



The Family LifeLine

Bulletin of the Family Life Society, Archdiocese of Singapore

Reaching out to Young People: An Interview with a Youth worker

FLL interviews Keenan Tan, who is the Director of the Youth and Young Adult Office at the Church of St. Mary of the Angels.

In a nutshell, what does being a Youth worker at St Mary's entail?

Persons between the ages of 13-35 are our responsibility. Our philosophy is simple. We hope to be of help to young people in their personal and professional lives. This is necessarily animated through a cultivation of a deep faith and friendship in the person of Jesus. What we want to avoid are "spiritualistic" and "activistic" models of youth ministry.

Interesting concepts, could you elaborate on that...

To my mind, a spiritualistic model of youth ministry means the emphasis on activities that are seemingly "spiritual" in nature and regarding other initiatives i.e.

helping young people cope with their studies, career coaching, going for picnics etc, as somehow "secular" and not appropriate for a church based youth outreach. Now I am not saying that we should not have Bible studies, faith formation sessions and retreats. What I am saying is that the same Spirit of Jesus should animate all our activities and not simply the so called "spiritual" ones. Jesus did not despise ordinary and seemingly "unspiritual" work. He himself worked as a carpenter for 30 years. Was he not redeeming the world even in his seemingly "ordinary" work? And look at the late Pope John Paul II when as a young priest, he brought students for canoeing and hiking trips.

Indeed, when there is a human need, our youth ministry should try to meet it.

And what then is an "activistic" model?

This is when youth ministries, in a laudable attempt to connect with oftentimes disconnected young people, begin to focus only on supposedly "fun" activities in an attempt to excite their interest. Now I am not against having "fun". What I am saying is that when a youth ministry begins to look and feel no different from the nearby community centre, we have a problem. The heart of youth ministry is the person of Jesus Christ. We are in the business in forming people to be disciples of Jesus and facilitating an encounter with the living God. We are happy to meet and accompany young people at whatever stage of their spiritual journey. But if we believe that we possess the treasure that is the knowledge of Jesus Christ, then we know that this is THE human need that all people are seeking. Thus, in all our initiatives, that must shine through.

What draws young people to church?

Well sad to say that from my experience, at least initially, few youth come to church because of a genuine faith experience. Many come because their families come, or because their friends come. That's not necessarily a bad thing

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in itself. What attracts them is the sense of community and friendship they can experience. We at the Youth Ministry hope to deepen this sense of community and friendship with

cliques. Now cliques are really very unchristian. Newcomers are made to feel unwelcomed and marginalised. It sends a message to a young person that we would rather not you be around. What we try to do is to help those who form cliques see that stepping out and welcoming other people is really not that difficult. On the contrary, when you welcome others, you yourself will be enriched. In fact, it's when you close in on yourself that growth is stifled.

Parents – What would you like to say to them?

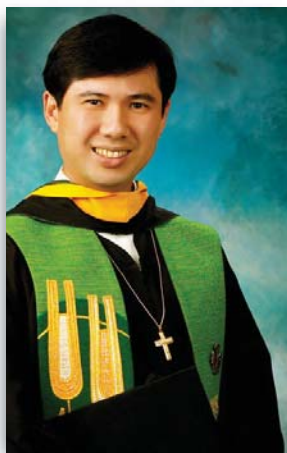
Do be involved in your children's life. Take time to talk to your children. Very often, the young people I work with tell me that their parents work very late and they do not see them often. Your children need models of Christian living and examples to inspire them. Very often, virtue and good character are not so much taught then caught. In fact, every youth should have a real life good Catholic role model whom they can emulate. They can be inspired by Mother Mary, the saints, the Holy Father, that's very good. But it would be wonderful if they know real flesh and blood people who are well-adjusted people living a joyful Christian life.

Thank You!



Youth Exhibition 2009 at St Mary of the Angels Church.

Meet our New Spiritual Director!



Fresh from getting his Masters of Science in Pastoral and Clinical Counseling at Loyola College in Maryland USA, Fr Joachim Chang joins Family Life Society as its new spiritual director. A priest for 11 years, Fr. Joachim has a passion for preparing people for marriage and has been doing so since the day of his ordination. Couples who come to him will receive personalised marriage preparation from Fr Joachim for at least six months before their wedding.

In his role as spiritual director, Fr. Joachim will sit on the executive committee of Family Life Society and provide guidance and expertise drawn from his extensive pastoral experience as a priest as well as from his time at Loyola College where he was involved, among other things in counseling persons with drug addictions, at shelters and under reformatory programmes and those who were deemed violent. We welcome Fr. Joachim to FLS and wish him a fruitful time working together with both staff and exco in building Christ centered families for the service of God and society.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED to take appointments for counselling in parish service.

If you could spare some time during weekdays, have good telephone skills, and hope to do your bit in reaching out to individuals and families in need, you may want to consider volunteering to take appointments for clients enquiring about our parish counseling service. Persons interested should contact Nick at nickchui@familylife.sg or call 6488 0278 for enquires.

Position Available

Family Life Society is looking for a sincere, committed and compassionate individual to fill the post of therapist.

Reporting to the Principal Therapist, the candidate should:

- Possess a degree in counseling psychology (those with social work background but trained in counseling work may also apply)
- Have at least 3 years experience in the helping profession, can work independently
- Be able to assist in training and supervision work
- Be familiar with group work

Interested applicants should send their CVs via email to:

Mrs. Susanne Richmond, Principal Therapist
suerichmond@familylife.sg

Shortlisted Candidates will be notified.

 **Family Life Society**
Catholic Archdiocesan Education Centre
Tel: 6488 0278
www.familylife.sg

If you have a personal story to share, comments or feedback to give, please feel free to email to nickchui@familylife.sg