

HISTORY OF HOLY TRINITY PARISH

The Holy Trinity Church is located at Jalan Dato Bandar, Kenyalang Park. Its history began in 1972 which is recorded in her 25th Anniversary Celebration (1972-1997) booklet.

The birth of a new church...

Towards the end of the first century during which the Catholic Church made its impact on Sarawak, the Catholic population increased significantly that it became necessary to set up new parishes. Physical development in the state led to the emergence of townships and hence, there arose a need to cater for the temporal and spiritual welfare of Catholics moving to live in new towns. The birth of the Holy Trinity Church, an absolute necessity, was most timely. In 1970, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Charles Reiterer, Vicar Apostolic of Kuching approached Rev. Fr. Lawrence Chua, then Rector of St. Peter's Church, Padungan, to help set up a mission in the up-coming township of Kenyalang Park. Meant to be an offspring of St. Peter's, the new parish would serve the needs of both the faithful in the new satellite town as well as the rapidly increasing population of St. Peter's.



Construction of the church in progress

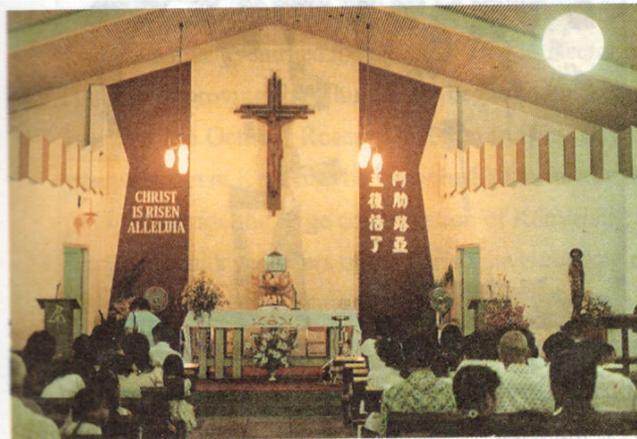


The Holy Trinity Church when it was completed

The donation of a piece of land for the building by the state government was a generous deed but credit must also be given to Fr. Chua who went as far as Australia to raise funds so that the construction could take off. Donations from well-wishers, both local and overseas, and a substantial loan granted by Msgr. Reiterer provided the initial funds for the project. Fr. Chua combined creativity and foresight and began to work on the plan of the church together with Rev. Fr. Peter Aichner and a local engineer, Mr. Chan Khiok Leng. The end result - a building carefully designed to suit the new liturgy, covering a spacious hall measuring 25m by 15m. A large crucifix, carved in Taiwan hung above the tabernacle, drawing attention to the Mystery of the Redemption almost as soon as one entered the church. The altar rested on a cluster of three supports on the right side and a single support on the left, depicting elements of the Blessed Trinity or the Mystery of the Three-Persons-in-One. On either side of the altar stood the statues of Our Lady and St. Joseph as a constant

reminder for intercessions. The murals on the walls portrayed the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes, and the sharing of bread as instituted in the Holy Eucharist.

30 November 1972 was a day recorded in the progressive history of the Catholic Mission. The new church which Fr. Chua dedicated to the Blessed Trinity was officially declared open by Msgr. Reiterer. Bishop Carlo Joseph van Melckebeke, the then Apostolic Visitor for Overseas Chinese, presided at the solemn blessing. The young parish needed a shepherd and the appointment of Fr. Chua as its Rector came as no surprise. It was a show of appreciation for the hard work and zealous effort Fr. Chua had invested. With perseverance and careful planning, he began the task of building a parish in a fast-growing urban town.



The Sanctuary symbolising the Holy Trinity



Bishop Melckebeke blesses the new church

A community comes alive

The birth of the Church saw the beginning of many projects. With assistance from a few senior members of the new Catholic community, Fr. Chua formed the first Parish Council. Recognising also the significance of women parishioners, he encouraged the formation of a Ladies' Guild shortly afterwards. This was followed by the Altar Boys' Society, and the English and Chinese Choirs. Together, these organisations aimed at cultivating a community spirit among parishioners and to create in them, a sense of belonging. Then came the idea of the Sunday breakfast sales and the Christmas campaigns to raise funds.

