



CHRISTMAS EDITION



This Christmas, we thank you for sharing our mission and bringing hope to all we serve.
A blessed Christmas and a joyful new year!



– from the Caritas Singapore family

MISSIONARIES OF THE NIGHT



*He was sitting alone, with all his possessions in a bag next to him. He is my brother.
Photo: Catholic Welfare Services*

What began as a simple act of kindness by Catholic Welfare Services (CWS), has now grown into a movement of modern-day volunteer crusaders. Motivated and filled with God's love, these volunteers with the CWS Night Mission go out of their way to reach out and befriend their 'lost' brothers and sisters, regardless of race and religion.

The Missionaries

When the Night Mission began, CWS did not envision the enormity of the impact their efforts would have on the people spending their nights on the streets, as well as the volunteers who walk with them. Lives have been touched, and new friendships forged.

For the Missionaries, the first step is always the most difficult; to walk up to a stranger and sit on the same piece of cardboard with them. From there, the Missionaries try to befriend the people on the streets until they are ready to move on to some form of permanent housing; their own safe space to call home.

Many of the people on the streets actually do have a place to stay and some are working, but sadly, personal issues have robbed them of a safe place to sleep and to focus on life's important issues.

Befriending and Journeying

As the sun goes down, CWS has seen some of their new destitute friends visit the CWS Night Café where they can take a shower and change into clean dry clothes before having dinner as a community. Everyone who walks through the doors of the café is welcomed.

Often, we take for granted our warm comfortable bed, our room and our home with a roof that safeguards us from the elements. Over the years of befriending and journeying with people of the streets, CWS has witnessed positive changes

in their character and personalities. They begin to think more clearly, take ownership of their lives, and eventually some have found a permanent place to stay.

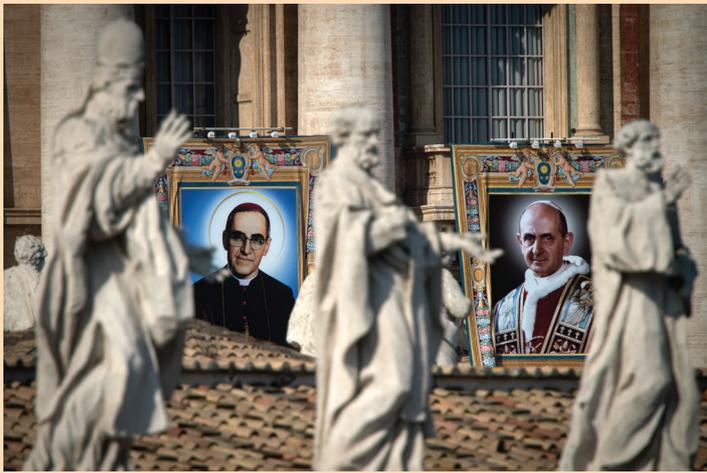
Brian Monteiro who leads the CWS Night Missions said, "It's a calling to be a Missionary of the Night. Meeting people who are broken, befriending and befriending again and again, and not judging them, and giving people the dignity and respect to decide [on how they want to live]."

"They [the Missionaries] are the arms and legs of the mission work on the ground. Without them, there is no way to reach all the people we have touched so far."

— CWS CEO James Chew

The Missionaries provide weekly reports to CWS including highlighting urgent cases that require social work intervention. Some people of the streets are willing to be engaged by social workers and with Family Service Centres, MSF. This way, they become documented and eligible to receive relevant help to move forward.

To find out more about CWS, visit www.catholicwelfare.org.sg, or write to CWS at generalenquiries@catholicwelfare.org.sg



Pope Francis celebrated the canonisations of Caritas Internationalis founder Pope Paul VI and our patron Archbishop Oscar Romero on 14 October 2018 in Rome. Photo: Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

CARITAS' DOUBLE CELEBRATION

St Pope Paul VI – Caritas' Founding Father – was a great champion of social justice.

A builder of peace, he was the author of landmark Church teachings *Populorum Progressio*, *Humanae Vitae* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

St Oscar Romero – Archbishop of San Salvador – was an advocate for social justice. He spoke out relentlessly for the poor and oppressed. He repeatedly denounced violence and spoke out on behalf of the victims of the civil war.

