

Dear Friends

All Saints Day makes me recall John Nava's evocative tapestries that adorn the walls of Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral in Los Angeles. These beautiful fusions of modern technology and religious art depict the saints of all ages. Attending Mass surrounded by these venerable figures, worshippers can vividly sense that the Heavenly Church prays along with the earthly one.

Along with great admiration for them, we Catholics dedicate an aspect of our earthly profession to our saints. We have saints for people of almost all callings; from craftsmen to traders, social workers to politicians. Name the occupation and we likely have a saint for it. These saints are not associated randomly, there is usually a good purpose that comes with their patronage.

For example, St. Thomas More is commonly acknowledged as patron saint of lawyers. We imagine he is the guy whom God gives the job of interceding for those in the legal profession. It is, in fact, because Thomas was a lawyer himself and successfully brought his faith into the practice that makes his patronage befitting.

St. Albert the Great is patron of scientists because he was successful in uniting his faith to his methodical exploration of the natural world. St. Genesius, who found God through working on the stage, is patron of actors. Health care workers

call St. Elisabeth of Hungary their patron saint, who expressed her faith in serving the poor and nursing the sick.

Diverse in their age, gender, race, and background, the saints show us that it is possible to work towards holiness in whatever state of life and line of work we are in. As baptised people they, in turn, 'baptised' their worldly work.

I believe that we are all called to our own way of holiness. Rather than attaining it as a prize, sainthood is what we strive for by being the best at what we do without shedding our Christian identity. Through our working, God's love becomes felt in our world. Personal sanctity is not self serving but allows grace to take root in the hearts of those whom we dwell with.

That is why we, the Church, are described as a *sacrament* by the Second Vatican Council (*Lumen gentium*, Constitution on the Church, n.1).

The expectation to sainthood is not reserved for the exceptional few. The Apostle Paul, in his letters to Christians, addresses them all as 'saints.' All Saints Day is therefore actually *our* day.

Nava's depiction of the communion of the saints include many nameless and unrecognised individuals who have remained faithful to Christ amidst their normal lives. During this November, let us appreciate that each one of us has a place on that tapestry as well.

Arthur

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AsIPA 6th General Assembly

Go You Are Sent Forth!



Daphne Leong

The 6th Asian Integrated Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) General Assembly was held from 18th to 24th October in Sri Lanka.

Approximately 120 delegates from 16 countries from across Asia and Europe were present at this assembly exploring the theme “Go You Are Sent Forth!” For the whole week, delegates listened to initiatives from the different countries to grow the small Christian communities in their local churches.

Despite challenging socio-political situations in countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, dedicated efforts are being made at the local level to serve the people in those countries through the small Christian communities. Through the exchange of stories and experiences, we realised that building the small Christian communities is a long journey with obstacles that need to be seriously looked at. But as we listened we rejoice and are glad that these small Christian communities across Asia are trying to make a difference despite these obstacles.

In his keynote address, Bishop Thomas Dabre of Pune urged the church to continue strengthening and forming the small communities with a mission consciousness that will in turn strengthen and renew the Church in Asia. At the conclusion, all delegates were reminded with the theme: “Go You Are Sent Forth” and to keep in mind the priority of following Jesus in his mission in the way we develop and grow our Christian communities in our respective countries.



Parousia Advent Booklet 2012

This year's Advent Reflection for families, small groups, and neighbourhood Christian communities focuses on the eschatological (end time) theme of Parousia. It will be available in your parish sometime mid-November in English, Mandarin, and Tamil.



Sharing Our Faith

Points on Evangelisation at NCC Day

“Jesus gave his life to share God’s love with us, and as imitators of Christ we are called to give our lives to share it with others. Are we ready to share this Good News with other people in Singapore?”

Archbishop Chia’s Opening Address

Arthur Goh

Participants in this year’s Neighbourhood Christian Communities Day found themselves in the challenging position of having to share their faith with a “non-Catholic.” During this role-play exercise that was intended to raise observation points on the way we evangelise, ordinary Catholics flexed their creativity to find effective ways to convey the best of our faith.

Fourteen people were appointed as “non-Catholics” from across a spectrum of life situations. They were then inserted into the small groups to ‘encounter’ Catholics through an imaginary everyday scenario; like a barbeque, or a birthday celebration.