The other 'first' activities included the appointment of women as lectors, the Charismatic Movement and the Sunday Religious Instructions which contributed tremendously to the spiritual growth of the parish. In this regard, Sr. Hyacintha Yong and the late Sr. Ita Ling and catechists, Catherine Ting, Agatha and Margaret Yap must be mentioned. An early census proposed to map out the Catholic population proved futile as many of the residents were temporary tenants in the Kenyalang housing estate. At the same time, there was a sudden influx of Catholics from neighbouring areas and it was only five years later that the population stabilised. It became necessary for parishioners to identify themselves with the Church and fellow worshippers. Some neighbourhood groups were identified to foster social and spiritual bonds through group prayers. This led to the well-known family bloc rosary groups which met weekly for prayers.



Fr. Chua with the first group of legionaries



Spiritual growth bears no limits - a catechumen aged 84 is baptised

A period of change

In 1975, Fr. Chua left the parish for further studies in Rome and Rev. Fr. Peter Ng was appointed to succeed him. Under Fr. Ng's guidance, the various parish ministries developed further. He became very actively involved in the Legion of Mary and the Altar Boys' Society. Members today still recall vividly his dedication. Following his return two years later, Fr. Chua was reappointed Rector in October 1977. However, it was not long afterwards that he had to leave for College General in Penang to take up lecturing. The appointment of a third Rector in the person of Rev. Fr. Stephen Chin took place in June 1979. Fr. Chin, who was very fluent in Mandarin, dedicated much time toward developing the spiritual growth of the Chinese-speaking community. He made it a point to deliver his Sunday sermons in Mandarin and many, especially the elderly, were drawn toward the faith. The Chinese Legion of Mary and choir were very much motivated and began to widen their scope of activities to include interactive work among parishioners.

Having started with a group of only about 250 parishioners, the Catholic population increased to no less than 3,000 by 1981. By then, Fr. Chua had also returned from his assignment in Penang and slightly later, was appointed Rector of St. Joseph's Cathedral. Nevertheless, he kept in constant touch with Fr. Chin on developments in the parish he once built.

Fr. Chua finally returned for the third time as Rector of the Holy Trinity Parish in June 1988. He wasted no time in improving the Church. He began to landscape the Garden of Our Lady outside the church, well in time for the October Rosary Devotion to Our Lady. As a well-travelled priest with experience acquired in the years out of Kuching, he knew he had to restore the church he built 17 years back to its former vitality, and to provide the large congregation of Kenyalang with a more conducive place of worship. Gathering a group of senior members of the parish, he embarked on a project to renovate the church. The first step was to give the existing parish hall a face-lift so that it could serve as a temporary place

of worship during renovation work. Funds were generated from a second collection during the Sunday services, through the sales of tickets and support from his contacts in Singapore.

All this while, the spiritual life and development of the parishioners were not neglected. New activities were taken on by the lay organisations. New talents were recruited for the English choir which saw a major improvement. Once again, members would sing in rhythm to the revived organ on Sundays. Fr. Chua often combined tradition in the celebration of feast days. The Chinese New Year Mass would see the distribution of blessed oranges and the offering of traditional cakes, and finish off with the lion dance. Fr. Chua tried to maintain contact between house-bound Catholics and the Church. In February 1989, the Sunday Masses were video-taped for the benefit of those who could not attend Mass. Lectors were often given tips on further improvement and lady wardens came on the scene in January 1989.

Church for the modern community and a double joy

In May 1989, renovation work began on the old church just after the parish-level Eucharistic Congress. However, the estimated cost of RM150,000 posed a worry on account of escalating costs of building materials. With a proven track record in fund-raising, Fr. Chua began to address the problem. He travelled to Brunei and Singapore to locate funds and started a fund-raising scheme through networking of envelopes.

