

# Finding our vocation at St Mary's

Victoria Lim

"Do you like the name 'Saint Mary'? Would you prefer if this was the church of Our Lady of the Angels?" asked Friar Michael D'Cruz at the feast day Mass of the Church of St Mary of the Angels on Aug 2.

The Mass, attended by some 700 parishioners and visitors, was held on the last day of the parish's feast day celebrations, which began on July 27 with a Mass for 170 sick and elderly parishioners, including those from the Bukit Batok Home for the Aged, the Ren Ci @ Bukit Batok Nursing Home, and the homebound.

All eyes were on the sanctuary, and many leaned forward in their pews as the parish priest Friar Michael D'Cruz explained the origin of the parish's name. He told the crowd that he "struggled" when he first heard that the church was named St Mary of the Angels.

"It just didn't sound right," he said. "All the titles of Mary...were Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour – and then we had 'St Mary'". He even wondered if this name referred to Our Lady or another saint named Mary.

"Actually, this is a problem of translation," he explained. "The name of the church is a direct translation from the name of a place in Assisi, Italy – *Santa Maria degli Angeli*, and *Santa* means 'holy'."

"It is actually the name of a place, not a person," said Friar D'Cruz. "St Mary of the Angels is about events that happened in a place...the *porziuncola* (Italian for 'little portion') of [what is now the Basilica of] *Santa Maria degli Angeli*.

"The *porziuncola* was a place dedicated to the Virgin Mother of God, and it was abandoned," he said. "St Francis [of Assisi] had a great devotion to Our Lady, and when he saw that the place was in ruin and heard the call from God to 'repair my church', he stayed



Some 500 parishioners of St Mary's participating in an outdoor rosary procession on the evening of Aug 2. Our Lady's statue was carried by members of the parish's Tamil community.

there permanently and built it up."

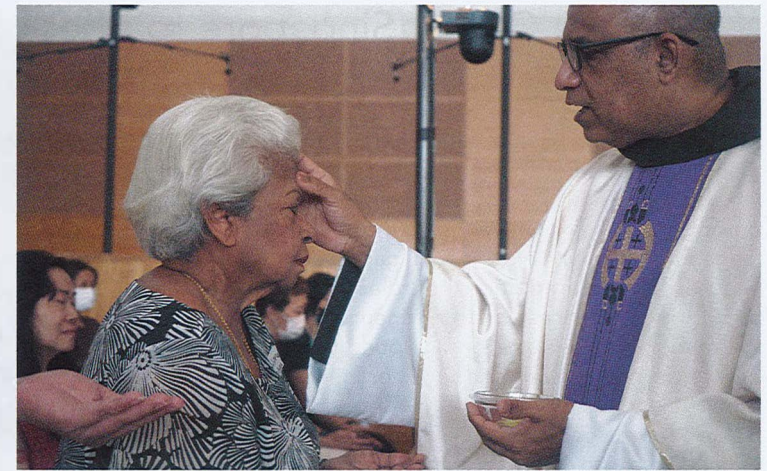
"It was also where St Francis prayed and asked Our Lady to intercede for him to receive God's mercy, and where she met him with her Son, Jesus, and gave him God's indulgent mercy," he added.

"We are celebrating a young man's discovery of his vocation and the establishment of the Franciscan Order," said Friar D'Cruz. "It is in this place, that we hope that, as a parish, we too will find our vocation."

Friar D'Cruz then invited parishioners to recognise themselves in the experiences of St Francis at *Santa Maria degli Angeli* and connect these experiences with their lives.

"Do we find that as we come to St Mary's, we are discovering where the Lord is leading us in our vocation?" Friar D'Cruz asked the crowd. "Do we ask Our Lady to intercede for us, so that we can receive the mercy of God and share it with others?"

Following the spirit of St Francis, who rebuilt the chapel of St Mary of the Angels, the parish raised about \$200,000 for their maintenance fund from a fundraising dinner on July 29 and a 'Kaki Challenge and Fun Night' on July



Assistant parish priest Friar Julian Mariaratnam, OFM anointing an elderly parishioner during the Mass for the sick and elderly on July 27. Photos: Luminaire Ministry, Church of St Mary of the Angels, Singapore.



(From left) Friar Michael D'Cruz, novice Friar Nicholas Lee, and Seminarian Marcus Chew, singing and dancing with parishioners at the feast day celebrations.

30. The amount will be used to build a wheelchair access ramp to the church from the nearby public housing blocks 286 and 287, and the Bukit Batok East dry market, said Friar D'Cruz.

"We hope to serve better those struggling with the steps as they enter the church, especially the elderly, the wheelchair-bound, and families with strollers," he said. □

Scan to watch highlights of St Mary's feast day (July 27 to Aug 2).