Here are a few lessons learnt from that educational experience:

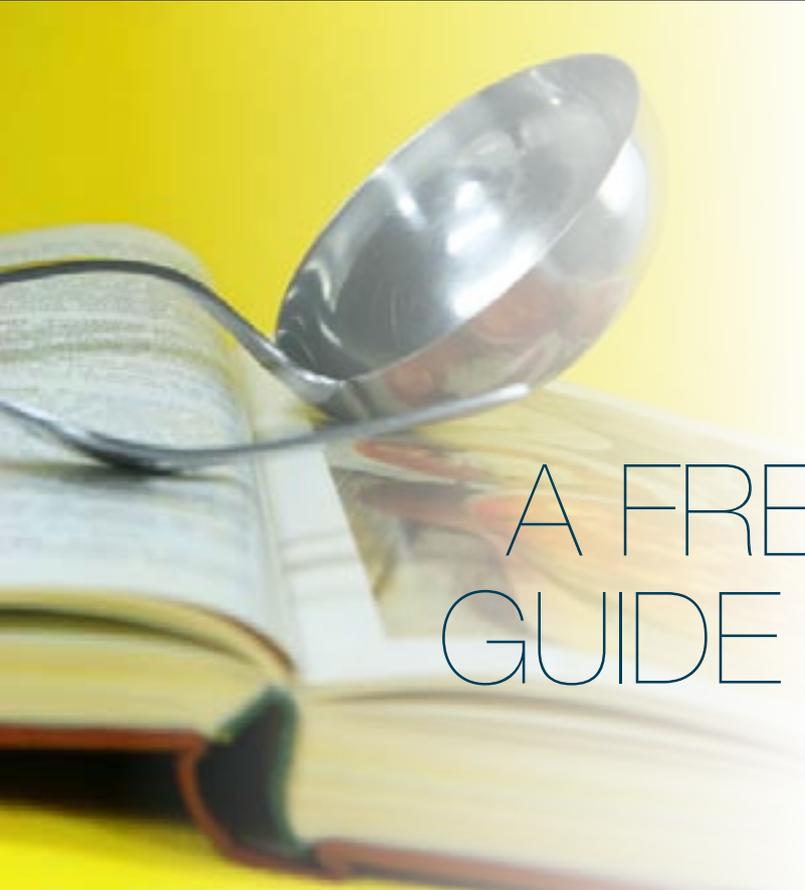
1 **Welcome is Important.** One constant feature among all the groups was the warm sense of welcome felt by the ‘non-Catholics’. Hospitality is a strong point of our Catholic communities, especially when gathered around food. We do befriending easily and sincerely,

but as Msgr Eugene Vaz explained later, we have to be mindful of the spiritual dimension that our welcome leads to.

2 **Find out about the Person.** When given the opportunity to have an eager listener, Catholics tend to ply them immediately with our ‘products’. Although the welcome was nice, some communities did not ask where their guest came from or what their life was like until late in the conversation. In other groups that took time to get to know the person better, the “non-Catholics” responded that they felt like they were treated like human persons, rather than objects for indoctrination. What is ‘good’ of the Good News will initially depend a lot on the life situation the hearer is facing.

3 **Talk about Jesus.** Many Catholics are not accustomed to testifying to God’s presence in their own lives. We tend to talk more easily about the organisational practices of being Catholic, but stop short at being able to speak meaningfully of our own personal relationship with Christ. The “non-Catholics” shared during the debrief that people recommended Novena, Rosary, RCIA, and other ‘church products’ but these incomprehensible terms were not really explained to them. Catholics need to learn to tell the Christian story better.

Mike Arents, pastoral coordinator at Holy Spirit Church, summed up the evangelisation cycle that Catholics should be aware of: Befriend others, listen to their story, share our story. When Christian communities learn how to witness both in life and in word, they will unlock their potential to reflect Christ’s light for the people they encounter in daily life.



A FRENCH CHEF'S GUIDE TO THE RCIA

posted by Nick

For Christmas, a friend gave me *The Complete Robuchon*, which is 800 recipes for “French home cooking for the way we live now.” My friend and I both love to cook, although she is much more serious about it than I am. She takes classes from important chefs, stocks her pantry with sea salts from around the world, and has more All-Clad pans than some women have shoes. Still, she gave me this very serious cookbook as “re-gift” because, she said, I’m more of an artist than she is in the kitchen. And this is a book about art.

