

1 life Christ

Insights into the Diocesan Priesthood

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Called & Chosen

Archbishop Launches Book on Vocation Stories of Local Diocesan Priests at Feast Day Celebrations at Seminary



His Grace blessing a copy of 'Called and Chosen'

ARCHBISHOP Nicholas Chia launched "Called & Chosen", a collection of the vocation stories of 17 local Diocesan priests at the Saint Francis Xavier (SFX) Major Seminary at its Feast Day celebrations on 3 December. The launch was attended by the seminarians, their families and friends and the participants of the Vocation Retreat and Camp which had taken place from 1 – 3 December.

"Called & Chosen" is produced by the Serra Club of Singapore, a project which has taken the members almost two years to complete (it started while the members were in the Vocation Promotion Team at Holy Cross).

The title of this book is aptly taken from the Gospel of Matthew 22:14, "For many are called but few are chosen." The cover for this book depicts the fact that priests are chosen and set aside from the world but for the world. The large wheat field in disarray in the background of a lone upright stalk suggests that the harvest is large but the labourers are few (Matthew 9:37).



It also calls to mind what Jesus said in John 12:24 "I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest." The wheat signifies the bread which at the words of our priests during consecration becomes the Bread of Life. In answering God's Call, our priests have laid down their lives just as Christ did by His Death to bring us eternal life. In the same way, by dying to their worldly ambitions and desires, our priests through their ministry are ensuring that the life of the Church is sustained by giving us the Eucharist – the Living Bread of God so that we may have life in us (John 6:51).

Essentially, the 17 stories are stories of love and celebrate the Glory of our Lord. It tells of the personal struggles and obstacles that each priest faced and how through the Grace of God and with great love, these men who were called and chosen came to fulfill God's Will for them.

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Serra Club of Singapore wishes you a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year ahead!

1000 Friends of Serra Club!

SINCE its launch in May 06, Serra Club has now recruited 1,000 "Friends of Serra Club".

These Friends of Serra Club have pledged to pray a minimum of one hour every month in front of the Blessed Sacrament for more young men to answer the Calling to the priesthood, for our seminarians and for our current priests. This means we have literally 1,000 hours of prayers each month for priestly vocations and priests.

Said Sean Yeo, President of Serra Club, "We really thank these Friends of Serra Club for the love they have shown and for their generosity in praying for the priesthood – which in reality is praying for the Church. For this current situation, of the lack of priestly vocations to turn around, we need everyone's prayers. Hence, for next year, we have set a target to recruit 2,000 more Friends." †

Friends of Serra Club

Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations



Called and Chosen...continued from front page

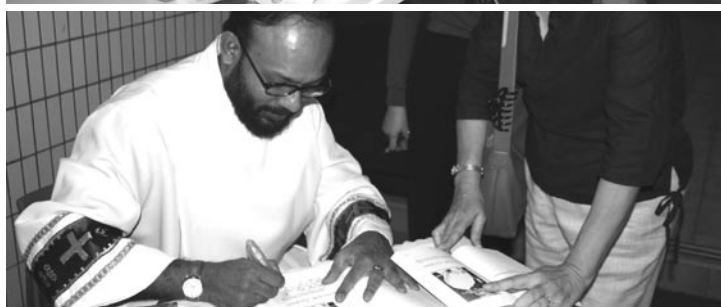
The 17 vocation stories were put together through various means – by interviewing the priests, transcribing the stories as they were shared at prayer sessions to pray for more vocations or from materials supplied by the priests themselves.

Some of the priests whose vocation stories are found in the book were present at the launch to lend their support such as Monsignor Francis Lau, Fathers William Goh, John Bosco, Kenyon Koh, Christopher Lee, Valerian Cheong and Damian De Wind.

On “Called & Chosen”, the President of Serra Club of Singapore, Sean Yeo has this to say, “I believe there are many vocation story books out there in the market and so, we decided to add a special touch to “Called & Chosen”, which was to specially craft a prayer for each of the priest. I pray that after you have read the vocation story of the priest, you will say the prayer for that particular priest and thank the Lord for the gift of that priest and for the work that these priests do tirelessly for the Church. I also hope that those who read “Called & Chosen” will be touched and inspired by our Lord to love our priests more, just as the members have come to a better understanding and appreciation of the priesthood through working on this book.”

