

CHALLENGE AND MISSION



“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.”

Acts 4:32

“I really miss just being able to walk into church when I am feeling anxious or scared and sitting in silence during adoration or before Mass starts. I always feel Christ’s reassuring presence in sacred space and I have been missing that.”

“Even though I attend an early-morning weekday Mass and we are a quiet bunch, I miss being in that community.”

“The being together...not only with my dear friends, but also with those I know only by sight, or recognize by where they sit or what they do.”

*Come, Holy Spirit breathe down upon our troubled world.
Shake the tired foundations of our crumbling institutions.
Break the rules that keep you out of all our sacred spaces.
And from the dust and rubble gather the seedlings of a new
creation.*



When exactly will churches reopen for sacramental celebrations? How long will the physical distancing restrictions last? Is there going to be a Mass attendance registration in Phase 2? When will the economy rebound? How are the finances of St Mary's coping? When will services resume? When is Confirmation? When can our Elect be baptised? What will church services be like? Will people stop coming to church?

We want answers, but we don't know the answers!

Our anxiety and frustration with not having the answers now, may possibly have stemmed from our fear of entering the mystery of our Faith – the mystery of our human existence. We continue to see the Cross as something accomplished, concluded, and in the past. Are we not in Easter, and Good Friday is over? When we lose sight of a Church being more “*on the way*” than arrived, we continue to demand answers.



SO

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Dear Parishioners of St Mary of the Angels,
Dear Friends*

Happy Pentecost!

Apart from being a very beautiful feast, the day of Pentecost is a celebration of God's hand guiding the Christian community through the trials and decisions that are presented to it.

If we look back at the daily scripture readings for the past seven weeks, we see a community struggling to come up with answers to the problems it faced: Who should be admitted to the believing community? Should we obey the

purity and food laws of the Torah? What roles, rights and duties should Church officials exercise? These were problems that vexed the early community. Today we are not spared of new problems for the community.

From that first Pentecost until now, it has always been the belief of the Church that the Holy Spirit directs and guides us collectively and individually. God is not a distant Being, and the ascended Jesus has not abandoned us. We have the Spirit of God living and working in our lives and in our Church.

“I am with you always, to the end of time”

Matthew 28: 20



By now, you already know that we are not opening our churches in Phase 1. Our Archbishop wrote in his letter dated 27th May 2020:

“The Archdiocese has noted the Government’s cautious stance, studied the restrictions and requirements, and consulted with a number of parish priests. Because we are not allowed to engage the help of volunteers, it will be very difficult to fully comply with the strict conditions set by MCCY for Phase 1. Hence, our churches will reluctantly remain closed for private worship during this Phase.

We have to err on the side of caution out of pastoral responsibility. We seek your kind understanding that both our staff and worshippers are uppermost on our minds for the best outcome always.

Let us remain strong and united as one Body of Christ.”

*Most Rev. William Goh, DD
Archbishop of Singapore*

ST MARY OF THE ANGELS

**The church
remains
temporarily
CLOSED
during Phase 1
of the
Circuit Breaker
exit**



Some in the Church may be disappointed and want the re-opening and resumption of public Masses, on the grounds that the spiritual health and well-being of the faithful are more important than protection from disease.

This attitude exhibits a kind of fideism - a rejection of the basic Catholic principle that faith and reason (science) must work hand-in-hand; and that we are bound by the

Church's mission for the common good and the love of our brothers and sisters, especially the most vulnerable.

So dear friends, let us understand that this is not an act of cowardice, or a preservation of self. It is a witness of love, a dying to self; for our brothers and sisters and the most vulnerable; not just for those within the Church, but also for those whom we are called to serve – the greater humanity.

One of the most painful things for me, as I'm sure for you as well, is not encountering one another and celebrating the presence of God with you, in the encounter of our personhood. To share and to dialogue with another person.

During the period of the Circuit Breaker and now in Phase 1, we are reminded by the Archdiocesan Covid-19 Task Force:




- 3.3 *Anointing of the sick is not allowed in residential areas. It will only be allowed in hospitals for non-COVID-19 patients on condition that the caregiver seeks permission from the hospital, and that the hospital grants it.*
- 3.4 *In Phase 1, only wedding and funeral rites are allowed. To minimise the amount of time people are gathered in the same location, such rites will not include Mass.*
- 3.5 *Sacrament of Reconciliation will not resume yet because it is considered a religious rite.*
- 3.6 *Baptism is not yet allowed in Phase 1. Catechumens who have completed RCIA will have to wait until baptism is allowed either individually or in small groups. However, in danger of death, any person can confer baptism to the dying (cf. can. 861.2, 865.2, 867.2).*



CONNECTING IN A NEW WAY

To help ease the pain, I have tried my best to remain connected and to help you.