The art of eating

You’ll have to come over for dinner some night to determine which of us is more the artist. I thought her comment was odd, though, because I’m what folks call a “recipe cook.” Because she is better trained than I am, my friend can whip up wonderful meals without a cookbook in sight. I’m constantly double-checking myself against the “experts” as I cook. Whether you wing it or cook by the book, however, Joel Robuchon says something important about “the art of eating”:

Proper nourishment calls for a certain balance,

within each meal and from one to the next. To be healthy, then, as well as engaged by the singular pleasure of eating, we must all find ways of varying what we eat. We may think of meat or fish as the center of a meal, but fruit, vegetables, dairy products, and grains should find their way to the table whenever we sit down to eat. The proportions may vary according to individual tastes and nutritional requirements, but no single food alone makes a satisfying meal.

He then goes on to explain the intangibles that go into the art of, not eating, but feeding others:

- You must first of all avoid overwhelming them, especially with heavy dishes served from beginning to end.
- At the same time, try to find something that will tie the whole meal together such as a common flavor note struck in several courses.
- You must also take into consideration your guests’ tastes, inevitable allergies, and religious requirements.
- Don’t forget that you will want to spend some time with your friends or family, away from the kitchen.
- The finest meals are planned with the season in mind.

A recipe for formation

I know you won't be shocked when I tell you I think this is very similar to how we should think of our formation efforts. If we think of formation as meal-sharing, we can learn a lot. You can be a "recipe cook" when it comes to formation and still be an artist. The key is balance—and keeping the needs of your guests at the forefront of your planning. There is no one form of catechesis that is going to be satisfying. You need to vary what you are feeding the catechumens. Specifically:

- You don't want to overwhelm them with heavy doctrines from beginning to end.
- Inquirers need a lot of appetizers—small but enticing bites of the best of our faith.
- Along with the main doctrinal courses, catechumens need plenty of side dishes of customs and practices along with well-matched wines of sparkling community and enlivening friendships.
- The elect need to be taught how to harmonize their faith the way the French balance a chorus of cheeses between the main course and dessert.
- And the neophytes are to be indulged in the eternal sweetness of God's saving grace—much like a kid in a candy store.

Cook for who is coming to dinner

The thing that moves this method of formation beyond recipe and into art is knowing when to put down the book and take up the relationship. An artist doesn't put a meal on the table just because some French chef said this tastes good with that. An artist starts with the question—what would my friends like to eat? What would delight them? What would feed not just their stomachs, but their spirits as well? What would make them leave the table completely satisfied and at the same time longing for so much more?

If we can serve up that kind of dish for the catechumens, we'll all be artists of faith.

First published at <http://www.teamrcia.com/2009/12/30/a-french-chefs-guide-to-the-rcia/comment-page-1/#comment-19180> Copyright © TeamRCIA.com Published with permission



Illustration by Joseph Tey

Ah Beng Learns About Vatican II

Ah Beng & Shanti recently got married and we listen to them after Mass one Sunday as they discuss their understanding of what it means to enter into this new vocation.

Beng:

I like that priest's preaching, he's damn funny.

Shanti:

Aside from the jokes did you catch his points or not?

Beng:

My favourite one was God asking Adam to name the creatures and when he saw Eve so chio he went 'Wooh, Man!' So that's how you kena call woman, ha ha!

Shanti:

Hello!

Beng:

Yes dear? Oh, point. Uh, marriage is sacred.

Shanti:

If there was a prize for making summaries you sure win one. Wasn't there something else?

Beng:

That marriage is for making children, lor.

Shanti:

I can't believe you missed the part of it being a sacrament, and the love of couples being a good of marriage itself.

Beng:

Only because I was still laughing to myself from his jokes mah.

But really meh, I thought that for the Church the only good for marriage was to create little Catholics? Even during our wedding reception, Auntie Yvonne...

Shanti:
'Mother.'

Beng:
Aiyah I still can't stop calling your mum 'Aunty'...
Anyway one of your mum's old friends hor, she
came up to me and said that we have to be a good
Catholic couple fast-fast and have lots of children.

Shanti:
Having children is the fruit of marriage. But
Vatican II also taught us that marriage in itself
is good.* Promising to love and care for another
person for life in marriage is a witness of
unselfishness. It's how human love can look like
God's love.

Beng:
Tell me about it man, now my private space all
gone. Even toilet have to share.

Shanti:
You can talk ah? I'm the one who has to live with
your family. I think I'm going to need earplugs
to cope with your dad's early morning Teochew
opera music.