It was a painstaking task to ensure that deadlines were adhered to. Seventeen years after its establishment, the church was finally extended to almost three times its previous size with a seating capacity of nearly 1,000. A day chapel was added on and the sacristy now has ample room for items used in the celebrations. The tabernacle is located at the day chapel which boasts of beautiful stained-glass murals and a marble altar with a corner specially dedicated to Our Lady. The “Three-in-One” essence of the Blessed Trinity is once again seen from the supports of the main altar, the lamps that hang above it, and the supports of the car porch outside the building.

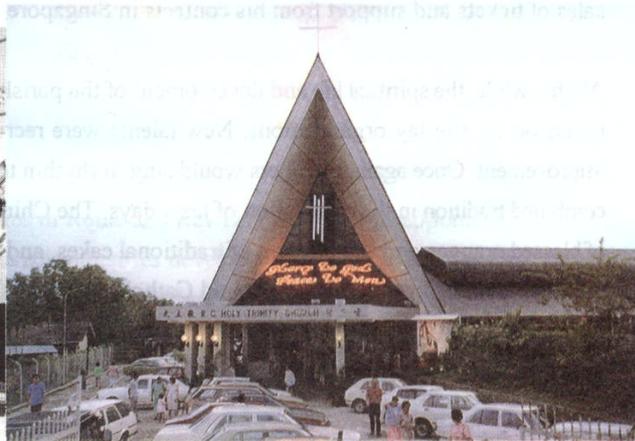


Renovation work begins soon after

Work completed in time for yet another grand occasion - the most notable thus far in the history of the parish. On 13 December 1989, parishioners witnessed the first double joy celebration - the Sacerdotal Silver Jubilee of Fr. Chua and the solemn blessing of the renovated church by His Grace, the Archbishop of Kuching, Datuk Peter Chung. Funds had to be gradually accumulated to settle debts incurred.



The main altar overlooking the day chapel



The magnificent entrance to the church

Envelopes continued to come in from supportive parishioners. A fund-raising joggerthon was organised and held on 17 September 1990 and another event worthy of mention was a charity concert performed by the Singapore Combined Schools' Choir on 11 June 1991. It received overwhelming response even from renowned public figures. Dubbed "Music for a good cause", it made headlines in some local papers.

Renewal after "spiritual dry spell"

Amidst all the new developments, however, the year 1989 saw a "spiritually dry spell" in the life of the parish. A parishioner decided to invite a group to devote an hour each week in meditation and prayer to the Lord. This formed the basis of the Thursday Holy Hour which continues until today, and more importantly, led to a series of "Life in the Spirit" seminars held in Kuching; the first ever in the Holy Trinity Parish was conducted from 12-15 March 1992. Then came structured parish prayer meetings which contributed greatly toward nourishing the spiritual needs of members. The formation of a 'cell-centred' community was stressed by Rev. Fr. Leonardo Polinar of the Philippines. This led to the birth of the Emmaus Community which at its first anniversary, recorded 57 members. Changes in the parish were noticeable; it was almost as though a spiritual renewal hit the parish. The liturgical celebrations were improved and involved more participation from the laity. Songs of worship and praise became common.

This renewal sparked off a series of other seminars and talks, one of which was the Bible Seminar in October 1992 and the Seminar on Spiritual Nourishment conducted by Fr. Polinar in 1993. Meanwhile, religious formation classes continued with the assistance from Sr. Yong and several catechists. The first group of Chinese-speaking adults were baptised in the renovated church on 8 December 1991 followed by the English-speaking in October 1992.



