



CFSM Nature Outing

20 June 2026 dawned a clear and sunny day when CFSM returned to Pulau Ubin, after several years. Away from the city life of the main island, we could appreciate Creation and the spiritual and redemptive significance of the natural world as according to the message of *Laudato Si'*. We started off from the *assam* (tamarind) tree growing out of the *Ubin* (granite rock) at the island's main jetty entrance. Francis was our guide who described the various native fruit trees and spices.

A local gentleman welcomed our large group into his home to see the traditional manual water pump still in use, and his sprawling garden. Chatting with him was a good reminder that real connections with people are necessary to ensure that our journeys are not just sightseeing, and become a truly meaningful broadening of our life's horizons. In fact, genuinely relating with people in the reality of their lives is the essential precondition of the Christian lay apostolate.

From this house, we went to the official maintained gardens of native fruits and spices, including curry leaf, different types of lime, tamarind, jackfruit, mulberry, passionfruit, winged beans, torch ginger of various colours, turmeric and even coffee.

Beyond the maintained gardens, native fruit of every kind flourished everywhere we walked, giving their bounty freely for all passers-by. Some of us picked a few rambutans as we walked, being mindful to leave enough for others. As we entered the uncultivated forest, we smelled durian and saw the husk scattered around. We sampled betel leaves fresh from the climbing vines, with their bright peppery taste.

Pausing at a rocky point on a beach, we prayed together to commemorate Fathers' Day as CFSM, with a special prayer and gift for all fathers, grandfathers and godfathers.

From there we walk around through the forest to Teck Seng's Place, a conserved heritage house which typifies a kampong home from days of yore, with its architectural details adapted to both the natural environment and to the social habits of the local community in that era.

After lunch at Ubin's main village, we took the local taxi van to Chek Jawa. The Chek Jawa Visitors' Centre occupies the colonial Chief Surveyor's house, with an attached jetty looking towards Pulau Sekudu (Frog Island). As we took in the view from that jetty, we saw a US Navy amphibious assault vessel (USS *Boxer*) passing through the strait, with its complement

of aircraft arrayed on deck. Even amidst the nostalgic idyll of Pulau Ubin, this was a sobering reminder of the current insanity of war, greed and unending violence all over the world.

We continued on the Chek Jawa boardwalk and ascended Jejawi Tower for its commanding view of the Straits. We were blessed with the sight of majestic sea eagles soaring in their element, which God gave them, just as He gave us.

Walking through the Chek Jawa wetlands and mangrove forest, we saw the remarkable adaptations of every plant, tree and creature to their environment. Every adaptation and the life and reproductive habits of each organism maintains the delicate web balancing the needs of every part of the ecosystem, and benefits the wider environment by providing coastal protection on the landward side and providing food and materials to be foraged.

From Chek Jawa, the taxi took us to the foot of Puaka Hill, which overlooks the deep blue of Ubin Quarry from a dramatic cliff. Our trek uphill was rewarded with that view.

This nature outing was a multi-sensory experience reminding us of God's goodness in giving us Paradise to live in. It was a glimpse at a different way of life: the possibility of being contented with a simpler manner of living by trusting in the generosity God lavishes on us through Creation.

As Pope Francis teaches us in *Laudato Si'* Chapter 2, Creation speaks to us of God's goodness, and in itself is a Gospel. Not only each creature in its uniqueness, but the interdependence between them, teaches us about God's loving plan. The Lord's Incarnation has also sanctified Creation. To damage our relationship with nature is a symptom of a disordered relationship with God and our fellow human beings.

On the other hand, the sight of the warship pricks our conscience as a manifestation of the worldly way: the way of seizing more power and asserting domination through force and technology. As CFSM, which way of life do we live out and exemplify for our family members?

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