



The Joy and Hope in the Risen Christ **By Hazel Lim**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

This Easter, I sensed God calling me to embrace the JOY and HOPE that Jesus offers through the Paschal mystery. I asked the Holy Spirit to open me up to this experience and my prayer was answered through the witness of children at Easter Mass.

It was a refreshing sight to see so many families, young and old, packed at Easter Sunday morning Mass at the Cathedral. I was especially praying with gratitude for the parents who brought their babies, toddlers and young primary school aged children to celebrate Mass on this important occasion. These parents are a wonderful witness of faithfulness and fidelity. Let's face it, it's not easy to keep young children engaged for an hour, and I understand how challenging it can be for parents, as I too had to run around the church after my children when they were young.

During Mass, I felt the Holy Spirit drawing my attention to the children around me. I saw toddlers running around; babies crying in the background; a little girl behind me who liked to poke; the little boy who was holding onto his offertory coins so tightly so he wouldn't drop them; the little girl who clapped for the choir every time they finished a hymn; a baby who fell asleep on her daddy's arms; the attentive boy who sat so reverently next to his mum, asking why the Bishop was sprinkling water. This vision suddenly overwhelmed me with profound joy! I burst into 'happy' tears and quiet laughter when the angelic voices of two little girls from the choir echoed through the church as they sang "Alleluia" for the Gospel Acclamation, followed by the sole clapping from the little girl from the pews.

As people were lining up for Communion, the little girl behind me (stopped poking and) loudly exclaimed "Daddy, can we go have Jesus now? I want to go have Jesus NOW!" Her determination and conviction of wanting to receive Jesus brought me so much hope – hope for our youth, hope for our families, hope for the future of our Church. It is through our continued desire and commitment in encountering Jesus through prayer and receiving him in the Eucharist that we can hold on to this hope.

It was such an incredible and blessed Easter Sunday experience of God's true joy and hope through the witness of his little loved ones! I pray that as we experience God's joy and hope in each of our own lives, we also allow the Holy Spirit to work in us to share this to those around us, especially those who most need it right now.