Launching of the Bible Year, October 1992



...Crowds were drawn



Adult baptism, 1991



Many also confirm their faith - the Rite of Confirmation, 1991

Helping a neighbourhood build and nurture an offspring

Towards the end of 1990, the Holy Trinity Parish had already extended its boundaries to serve the Catholic communities as far as Stampin. Taman BDC in Stampin had almost developed itself into a fully fledged housing estate, and was expected to see further impending growth and development on an even larger scale as construction continued on every inch of available land area. It was foreseen that the existing seating capacity of Holy Trinity could not eventually accommodate the Catholic population. Almost as soon as he had begun to substantially clear off debts from the renovation project, Fr. Chua was faced with the next challenge of helping a new community raise funds for its church. Similar fund-raising programs in the form of concerts and joggerthons were organised. Food fairs and jumble sales became once again a frequent sight in the grounds of Holy Trinity. While planning for the new church, Fr. Chua lost no time in making use of the plot of land which had been provided gratis by the state government. He was instrumental in the construction of the Blessed Sacrament Centre on the site which was completed in 1993. Parishioners shared their joy by taking part in the first social event there - the New Year's Eve Dance to welcome 1994. Another major event to be held was the Second Asia-Pacific Servant Communities Conference from 2-4 December 1994.



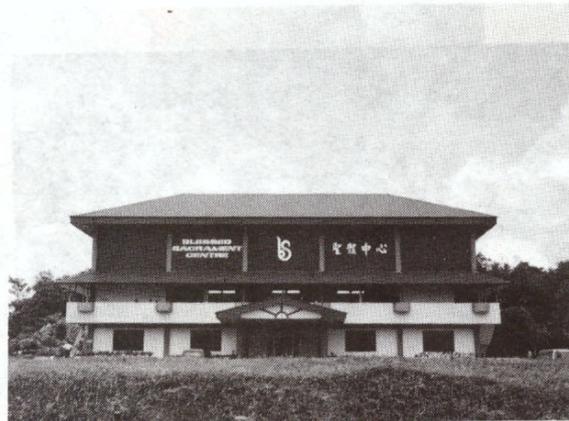
A priestly commitment? Fr. Hanrahan at the joggerthon



The flag-off



Food fair - a common sight and source of revenue



The Blessed Sacrament Centre

In November 1993, Fr. Chua, inspired from a conference in Manila which covered the manifestations of God's love through the intercession of Our Lady, proposed to have the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes built on the site. On the eve of the Feast of the Assumption of Our Blessed Lady in 1994, the completed Grotto was appropriately blessed by the Archbishop Datuk Peter Chung who, at the same time, officially launched the programme and preparation for the Jubilee Year 2000 for parishes of BDC and Kenyalang. The new responsibilities called for assistance and Rev. Fr. Noel Hanrahan became a frequent celebrant, particularly when many Masses had to be celebrated on festive occasions. Parishioners recognised his efforts and willingness and showed their appreciation as they celebrated the 40th anniversary of the priesthood of Fr. Hanrahan in August 1994. They were however, deeply distressed by the sudden news that Fr. Hanrahan had to leave for medical treatment in Ireland in December 1996. 1994 was also a year which emphasised the interests of youth of the parish. The first Youth Fellowship was organised by the Emmaus Community and since then, there have been follow-up programs.

In later years - striving for excellence

1995 saw further developments in the parish. Although there was ample space inside the church, meetings and catechism classes were often cramped in the one-storey Parish Hall. Fr. Chua was quick again to suggest a two-storey hall, which after its completion on 22 August 1995, had 3 classrooms and an “upper room” which lay organisations could use to spend quiet hours in the Lord’s presence.



The new Parish Hall with the statue of Our Lady in the background



*“The Master is here and is calling for you”
- the upper room in the Parish Hall*

On 10 March 1996, the celebration of Sunday Masses at the Blessed Sacrament Centre commenced as a temporary measure and at the same time, a fund-raising campaign for the construction of the church proper was launched by Fr. Chua. It is hoped that an estimated RM 1.8 million would soon be raised.



*Full house at the first Sunday Mass,
Blessed Sacrament Centre*



... with active participation from the young

Meanwhile, the Centre would also serve as a multi-purpose centre for functions, Sunday schools, etc. It is now the venue of the Sunday school program “Jesus’ Kids” started by parishioners of Holy Trinity and BDC for children aged 3-12. Modern methods in tandem with the new-age technology are used to teach children Bible stories and Christian values.

1996 was also a year in which the “charism of singleness” were brought to the attention of parishioners in a seminar, the first of its kind in Sarawak, organised by the Emmaus Community.