In 1980, a day after he preached a sermon urging Salvadoran soldiers not to carry out human rights abuses ordered by the government, St Oscar Romero was murdered when he was celebrating Mass. He was posthumously named a co-patron of Caritas in 2015.

A TROPICAL CHRISTMAS



Photo: Laurent and his family

A Christmas sans winter is different. Being away from home [France], family, friends, and familiarity, changes the experience of Christmas. Yet, Christmas is the same celebration all over the world, including Singapore.

For Laurent Fagot and his family, preparing for Christmas is a journey that starts from the home to the heart.

During **Advent**, they begin their preparation for Christmas by decorating their house together as a family. This is an important part of the preparation for both the parents as well as the children.

Laurent excitedly shares, "Our whole house will be decorated for Christmas. The kids want our house to be the happiest place. They put up the tree, and the nativity scene. This is the most special and challenging: the figurines are very fragile, and the kids have been so excited that they have broken some of the figurines in the past but as parents, we see this preparation stage as one that is important for all of us to be involved together."

Laurent adds, "As a priest once said during his homily, 'we do not want to let only Orchard and the malls be decorated, our homes must be even more beautifully decorated, because of what it means to us: **Welcoming Jesus.**'"

Once their home is ready, Laurent and his family begin to prepare their hearts. They write a special family prayer and place it at their prayer corner. Sharing their needs with each other, the family comes together to pray for their loved ones, including those far away.

"This helps us to feel connected with our family back home in France even though we are physically apart."

Celebrating Christmas eve away from their family has not always been easy but Laurent and his family now enjoy this time with friends in Singapore. Mass at Church of St Francis Xavier is especially close to their hearts, and the family expressed how they love the fellowship after Mass. Gathering as a community makes them feel at home.

When they get home, the Jesus figurine is added into the nativity scene, "where Joseph and Mary and all the characters were waiting for Him". With the nativity scene now complete, the family comes together once again in prayer.

"We remind ourselves that **Christmas is all about Jesus' coming – into our family, into our world, into our hearts...** We are filled with excitement and anticipation as another Christmas comes," shares Laurent.

Laurent and Isabelle are active in Marriage Encounter Singapore (www.facebook.com/wwwmesingapore). In recognising the importance of faith and family, the couple also supports Family Life Society in their various programmes and events (www.familylife.sg, www.facebook.com/familylife.sg).

Laurent and his family are grounded in faith and love. What has the focus of Christmas been for us and our loved ones? This year-end, let us once again, reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.

OUR MEMBER ORGANISATIONS



FAMILIES, YOUTH & CHILDREN

POOR, SICK & THE ELDERLY



A card depicting the joy of Christmas as drawn by Michi, 9, of Canossville Student Care.

NO ONE CAN CELEBRATE A GENUINE CHRISTMAS

without being truly poor.
The self-sufficient, the proud,
those who, because they have everything,
look down on others,
those who have no need even of God
– for them there will be no Christmas.

Only the poor, the hungry,
those who need someone to come on their behalf,
will have that someone.
That someone is God, Emmanuel, God-with-us.
Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God.

Oscar Romero, "The Violence of Love" Translated by Brockton, J.R., 2011

ON MY OWN



Photo: Stock photo by VITA Images

My bags were packed but my heart was hurting. I had an opportunity to work in Singapore, which would be better than what I have at home now. But how do I leave my wife? We got married recently, and she is expecting, but to fulfil the visa, I would have to leave before my first child was born.

I was nervous coming to Singapore, not knowing what to expect. I used to work in an office and was promised that the new job would be the same. Singapore would be the same, or so I thought. I didn't know anyone when I first arrived in Singapore.

The agent picked me up at the airport. When I was brought to the place that I was to call my home, my heart sank. It was a construction site. I did not understand the complexities of work that was needed in this environment. Moreover, this was not what was promised to me.

The space I was given to rest and sleep was not pleasant. Every day, I worked very long hours and I was not used to this level of manual work. I was very sad, and it hurt a lot. I did not want to stay here anymore but I had no choice.

I prayed to Mother Mary, our Lady of Fatima, to intercede for me. One day, my boss decided that it was time for me to go home. He told me, "You cannot do this work. Monday, I will send you home." I was unsure to be happy or sad about it. While I would be out of this situation, I would also be facing all the loans and interest that I would have to pay the agent who brought me to Singapore in the first place.