Beng:
Eh, Teochew opera is solid stuff, OK. And my
pa is a morning person, can't help it lah. But I
understand you never grew up with it.
But you're right, being married is to practice
unselfishness, just as Jesus was unselfish.
So that means children is second priority is it?
Jesus himself never got married and didn't have
children, what.

Shanti:
No having children is still good and God's great
gift to couples, in fact it is a higher level of
unselfishness to rear children. But what about
couples who cannot have kids? Does it mean it's
impossible for them to be good Catholics?

Beng:
I also say. Then someone better tell your mum's
friend to stop going around asking us young
couples to multiply like rabbits. Think we print
money one ah?

Shanti:
The Church leaves it to each couple to plan the
size of their own families, while reminding them
to always be open to life.
Vatican II calls marriage a vocation of authentic
human love. Do you know what it means? It
means my new calling is to sayang you, feed you
your veggies, clean up your mess, and help you
become a better person.
Now my main way to become holy is looking after
you, can you imagine? You are my means to my
eternal salvation!

Beng:
So drama-mama lah you, Shan. I think I confirm
will make you a saint one.

Shanti:
Eh it goes for you too, OK.

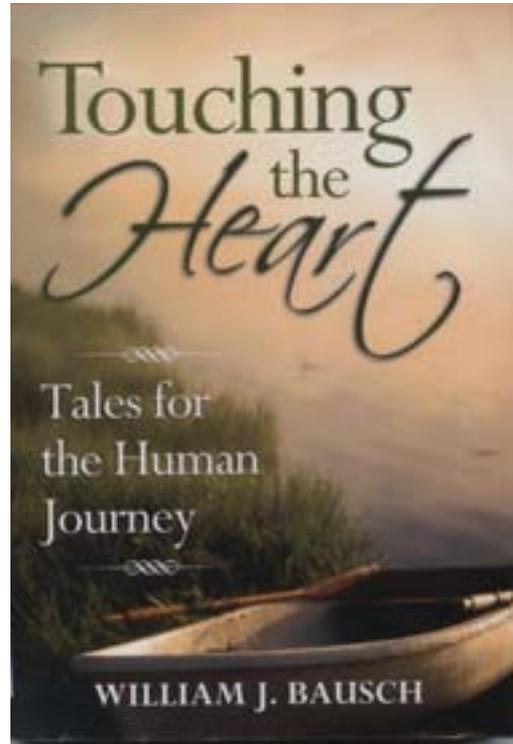
Beng:
...like how?

Shanti:
You can be a holy husband by giving your wife a
nice shoulder massage to ease her stress.

Beng:
<cracks fingers> this kind of holiness, I'm the
expert.

* Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the
Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, n. 49

Title: Touching The Heart
Author: William J. Bausch
Publisher: Twenty Third Publications
Pages: 264



Ann Hoffner

William J Bausch's book is a magical world of story telling. These come in the form of myths, nursery rhymes, fairy tales, poems and novels. To understand them, one listens with the heart, for the deep hidden meanings to unfold. Stories help us cope with life's hardships, oppression, denial, and our inner demons. As the old saying goes, "some stories are factual. All stories are true", and here Bausch attempts to make a point of that.

For the purpose of this reflection, I choose to focus only on two aspects and will start with its impact on little children, wherein life's journey commences and end with the senior years that culminates the journey taken.

Fairy tales and nursery rhymes engage the imagination (right brain) and is a natural way to develop the child's emotions and character. So read stories to children, the earlier the better. Albert Einstein wrote, "If you want your children

to be brilliant, tell them fairy tales. If you want them to be very brilliant, tell them more fairy tales".

Modern society is obsessed with television, computers and grades, and too anxious to fit the child into desired molds that develop the mind but not the heart and emotions. Too much emphasis is placed on education, yet the most precious memories preserved from childhood is the best education to take into life's journey. Story telling has a positive impact on the formative years of the child, they convey morals and allow children the chance for interaction, to delight in singing, imagery, play, hugs, and to indulge in a familiar comforting reading voice.

"Things and possessions only rust and age, but memories, Tommy, memories are like fine wine... they grow in value with time" - The Tin Box

Nursery rhymes were originally disguised stories, intended for adults and have some background in

history. This one tells of the bubonic plague in the 14th Century which appeared as a rosy red ring shaped rash on the skin. Flowers were carried to sweeten the bad odour caused by the disease and ashes referred to cremated bodies. Today, this rhyme provides play and song for children to interact with each other,

*“Ring around the rosy
A pocket full of posies
Ashes, Ashes
We all fall down”*

In C.S. Lewis’ novel “The Chronicles of Narnia” Aslan the Lion is the Christ figure - just when all seems lost, Aslan is resurrected and brings salvation. Whilst “The Wizard of Oz”, “Pinocchio” and “The Stolen Ax”, all have wisdom to offer in their stories.