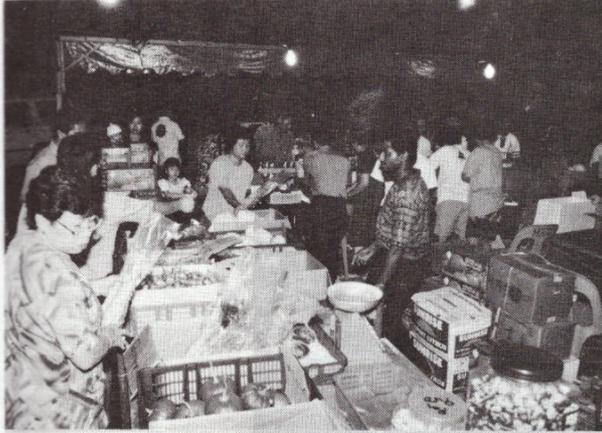
Over the years, the parish had experienced physical extension and development - very often out-of-phase with spiritual and organisational development. Hence, in February 1996, the council members decided to sit together to study the “New Practical Guide for Parish Councils” and to discuss the possibilities of organising the various lay organisations under structured committees. It was hoped that this move would help to improve the interaction amongst the lay groups and the structural set-up of the parish.



Commissioning of the new Parish Council members - the new Council is the matrix which binds together the various lay organisations

In May 1996, with the election of the new parish council, various committees were also formed. To look at the spiritual needs of the parish is the Spiritual Life and Worship Committee. The educating of adults and children in the faith comes under the responsibility of the Christian Formation Committee. Responsible for the social and administrative affairs are the Social Ministry Committee and the Administrative Services Committee respectively. The Parish and Community Life Committee assists parishioners to accept and appreciate togetherness and community life. The Chinese Liaison Committee maintains closer rapport with the Chinese-speaking community.

When the Holy Trinity Parish celebrates its 25th Anniversary on 29 June 1997, it would have a living, vibrant community, ten well-structured lay organisations and a sister community in Stampin under the pastoral care of Fr. Lawrence Chua. Without doubt, the parish has come a long way from its humble beginnings to where it is today - thanks to Fr. Chua! We pray that it will continue to grow with the efforts of its shepherd, the people and their faith



'Never tiring' - sales of fruits and vegetables just before the Chinese New Year 1997 to raise funds



Wardens distribute "Ang Pows" to children, Chinese New Year Mass, 1997



Tradition combined - Lion dance to welcome 1997



(Left) The Church in 1972.

(Bottom) The Church after its renovation in 1990



THE PARISH COMMUNITY

The core of the parish community is the **Parish Council**. The sixth Council was recently elected in May 1996. A council with two Presidents in the persons of Fr. Lawrence Chua and Sr. Hyacintha Yong, it also has a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer and 13 Committee Members. Its foundation goes as far back as 1972 when Fr. Chua formed the first Parish Council soon after the Holy Trinity Parish was officially declared open. As such, it is the oldest structured organisation of the parish as well as a vital operating unit. To meet the needs of a flourishing community, the new council has gone through detailed structuring. The Council which aspires to proclaim the Word, pray and celebrate the Liturgy, serve the people of God and build a community has six subcommittees – Spiritual Life and Worship Committee, Christian Formation Committee, Social Ministry Committee, Administrative Services Committee, Parish and Community Life Committee and Chinese Liaison Committee - to help it attain its goals.

PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS

(1995 — 1998)



Sitting (L to R) : Peter Chai Ching Wang (Secretary), James Hui, Rev. Sr. H. Yong, Rev. Fr. L. Chua (Rector), Stephen Kong Swee Meng (Chairman), Matthew B. Jenö (Treasurer), Harry Kam.

Standing (L to R) : Dominic Yü Hua Ming, Richard Chong Ayn Yew, Andrew Chai, Pauline Lim, Stanley H. K. Khoo, Rose Khoo, George Chapman, Julia Sim Ai Khim, Peter Chia, D. Spencer Dreman, Clement Sia Chik Kiong, Titus Chuo.

Absent : Catherine Sim Eng Hong, Thomas Ting Siew Hung.