Overnight and with the sweat and blood and panda eyes of Patrick and the newbies in the Digital Ministry, we have produced, since Feb 15th, 130 videos, over 100 days. We have had 850,000 views, 122,000 hours watched, 7.3 million minutes consumed! We are viewed in 70 countries! I'm not making all this up. This is from the analytics given by  **YouTube**.

Many of you have shared your gratitude to us. Yes, often there were/are many things we can improve upon. It's interesting that we are taking to social media with what is becoming a daily deluge of prayers and blessings - I'm sure your phone is buzzing and beeping with holy pictures

and homespun rituals, livestreamed Masses and virtual devotions. There are many reasons for such intensity of prayer. There is the anguish of those living with illness, death and bereavement, the exhaustion of health workers daily risking their lives to help others, the loneliness of those who are cut off from society and have no one to turn to, the economic fallout, impending loss of jobs and income, stresses in the home, and of course, eventually our own fear and uncertainty of what the future holds.

But the question that keeps haunting me is, how many parishioners are we NOT reaching out to? How many DON'T KNOW what is going on in our attempts to connect? How many don't have access to social media? How many are not in small groups, NCC groups and receiving calls etc?

COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY:

DIGITALISING THE OFFICE OF ST

MARY'S

We actually need to have a Digital/Communications survey/registration, so that we know how to reach out to you, and you to us – in both ways. We must engage in this, so that we can have printed material posted or calls made to engage with those “left out”.

We will use Phase 2 and 3 to ensure that we have a registration system in place to assist us in communications.

I am hoping that soon we can even have a dedicated time when you can call in and have a simple chat, so that we can “engage”.

Our staff will embark on a 6-month training to digitalise the office and will begin their sessions this Tuesday. It will be challenging to unlearn, to pick up new skills, to make us more available to you, in person and online.

At the moment, we thankfully have been able to answer all calls with a human voice and to attend to your needs as best we can. I have to thank Cindy from our Communications Office immensely for managing our corporate mobile phone and informing the priests of any pastoral needs.

UNITING THE ONLINE COMMUNITY WITH THE IN-PERSON COMMUNITY: ONE CHURCH?

In Phase 2 when our churches reopen, chances are that we will still have limited attendance by registration. How do we connect the ONLINE COMMUNITY with the IN-HOUSE COMMUNITY? So that we are ONE COMMUNITY. I have researched the strategies we need to have an interactive system, so that those following our services online can participate with the community in church. Think of how the Choir can lift up our experience of services in church when we cannot have live music ? What about our aged, who may not be able to join us even in Phase 2? How many cannot join in the funerals of loved ones or marriages because of the restrictions? How can we bridge this and make our services interactive with those engaging from home because they have to?

Unfortunately the architecture and play of light demands for certain equipment installed, without altering the aesthetics of St Mary's, but more importantly, the investment in people who can be trained in the system and create content. The amount is expensive. We need about \$200,000 to \$300,000. Yes, it will be an expensive investment, but with so many needs - I'm praying. At least you know the friars are working out and considering the challenges ahead! Whether we can or cannot, I don't know yet. It depends if you too see this as something that will become more and more important.

Christian social media cannot keep focusing more on different ways and means of praying, than on ways of responding to our neighbours in need, and forming communities of care and support for those who are most vulnerable.

In the words of Michael Forster's poem, "Kindle A Light To Lighten The Darkness":

THE JUBILEE MISSION

"God in the poor is coming to meet us, judge us, heal us and free us. What will our Pentecost offering for them be?"

This is what Pentecost is - they stepped out and encountered the world. Engaged in the troubles and cares, they brought good news. Thus, the mission of the church took shape.

TO LIFE and TO BLESSINGS

Jubilateus



Sanctae Mariae Angelorum



*"Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land
to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to
return to your family property and to your own clan.*

Leviticus 25:10

Pentecost, and especially in our Jubilee year, reinforces the idea that service must be part and parcel of our Christian lives; for it is our *raison d'être* for being Church.

Over time, we have done our best to involve the Choir, the Lectors, and the Youth, to come on board. We have also tried to link up with the Prayer Groups in Divine Mercy, Legion of Mary etc. But you have to admit, that it is still overall, only a passive outreach.