Our journey takes us into the realm of the senior years, and here Bausch outlines its seven pitfalls, with a series of even more stories.

1. **Beyond the Myths** - “The Cruise” tells of an old lady, who throws off her inhibitions, when she thinks no one is looking, and begins to snap her fingers and swivel her hips on the carpeted passage way, when the intercom plays “Begin the Beguine” and in doing so, throws off the negative imagery of aging.

2. **Beyond Conventional Roles** - The “Gift of the Red Bird” reminds us that our adult roles should not become our lives but rather the channels for God to touch us.

3. **Beyond Victimhood and Role Playing** - “The Color Purple” speaks of the spiritual task to move from being victim to survivor.

4. **Beyond the Masks of Society** - “The Magic Towel” invites us to grow old gracefully both psychologically & spiritually. Old age is a time for contemplation, for building bridges, for new beginnings, for shaking off past jealousies, rivalries, regrets and to see with our inner vision.

5. **Beyond Inertia** - “Fortune & The Woodcutter” tells of poverty of the emotions, of a sense of loss and depression. It relates the story of a married

couple, who worked all their lives and raised their kids, only to find their children grown and gone, and now they live on a meagre income instead of happily ever after.

6. **Re-Examine the Routine** - “The Bribe” is a story of charity done selfishly in exchange for flattery and favour. The story challenges us to confront self, to re-examine our intentions and re-dedicate self to sincerity.

7. **Beyond Denial & Fear of Death** - here Bausch discusses self deception, that embraces plastic surgery to keep us youthful looking, and our dread of sickness and death, wishfully hoping that this curse can be avoided with medical scientific advancements.

Bausch quotes Basil Pennington who sums up the desired attitude beautifully, when he says,

*“I do not know the day or hour,
but I have full confidence that the Lord
will complete the work
that God wants to do in and through my life
and then take me home”*

This story is my personal favourite from the book, told by a Rabbi, that can be appreciated by children and seniors alike.

The Jews saved from the bonds of slavery after crossing the Red Sea gave thanks to God with a poem called “The Song of the Sea”. However, the Egyptian army that gave them hot pursuit were all drowned. The angels too then began to sing a song of praise to God, who promptly rebuked them, “my handiwork is drowning in the sea and you want to sing a song of praise.” God who is both just and merciful, could not allow unconditional celebration when people were dying.

This book is available for borrowing at the Pastoral Institute Library, call number 248 BAU.



The Pastoral Institute was established in 1978 to assist the Archbishop in providing faith formation for the Catholic Archdiocese in Singapore. Today, the Institute continues to carry out this responsibility in the catechetical, biblical, and pastoral aspects of Christian ministry. In addition, the Institute looks to the preparation of those who serve the Church in various ministerial capacities, and identifies emerging issues that have pastoral import on the life of the local Church.

This newsletter is published monthly for internal circulation within the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore.

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CATHOLICS & ECUMENISM

Melaka-Johor Pastoral Institute director Deacon Sherman Kuek takes us on an in-depth introduction to the relationship between Catholics and non-Catholic Christians and our efforts towards Christian unity. In conjunction with the anniversary of the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism.

Friday, 23 Nov, 8:00pm-10:00pm & Saturday 24 Nov, 9:30am-5:30pm. CAEC, 2 Highland Road. Voluntary contribution. Registration required as seating is limited and lunch is provided. Contact [Melinda Reyes](#) for registration details.

KIDS HOLIDAY BIBLE CAMP

An enriching and fun four-and-a-half days camp for children from K2 through P6, conducted by the Catechetical Office.

Monday, 19 Nov to Friday, 23 Nov, CAEC, 2 Highland Road, 9:00am-1:00pm. Contribution: \$90 per child. Oversubscribed, registration closed.

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (CGS) LEVEL I, PART I

The CGS group is conducting an introductory training for parents, catechists, and others interested in this alternative way of handing on our faith to our children.

Monday, 26 Nov to Saturday 1 Dec, Church of St. Teresa, 9:00am-6:00pm. Contribution: \$350. Contact [Sylvia Stewart](#) for registration details.