A young, yet vibrant, community is the **Emmaus Servant Community** which was formed in 1992. Although it cannot boast of an early beginning like the Parish Council, it can certainly be proud of the impact it has made on the parish through its activities. It only began with a handful of parishioners who met and prayed together in the Thursday Holy Hour sessions in an attempt to improve the spiritual life of the parish. Then, an opportunity came to invite Rev.Fr. Leonardo Polinar of the Philippines to conduct a Life in the Spirit Seminar (LSS) in Kuching. This led to serious thoughts about sustaining the spiritual needs of the participants which was finally realised when the format of formal prayer meetings was revealed to some in a February 1992 retreat conducted by Sr. Briege McKenna and Fr. Kevin Scanlon.

The first parish LSS was then held from 12-15 March 1992 followed by the first formal prayer meeting on 19 March. After much prayer and meditation, Fr. Chua chose the name 'Emmaus Servant Community' for this group. At its first Anniversary on 21 March 1993, 57 aspirants out of 59 made their first commitment to continue living a covenanted way of life and to serve the parish community. Membership has been on the increase since and today, the Community has the highest record of members.

The Community is guided by Fr. Chua as the Head Shepherd Pauline Lim-Kuek, who has in many ways contributed toward its foundation, is the Head Servant. Other servers are addressed as the Men's Servant, Women's Servant and Ministries' Servants. There are also six Deputy Servants who are responsible for outreach ministries which emphasise healing, prayers and interaction with the youth and children.



The Emmaus Community

The Choir consists of three groups; the Sunset Mass Choir is the smallest group but perhaps the most impressive for it is made up of members of a very talented family who do not mind putting in the extra hours of practice each week. With its 22 members, the Morning Mass Choir has improved tremendously since its revival in 1987 - thanks to the assistance from a few semi-professionals in the group and a very musically-inclined and learned conductor, Dr. Geraldine Law-Lee. The team with a forceful voice is the Chinese Choir under the guidance of Mr. Thomas Ting. Apart from singing at Masses, the groups also involve themselves in all activities of the parish like helping at food fairs, leading the rosary recitation and carolling at Christmas.



The Choirs
*“Evangelising through the
Music Ministry”*

Also celebrating 25 years since its foundation in the parish is the **English Legion of Mary** (LOM). Thriving on its ten members, the organisation calls itself “The Refuge of Sinners” Praesidium, a name chosen after one of the many titles of Our Lady. The Praesidium is the working and spiritual unit of the Legion, the structure of which consists of a Spiritual Director, a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer and the members. Although the Legion was introduced to Sarawak in 1951, it did not reach the parish until 1972 when a proposal was made by Rev. Fr. Peter Ng from his parish at Mile 7. When Fr. Chua was appointed Rector in November 1972, he became the Spiritual Director of the Praesidium, a post he still holds today.

Legion activities are basically spiritual. Meetings are conducted weekly for prayers, reports on work performed during the past week and plans for assignments for the coming week. Without much publicity, the members carry out their weekly tasks which include visitation of the sick in the hospitals and homes, attendance at wake prayers and funerals, visits to the Blind Centre, the Cheshire Home, and homes of lapsed Catholics, and giving of religious instructions to both adults and children. Over the years, the Legionaries have assisted to set up bloc rosary groups in Tabuan Dayak, Muara Tabuan and recently, Taman Phoning. Nevertheless, they do not confine themselves entirely to spiritual activities. Social and recreational activities are organised annually to bring members together in a relaxed atmosphere.



The English Legion of Mary



The Chinese Legion of Mary

After the formation of the first English-speaking Praesidium in Kuching (Stella Maris), the progress of the LOM in Sarawak gradually picked up momentum. The Chinese Praesidia finally came into being for the benefit of Chinese-speaking Catholics. In the Parish, the Chinese LOM became active in 1972. Under the spiritual guidance of the Rectors and later, Sr Hyacintha Yong, the organisation is proud to announce a membership of 20.