There are only 5,000 copies of “Called & Chosen” available. Serra Club of Singapore plans to distribute the books at parishes and schools where we hold Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations or prayers for vocations and at other vocations promotion events. We will also be targeting to sell the books at some of the parishes before Christmas. Books are sold at a nominal fee of S\$4 and all proceeds go towards vocations promotions. Copies are also available at the Novena Church bookstore.

The Feast Day celebrations also saw the installation of five seminarians as Lectors and one as Acolyte at the mass celebrated by Archbishop. The Mass also brought to a close the Vocation Retreat and Camp which saw a record attendance of 22 young men at the retreat and 26 young boys at the camp. †



From top: His Grace Archbishop Nicholas Chia, Fr William Goh and Fr John Bosco signing autographs for their portions of the book.

Four Final Year Seminarians

THERE are currently five final year seminarians who are preparing to be ordained as priests next year. They are Brothers Robert Hauzamong (28 years old), Stephen Chit Ko Ko (30 years old), Arin Sugit (34 years old), Ryan Muthu (34 years old), and Stanley Antonisamy. While we are happy that the Catholic Church will be enriched in the near future with 5 more priests, unfortunately, none of them are from Singapore. So, when these five seminarians are ordained as priests, they will be serving in their respective countries. Both Brothers Robert and Stephen are from Myanmar, Brother Arin is from Brunei, Brothers Ryan and Stanley are from Malaysia.

1Life4Christ had the chance to talk to four of the five seminarians (except for Brother Stanley) to find out how life in the seminary for the last seven years was like and what their aspirations and goals are when they become priests.

What was seminary life like and how did you find living in Singapore?

Br. Robert:

Having spent seven years in the seminary, the formation to become a priest has been comprehensive, holistic and challenging. When I first came to Singapore, I had to study English for the first three months, now I know written and conversational English.

I was homesick initially and I have not been back to Myanmar since I arrived here seven years ago. I do miss my family, friends and the familiar surroundings back home but I do keep in touch by calling and emailing them.

Br. Arin:

I see the seminary as Noah's Ark where the seminarians can be likened to all the animals on the boat, looking for the Promised Land or dry land. Though all the animals have different characters but being in the same boat, we have to learn to get along and appreciate one another.

About Singapore - the greatest challenge was adjusting to the Singapore environment. It was fast paced and much more demanding when compared to life in Brunei which is more laidback.

Br. Stephen:

Before I came to Singapore, I had the impression that Singaporeans were 'kiasu'. But I was surprised when I entered the seminary, I found them to be quite a disciplined lot of people.

How do you feel when a fellow seminarian leaves the seminary?

Br. Arin:

I feel saddened when one of the seminarians leaves, as I am close to one or two persons in the same class.

Br. Robert:

It makes me realize that vocation is a mystery. Some people enter the seminary and as they are very talented, one would expect them to make it to become a priest, but they don't make it. Others struggle throughout their seminary years but they make it to become priests in the end.

Share on Seminary Life, Going Home and Future Plans

Appearing relaxed and yet, contemplative - (from left) Br. Arin, Br. Stephen, Br. Ryan and Br. Robert sharing their thoughts.



Are you looking forward to going home when you complete your seminary studies?

Br. Stephen:

Yes, I am looking forward to going back to my country to see my family. It was a real struggle for me to come to Singapore for my seminary studies as my family was not happy that I wanted to be a priest. Though my parents are married in church and baptized as Catholics, my family is still very much influenced by the Buddhist faith as I have two uncles who are Buddhist monks.

But now, when I speak to my father on the phone, he seems to be alright with my decision to be a priest. So, let's see when I get back.

Br. Robert:

I am also looking forward to going back as I have not been back home since I came here seven years ago for my seminary studies.

In my family circle, most of them are Protestants and they objected to me becoming a Catholic priest, especially two of my Protestant uncles. They even went so far as to hold prayer sessions and retreats to make me change my mind. In addition, my uncles are very active in the political movement back in Myanmar and they felt that my country needs young men like me to fight for diplomacy and freedom and not to become a priest.

What are your plans after you are ordained a priest?

Br. Ryan:

I want to be like the Good Shepherd. Our Lord has called me to be His priest-son and I want to be like Him. I want to live like Christ, who laid down His life to take care of His flock and to protect His sheep.