Look back at the souvenir booklet that was printed and given to us on the Inauguration of the Jubilee Year, February 2nd - The Feast of the Presentation. What are the the 3 pillars of our Jubilee?

St Mary of the Angels started as a small hilltop chapel for the Franciscan friars. In its early days, it was a simple structure that was surrounded by orchards and plantations. People from the neighbouring villages would just walk up the hill to mass. Friar George Boggs, OFM, one of the early pioneers, recalls that about 2 to 5 people used to join the friars in the daily Mass and for Christmas Mass, there was usually a grand total of 20 people.

In 1970 when the number of people grew and Bukit Batok was developing, Friar Sylvester Campbell, OFM, signed a 25-year agreement with Archbishop Michael Olcomendy to run a parish. The friars' chapel was made a parish church and Friar Sylvester became the first parish priest of St Mary's.

A decision was made by the Franciscans to develop the land and the friars' property. The old chapel of the friars was demolished and the friars gave the bigger share of their land for the use of the people. The "new" St Mary of the Angels was built. It was dedicated to God on the Feast of the Presentation, 2 February 2004. Today, the church is the home parish of about 11,000 people.

As this year marks the Jubilee of St Mary of the Angels, the friars in this ministry have decided that we begin the Jubilee on the day that the church and her people were dedicated to God, 2 February 2020.

The Jubilee invites us to a renewal of our hearts and it fits so dearly to St Francis' repairing the chapel of the Porziuncola, St Mary of the Angels. Therefore in keeping with Scripture and our Franciscan roots, we will focus on 3 tenets for our celebrations:

- to restore our faith in Jesus Christ after St Francis' spirituality*
- to lift up and to be concerned for the dignity of others and especially the less fortunate*
- to celebrate and deepen our sense of brotherhood and sisterhood (fraternity)*

We are trying not to make the Jubilee a fundraising activity for the church building (as much as we desperately need this), but rather a Jubilee for you, the living stones of Christ's body; the Church.

Therefore, I invite everyone to be a part of the family, returning "to his property and to his clan" (Leviticus 25:10), to understand that this is a call to return to the heart of God, and to life in His kingdom. I hope that you will be able to celebrate with us friars, and people, the peace and goodness of God. I hope that you will participate by prayer, presence and sponsorship, where applicable. Any excess funds from the budgeted proposals will go to the agencies (and not to us).

This is your Jubilee. This is our Jubilee. This is the Jubilee of the Lord.

May our Lady of Angels pray for us this Jubilee and always.

On behalf of the Franciscan friars,



*Friar Michael D'Cruz
Parish Priest of St Mary of the Angels*

We have responded to this mighty wind that blew and shook the church foundations. We are now challenged by the Jubilee Mission!

Come, O Holy Spirit,

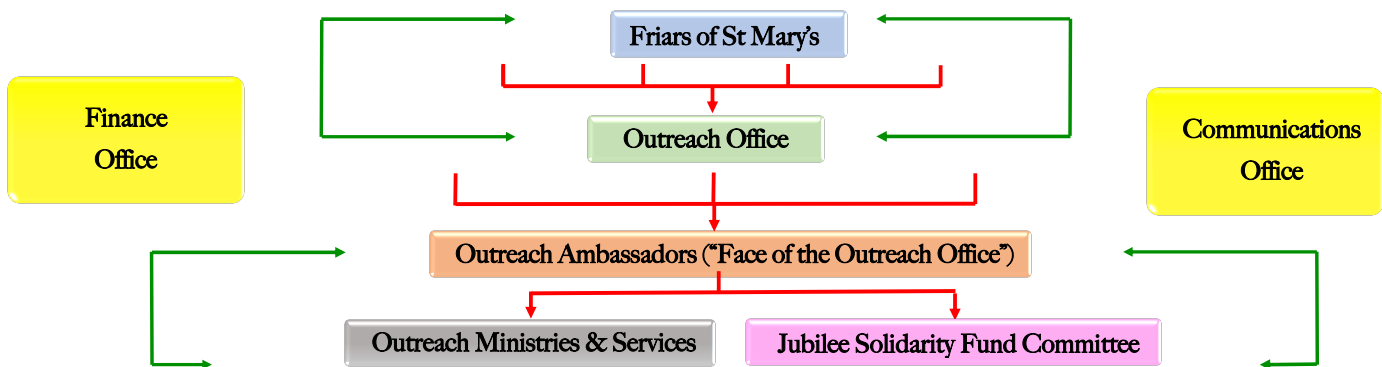
Break open the prisons of our inner being,

And let your raging justice be our sign of liberty.