The Altar Servers' Society

Another organisation that was formed in 1972 is the **Altar Servers' Society**. With an initial number of 20-30 servers at that time, monthly meetings were held to allocate duty rosters

and to solve problems. Since then, there has been an on-going change of faces as members leave for further studies overseas and are replaced by new ones. On 10 November 1996, the Altar Servers' Council of office bearers was formed. The council members include the President, Vice-President, Secretary; Treasurer and leaders-in-charge of each Mass. Sr. Hyacintha Yong acts as the spiritual advisor. An organisation consisting mainly of young people, it is also actively involved in all the parish youth activities.

Although this group - **the Lectors and Commentators** - has been serving the Parish since its early beginnings in 1972, it does not have much of a structure. A duty roster would be prepared by the Rector or his assistant and the readings were taken up by a mere handful of 6-8 readers. Over the years, new talents have been recruited and Fr. Chua has put in much effort to improve the way in which scriptural messages are proclaimed to people. In 1993, some of the more regular readers met to study guides and tips for better reading techniques and coordination of the Mass. Readers are now dependent on a non-existent roster and thanks must be recorded for Mrs. Rose Khoo who usually calls and reminds readers.



Lectors and Commentators

With the election of the new Parish Council in 1996 and the subsequent formation of the Spiritual Life and Worship Committee under which lectors come, a proposal was put forward to make lectors more officially recognised and, in particular, committed to their ministry so that the Word of God can be born alive from them and also from the hearts of those who hear it. On Bible Sunday, 14 July 1996, 22 English and Chinese-speaking lectors were finally officially installed. Together, they made a public pledge to read the Word of God properly and with respect.

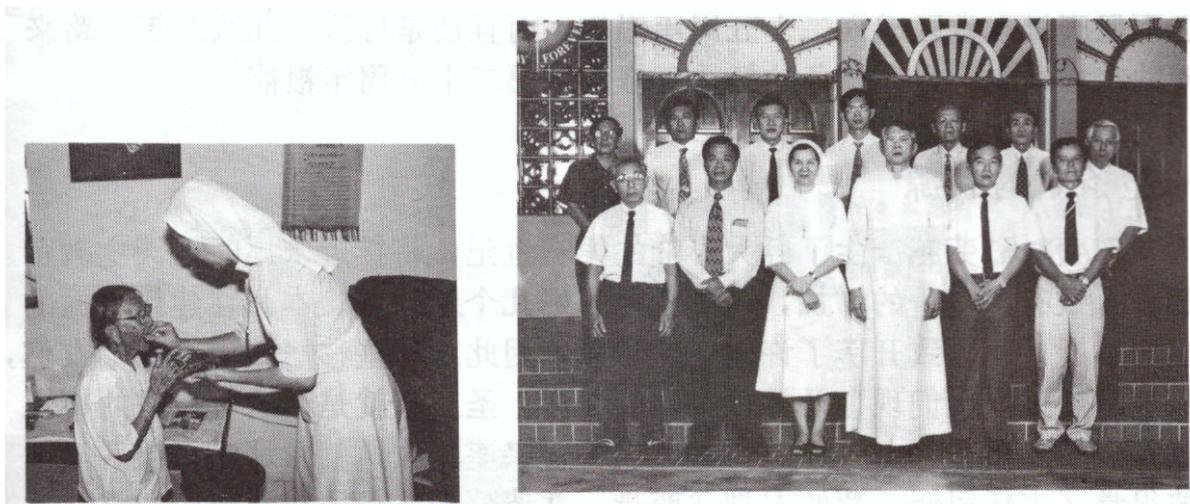
The Wardens, who form the second largest organisation, play a vital role in the operation of the parish, from directing the flow of traffic outside the church to the ushering of faithful inside. Apart from assisting in the weekly collection, they are relied upon when it comes to

cleaning the church and its surroundings before feast days, making the necessary arrangements for church activities - food fairs, joggerthons, concerts, etc. - in other words, they provide the hard labour! Complementing these duties in a more subtle manner are the women who first joined the group in January 1989.



