia encouraged more Catholics to sign up as CBN members.

"People in society today have a consumerist culture; we have to cultivate a vocational culture. We are called by God to make use of our different gifts to build up the kingdom of God," the archbishop told the gathering.

"People say that you cannot do business and be a Catholic at the same time, but Jesus says you can," added CBN spiritual director Monsignor Eugene Vaz. "CBN will help you answer (the question), 'How can?'"

Monsignor Vaz also gave a short reflection on Jesus' parable of the merchant looking for fine pearls. "Members of CBN are searching for that one pearl that is so meaningful that we are ready to give up everything" for it, he



From left, George Chew, Monsignor Eugene Vaz, Archbishop Nicholas Chia of Singapore, Jeannie Tien and Angelic Cheah, during the launch of the Catholic Business Network on Oct 30.

said, adding that businesspeople and professionals praise God "in the way that they do their work".

CBN president George Chew mentioned two objectives for the newly registered society in his opening speech.

The first is to help Catholic business owners and professionals "in their walk with God", and encourage members to "practise Catholic values, ethics and

morality in our work and at our workplaces", said the chief executive officer of Sitra Holdings (International), a distributor of wood products and furniture.

The second objective is to encourage these Catholics to "use their talents and resources to serve the community and to help the less fortunate", he continued.

Prior to the formal launch, CBN organised a series of

sharing sessions by business leaders titled "Being a Catholic in the working world", as well as informal get-togethers among the founding members, who number about 70. The annual membership fee is \$50.

As an affiliate of Caritas Singapore Community Council, the official social-action and community development organisation of Singapore archdiocese, CBN has helped the council raise \$250,000 through its annual Golf for Charity event.

The idea to set up a Catholic business network was proposed 14 months ago by council chairman Willie Cheng, who observed that doctors, nurses and lawyers in the archdiocese had guilds but businesspeople had none.

CBN vice president Vivienne Lim acknowledged that raising funds for the less fortunate is one of the network's activities.

CBN's plans for the upcoming year include compiling and maintaining an online directory of Catholic businesses, which will help in job placement for Catholics who lose their jobs in the current economic crisis. □

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