THE HEART OF ST MARY

The heart of our Franciscan Parish must be our encounter with the poor and those in the margins. The Pandemic sees so many who are struggling - emotionally, spiritually and materially. To respond to the situation, we have looked into the restructuring of the OUTREACH TO THE POOR. We will be having a more consolidated and integrated approach, synergizing our efforts.

On Saturday, we will be welcoming 7 parishioners who are stepping up to assist us in social work/care, ranging from suicide intervention, special needs, medical etc. Imagine that! And what a significant number!



Our current outreach with the Poor and Needy Fund is limited and restrictive. It needs to expand. We will not be able to reach out to the pressing situations affecting the lives of our brothers and sisters, and perhaps even you, reading this. So this Pentecost, we will be introducing the **JUBILEE SOLIDARITY FUND**. This fund will allow us to reach out to the “new” poor. Our hope is to have about 500 families blessed by this initiative.

It’s necessary that we be good and prudent stewards and make sure that we have people who can assist those in need, to tap into help that is already set up. But there are always those who are marginalized – those who don’t fit into the current help pools. So I need you to understand the funding structures and in doing so, I hope you will help us to reach the aim of us being a Blessing of God to 500 families.

If we estimate a \$1,000 aid per family, we will need to raise \$500,000! But we are all under strain ourselves. Therefore, so as not to further strain anyone, from Pentecost 31st May 2020 to the Feast of St Francis on 4th Oct 2020 (the Closing of the Jubilee), all donations to the Poor and Needy Fund will specifically go into the Jubilee Solidarity Fund, to extend our outreach.

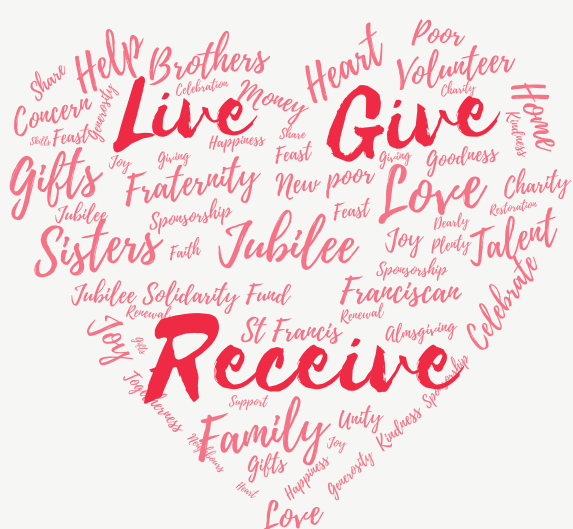
BUT THE MISSION CANNOT BE A PASSIVE GIVING OF FUNDS! It must be an active involvement of you - as Church, as Parish, a **LIVING JUBILEE**.

We must have the Heartbeat of the Parish felt by our brothers and sisters. So from Pentecost (May 31st) to the Feast of St Anthony (June 13th) - the miracle worker, the fearless preacher and the one who gives bread to the Poor - we will launch the campaign.

Live Jubilee Give Jubilee Receive Jubilee

We need you to go to the website (go.stmary.sg/livejubilee) and sign in your interest and your willingness to be part of this renewed Outreach Office to the Poor.

This is the HEART of the Parish; our social mission.



St Mary of the Angels

Jubilee Solidarity Fund

We hope that our small and humble acts of aid and relief can bring you some hope and comfort. This jubilee, let us spread hope and comfort to those who need it.
#LiveJubilee

More details at: GO.STMARY.SG/LIVEJUBILEE

Come, O Holy Spirit,

*lead us to places we would
rather not go.*

*Expand the horizons of our
limited imaginations.*

Awaken in our souls,

*dangerous dreams for a new
tomorrow,*

And rekindle in our hearts

the fire of prophetic

enthusiasm.

THE SOUL

While the OUTREACH TO THE POOR is the HEART of the parish, the SOUL of the parish must be the FAITH & EVANGELISATION OFFICE. The new normal calls for a way we connect and reach out to build up faith, engage in Formation and celebrate Faith in a new integrated way.