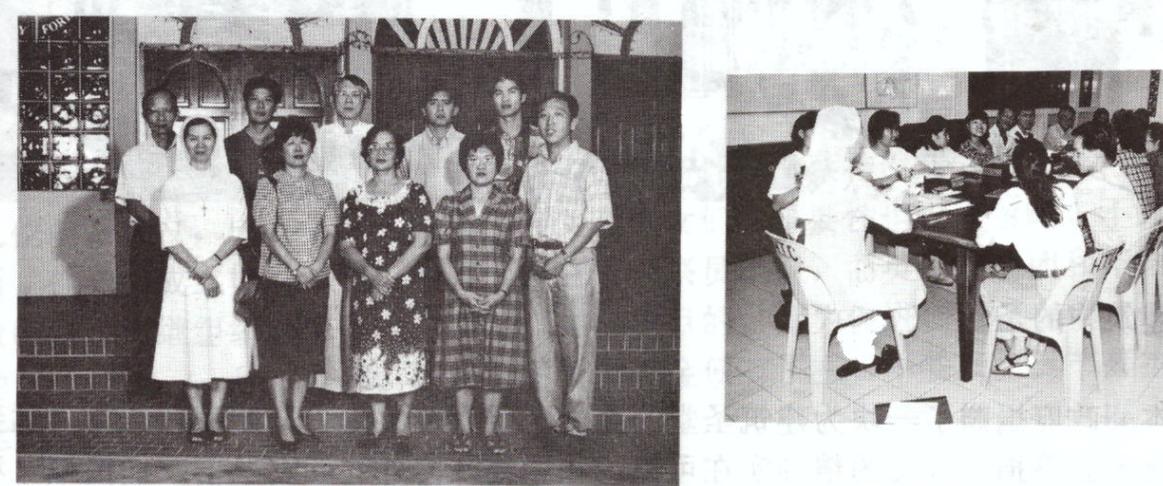
The wardens

Commissioned on Holy Thursday 1994, the 12 Eucharistic Ministers, including Sr. Hyacintha Yong, assist the Rector in the distribution of communion during Masses. In addition, they also bring the host to the sick or dying. The engagement of the laity as Eucharistic Ministers started worldwide after it was formally approved by the Pope in the 1980's. The need in the parish for such ministers was strongly felt following a steady annual increase of parishioners. The commissioning was timely chosen at the Mass of the Last Supper for the 12, signifying the 12 apostles.



The Eucharistic Ministers

Some other organisations are committed mainly to the spiritual growth of the parish. Coordinating related activities such as adult, family, youth and child faith formation is the **Christian Formation Committee**. It is also responsible for the RCIA program. There are at present 25 religion teachers, including pioneer catechism instructor, Sr. Yong, who are actively involved in conducting Sunday classes and faith formation courses in English and Mandarin. To keep up with modern methods of teaching, many of them have combined innovation and creativity in their teaching skills “Jesus Kids”, a weekend activity to teach children aged 3-12 about Christian values and basics of the Bible, is one such example.



Christian Formation Committee

SUBSEQUENT YEARS

The Altar servers



Front Row (L to R): Andrew Law, Clement Ng, Thomas Chia, Joseph Ng, Josh John, Philip Aw
Back Row (L to R): Fr Lawrence Chua, Andrew Voon, John Ting, Philip Tang, Dominic Chiew,
Paul Ting, Lucas Lai, Peter Chia, Raphael Su.

Photo courtesy of Josh John. His comments: Photo of some of the original batch of altar boys of HTC. The photo was taken at the end of 1972 or early 1973. Most likely in 1973.



Front Row (L to R): Raphael Su, Philip Aw, Josh John, Jaithish John, Andrew Law, John Ting, Paul Tan, Peter Kho & Dominic Chiew

Back Row (L to R): Paul Ting, Fr Lawrence Chua, Bishop Peter Chung, (Unknown)

Photo courtesy of Josh John. His comments: photo of the altar boys taken probably in 1975.

The Church – a patio was added.





Photo: Clement Kuek. Fr. Stephen Lim presiding at Mass, 10 December 2008



Photo: Clement Kuek. Easter Vigil, 11 April 2009.