

ISSUE  
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CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS  
JOHOR BAHRU ✕ 新山耶稣圣心主教座堂



*stories from  
the heart...*



新山耶稣圣心主教座堂  
CATHEDRAL OF THE  
SACRED HEART OF JESUS  
JOHOR BAHRU

1982-2022

***“It enabled me to face the storms of life and to appreciate God’s love and gifts for me.”***

My name is Anna Er. I was born in Johor Bahru to a Catholic family. My late parents Abraham Er Wee Teck and Francisca Png Siok Kim aka Molly, my younger sister Cecilia and I used to live with my granduncle until we moved out to our rented room at various locations and finally at Jalan Mohd Taib, off Jalan Kuel. My father was a well known handyman and he did everything around the house, from the plumbing to electrical works, to marketing, cooking and sewing. He never went to school and his shopping list was always very interesting because it consisted of his drawings! My mother was a very neat and tidy home maker and the house was always sparkling clean. Though most women at that time did the cooking, my mother never did as the kitchen was my father’s territory. I remembered how my father would single handedly prepare tins and tins of love letters during the four days before every Chinese New Year to share with family and friends. He also sews and I remember how he sewed the best cotton double mattress which was no easy feat. Its quality was better than any of the commercially made ones! Growing up, my family and I used to attend mass at the Church of Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru.

I met Albert Lee Ah Kaw sometime in 1978. He was the best man and I, one of the bride’s maids at my classmate’s wedding. Three years after that we got engaged and on 31st December 1983, we were married in the Church of Immaculate Conception. Thereafter we moved to a rented place two doors from my parents’ place. Albert is a little like my father, in that he does the housework and cleaning in the home.



*On our engagement day with my parents.*



*Our wedding mass celebrated by Fr James Tan.*



Not long after we were married, we became parents, in February 1986 to our first born, Alfred and later in June 1988 to a pair of twins, Aaron and Adam.



*Alfred's baptism in 1986.*



*Aaron & Adam with godpa Anthony & Lawrence on baptism day.*

As my husband and I were both busy with our work, my parents were a big help for the care of our 3 boys. 1988, we finally bought our own home in Taman Daya and very soon after, we moved there. My parents moved there with us and continued to care for my children. We started to attend mass at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus after moving to Taman Daya.

I always thought that I am very lucky as pregnancy for me was a breeze as I had no morning sickness and my 3 boys popped out quickly and easily. Motherhood was very different and came with many challenges. Alfred was only two years old when his twin brothers were born.



*With our 3 boys.*

Sadly Aaron, the older twin passed away at 16 months. Adam, his younger twin had fever on and off after Aaron's passing. He somehow lost confidence in learning to walk and talk and at 3 years old he still could hardly stand up nor could he talk very well. Then a couple who were members of Kiwanis Club told us to try to enroll Adam at the Kiwanis Special School and there Adam went 3 times a week until he was 6 years old. At 7 years old he was accepted into Sekolah Kanak-Kanak Kerencatan Akal Johor and graduated at 17 years old. My mother, patiently and lovingly sent Adam to school through all those years.

Though raising the boys had its challenges, it also came with much blessings. I remember some years ago when someone from the Mandarin Apostolate approached me to come to my house and take some pictures for the celebration of mothers' day. When the day came and I attended the mass, seeing pictures of me and my family flashed from the overhead projector, my heart was filled with thanksgiving and gratefulness and I could not hold back the tears. All the mothers present were given a single carnation that day but my arms soon became full as all the other mothers started to give me their carnations! Knowing that my husband and I could not have managed without the help of my mother, I turned and gave the armful of carnations to my mother with a grateful heart.

After moving to Taman Daya, we were approached to join the Basic Ecclesiastical Community (BEC) in that area. We were one of the pioneers in a somewhat new housing estate and I remember how Josephine Mak, our then BEC leader would ride her bicycle along the houses to identify houses with Holy pictures so that we can find our fellow catholics to invite them to join us. We used to meet up at Teresa Alphonse's house. There we had our first BEC Christmas party in 1989. We also started Rosary groups, every weekday evening, we meet at one of the BEC member's home for about an hour for rosary and worship. At that time, we prayed the rosary in 3 different languages; English, Mandarin and Teochew. As the group grew bigger and bigger, the language groups split. Currently our BEC (English group) has about 30 families.







*Adam and I at BEC Christmas party.*



Joining the BEC helped me to be more open, to share my joys and troubles with others. This also lifts my burdens and lifts my soul. It gives me a sense of belonging. When I feel there's no one who can understand me, there's the BEC members who are always there to support each other. It also empowered me to help others who are less fortunate and in need of help. We organised fund raising for members in need, help coordinate donations of food, clothing and other essential items to children's homes and the poor. I am very touched to see the BEC leaders going all out, sacrificing so selflessly for other members. It also helps me to grow in my faith and strengthen my love for God and His people.

My children have now grown up. Alfred is now 36 years old and Adam is 34. Adam still needs us to care for him though he is ok on his own when we all go to work. Adam used to follow me to church until the pandemic, which made it difficult for me to bring him. He loves children's blessing at the end of mass, that's when his face will really light up. Though he is hardly vocal, his only word these days is "ai chiak" (meaning "want to eat" in teo chew), I will always remember his first utterance at age 2 when he said "Boa Boa" (Mother Mary in Teochew). Every morning and evening without fail, we will have our morning and evening prayer sessions. I hope I'd be able to bring him back to church soon.

I am very thankful to have all the BEC members' support, the friendship we have forged through the years is one of my greatest blessings. It enabled me to face the storms of life and to appreciate God's love and gifts for me.

*Anna Er*