I just shared how we must link the online community with the community in-house to bridge this. But so many of our processes have been classroom-based. I hesitated to start our new journey for those interested in finding out about the Catholic Faith especially when our current ELECT has not been able to be baptised. We continue, though struggling but getting there, with the continuing and deepening of the faith with the Elect through Zoom.

But I was shocked to read that in actuality, the Pandemic has reinvigorated religion. I read in the 16th/17th Weekend Edition of the Financial Times:

“Alpha, an evangelical introduction to Christianity run by Holy Trinity Brompton, the Church of England’s largest church by congregation, has more than twice as many participants online as it did in person. Its seven-week marriage course normally has 80 to 100 couples attending; 5,500 couples have signed up online since lockdown began.

“I didn’t like the idea of online courses. It went against the idea of local church,” says Nicky Gumbel, who has run Alpha since 1990. “I could not have been more wrong . . . It works better online than in person.””

The coronavirus crisis may be unprecedented but, as with previous moments of turbulence, it has triggered a search for the divine.

Seek

ST MARY OF THE ANGELS

Have you been looking for answers to life's big questions? Or perhaps, just plain curious about God and who He is?

JOIN US AT OUR ONE OF SESSIONS WITH OUR RCIA TEAM.
EMAIL YOUR INTEREST TO [RCIASMOTA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:rciasmota@gmail.com)



WE MEET VIA ZOOM ON THE
1ST & 3RD THURSDAYS OF THE MONTH

So we will begin our new RCIA Journey, so if you know anyone who is interested in beginning this journey and desiring to respond to a call they are feeling, to know more about Jesus Christ and the Catholic Faith, please

get in touch with our RCIA team by dropping them an email (rciasmota@gmail.com).

CATHECHISM CHALLENGES

Then comes the Faith Formation of the Young. I sincerely apologise to our young adults, who like the ELECT, have been waiting for their Confirmation. Our target date is the Feast of the Holy Cross (September 14th). But it cannot be that it's just a date in the calendar. It needs to be a journey, and the journey is part of the destination and mission. Our Novena to the Holy Spirit was to engage the youth.

But we must begin the journey and use new means of communications (e.g.) Google Classrooms, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google “Hangout”. These are tools, a platform, given to us to use. Not all of us are comfortable facilitating faith formation using these means. It really calls for a different skill set. And we need to realise that with schools going online too, Faith Formation and Faith

Sharing has to engage differently. We cannot simply “do lessons” online. We need to build a safe place for our students to share what is in the heart. We need to make sure that this platform is also engaged in the Protection and Safety of our children. We need responsible adults to team up with facilitators so that it will be a safe environment online.

I need more young adults to step up and engage with the parish in Faith and Evangelisation. We need to reinvigorate and coordinate the Young Adults, the Youth Ministries etc. All this will be part of the reorganization of the Faith and Evangelisation Office. And we will need the Young Adults to first build up a group that shares their faith journey, growing in Christ - and then to become part of the nurturing of faith (lived in a real world) to our younger members.

This will take time, and as we reorganize the Outreach to the Poor, we will have to have more people coming up with skills and the languages of the youth living the challenges of faith today in the real world, to evangelise and give a helping hand to our catechists.

So if you are willing to be a catechist and are familiar with these new means of communications, and have a love to impart faith and nurture the journey of our younger members, contact Agatha, Joan or Michael.

We are also need to reach out to more young people to form a community that will serve the evangelisation and faith formation in St Mary of the Angels. We need to integrate our current communities and have them to be service communities, as much as faith sharing communities.

If you have been following the Novena to the Holy Spirit, you would have seen a group of these young adults functioning - there are about 15 of them who are meeting regularly. So I invite you, if you are 19-26 years, to get in touch with them, so that we will be able to celebrate the Church of tomorrow, today. If we are developing and nurturing the heart of the Parish, we must also nurture the soul of the Parish.

Youth Group (19-26 years):

Jonathan Chua

stmary.ypc@gmail.com

To be a catechist:

Agatha/Joan/Michael

oneadmin.stmary@catholic.org.sg

You can see the challenges we have ahead. It's not going to be easy, but with the Holy Spirit with us, we will be a church responding to the times.

Our worship will get fuller as together, we learn new steps in a new time. As we prepare to reopen, let's not go back to the old 'normal'.



*Come, O Holy Spirit,
whose promise invigorates our every effort;
To create a new heaven and a new Earth,
Now and forever. Amen*



Pax et Bonum

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael D'Cruz', written over a horizontal line.

Friar Michael D'Cruz

Parish Priest