I turned to Mother Mary for help again.

Monday came, and my boss did not say anything to me. Time passed. I persevered in doing what I can and as best as I can. One day, my boss handed me a new phone. He said, "You are now the foreman of this site." I was truly surprised. I worked as a foreman until I found another job in an office environment many years later.

Initially, it was very difficult to celebrate Christmas in Singapore. In fact, I did not want to celebrate at all. I missed my family. Whenever I called home, I would cry. However, being surrounded by good and positive people has helped me a lot.

While it is still difficult to truly celebrate Christmas as I miss my family, I have found my 'family' here in Singapore through good colleagues and friends.

This Christmas, I am busy with work, and also staying in touch with my family. But I am happy. I trust that one day soon, we will all be together again.

– Sharing from a Migrant Friend

Are we listening to our migrant friends around us? All of us have a gift to share: our life stories. This Christmas, as we busy ourselves with preparations, let us share our time, and our stories by listening to those who are celebrating this joyful season on their own.



EVENTS



11 –
JAN 22
FEB

(Every Friday)

Personal Moral Compass 2019 – Module 1 (Who decides what is right or wrong?)

Personal Moral Compass (PMC) is a year-long modular course, with a total of 6 modules on ethical issues. In module 1, Fr David Garcia, OP, a Dominican Moral Theologian, will cover topics such as moral principles, personal decisions and conscience, who decides what is right or wrong, cultural dogmas and morality, and how one decides what to do with his/her life. PMC is for all Catholics and non-Catholics who are interested in the foundations of ethics. For more information on PMC, go to www.caritas-singapore.org.

🕒 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm

To register

☎ 6338 3448



55 Waterloo Street, Catholic Centre, Level 3



formation@caritas-singapore.org



22
FEB

(Fri)

Public Talks @ Agape Village

Celebrating our Golden Years – Retire Smart via CPF

Our CPF savings are an important component of our retirement plan. In recent years, there have been changes to the CPF system. For instance, a new CPF Life option – the Escalating Plan – available since 1 Jan 2018. Best-selling author, The Sunday Times' Invest Editor and The Straits Times' senior correspondent, Lorna Tan will speak on CPF Life, and how you can retire smart.

Self-care for the Second Half of Life

How have you lived your lives up till this point? How would you like to spend the rest of your years? Sr Linda Lizada will address some of these questions that come up as we go through the transition: questions about identity, relationships, meaning and fruitfulness of life. Sr Linda is a Cenacle Sister based in Singapore.

🕒 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm

To register

☎ 6801 7400



Agape Village, Multi-Purpose Hall



agapevillage@caritas-singapore.org

26 –
FEB 27
FEB

(Tue & Wed)

Review of Life (ROL) Workshop

Do you want to learn how to see clearly with eyes of faith, start living the Gospel in your daily lives and grow in faith?

Come learn The Review of Life (ROL) Method as a method of formation and a tool to help you integrate faith and life. There will also be engaging discussion and practice sessions.

🕒 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm

To register

☎ 6338 3448



Agape Village, Multi-Purpose Room



formation@caritas-singapore.org

02
MAR

(Sat)

Agape Experience (Church of St Francis Xavier)

A programme specially crafted for youths who will soon receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Through prayer, experiential learning and engaging activities, the youths will learn about our Catholic Social Teaching, and its connection with the Sacrament and our Catholic social mission.

🕒 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

To register

☎ 9144 4933



Agape Village, Multi-Purpose Hall



eve@caritas-singapore.org

02
MAR

(Sat)

Down Memory Lane 7

Oh, how we miss the 70s and 80s. From classic TV theme songs of Sesame Street, Happy Days and Great American Hero, to John Denver and Eagles, the retro dance hits by ABBA, Bananarama and Kylie Minogue. Join us as we go back in time for an evening of feel-good funk, great food and good cheer!

🕒 7:00 pm till late



One Farrer Hotel (Grand Ballroom, Level 6, 1 Farrer Park Station Road, S 217562)

💰 \$5,000 per table (5-course fusion dinner includes free flow of selected wines and dessert buffet)

For sponsorships and reservations



dml@caritas-singapore.org



CONNECT WITH US

Wish to receive an e-copy of this newsletter? Write to us at comms@caritas-singapore.org

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🌐 caritas-singapore.org