Back in Malacca in the Diocese where I will be serving, there are many challenges waiting for me. The parishioners there are simple folks from different races, some are Bahasa-speaking while others are migrants. I want to see to their needs and to cater to them accordingly. I want to bring Christ to them.

Br. Stephen:

My goal is to live for the poor. I had initially joined the La Salle Brothers but left after two years as my calling was to be

with the poor. In Myanmar where I come from, one parish has about 40 – 60 orphans where their education is taken care of by the priests and these orphan children live with the priests.

I want to be with these children who are poor. I want to look after them, see to their needs and minister to them.

Br. Arin:

My main goal is in the area of formation and missionary work as there are insufficient priests in Brunei. I believe that when you 'form' people with the right attitude, then other (missionary) things can move. I want to be there for the people, I want to care for them and I want to understand their problems and troubles.

Br. Robert:

Before I entered the seminary, I joined a missionary society and worked with the Franciscan nuns in their mission trips. In Myanmar, each parish can have up to about 20 – 30 outstations in the remote areas. The Catholics there do not have the Eucharist or the Sacraments regularly and some places will only have a priest visit them once a year!

As such, though many are baptized as Catholics but they drop out after a while due to the lack of support. So, I want to be able to help these people not only spiritually but also help them improve their life in general and with their education. †

Pray For Our Priests On Their Ordination Anniversary	
2 Jan	Rev. Fr. Alex Chua (7th) Rev. Fr. Erbin Fernandez (12th)
7 Jan	Rev. Fr. Michael Sitaram (17th)
15 Jan	Rev. Fr. Alfred Chan (35th)
16 Jan	Rev. Fr. Cyril Lee (41st)
19 Jan	Rev. Fr. Albert Ng (8th)
21 Jan	Rev. Fr. Robert Balhetchet (43rd)
26 Jan	Archbishop Nicholas Chia (43rd) Rev. Fr. Aloysius Doraisamy (43rd)
2 Feb	Rev. Fr. Rene Nicolas, MEP (51st)
6 Feb	Rev. Fr. Adrian Anthony (36th)
13 Feb	Monsignor Eugene Vaz (36th) Rev. Fr. Johnson Fernandez (36th)
22 Feb	Rev. Fr. William Langenhuijsen, SSCC (43rd)
25 Feb	Rev. Fr. Joseph Tan (34th)

Serra International President Visits Singapore

THE new President of Serra International, Robert Wright and his wife, Kitty visited Singapore from 10 – 12 October as part of their tour to visit Serra Clubs in Asia. It was a chance for them to see firsthand how the Serra Clubs in the various countries were doing and to offer their encouragement for a job well done.

A lunch was arranged for Bob and Kitty to meet up with our Archbishop Nicholas Chia and Chaplain of Serra Club Singapore, Father Richards Ambrose. All the Serrans gave a short testimony of what it has been like to be part of Serra Club for the last eight months over dinner with Bob and Kitty. It was a wonderful chance for all to share and exchange ideas about the ministry in which we have been called to serve – the promotion of priestly vocations. For all Serrans, we certainly learnt a lot from Bob and Kitty's experiences of having served in Serra Club for so long.



Bob and Kitty at the Botanical Gardens

Before the dinner ended, Bob left these words for all Singapore Serrans to ponder on – “We are all nobodies and no one is more important than the other. What we need to do is to stick together and pray together, be united and God will guide us through in our vocation.” †

Second Day of Prayer for Vocations 28 October 2006

THE second Day of Prayer for Vocations (for 2006) was held at the St. Francis Xavier Major Seminary on 28 October 2006.

The event was organised by the seminarians together with the Archdiocesan Vocation Team, Serra Club of Singapore and supported by Amplify (formerly called “Youth Praise Ministry”). †



Prayer warriors filling the Chapel on a Saturday afternoon.



Leonard from Amplify leading the group in a praise and worship session interspersed with group prayers to stomp Heaven for more vocations to the Diocesan priesthood.



Malaysian seminarian Bro Ryan (right) leading a group in prayer.



Vietnamese seminarian Bro Peter Bao Khanh sharing how he was Called to the priesthood and what he had to go through to finally become a seminarian.



Seminarians and prayer warriors taking time to have fellowship and share a snack together during the tea-break

Fr Erbin Fernandez sharing on the theme 'Vocations in the Mystery of the Church'