



CFSM Singapore hosted the 13th Asian Continental Conference of the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements (ICCFM) on 24 to 27 October 2025. Delegates converged on the SFX Retreat Centre from India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, the Philippines and our own Singapore; to reflect on the theme *Unleashing the Joy of the Gospel; Embracing Missionary Discipleship*.

The conference kicked off with Mass on Friday evening celebrated by his Eminence William Cardinal Goh. His Eminence's homily urged missionary discipleship by building up warmer and more joyous Catholic communities that truly include all, especially the youth.

The main proceedings of the conference included keynote and plenary sessions, as well as group breakout sessions and presentations.

The opening keynote was given by Msgr Eugene Vaz, who presented, in his inimitably clear way, an enlightening overview of *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, the source for this conference's theme. Msgr Vaz explained the structure and key ideas from this first encyclical of Pope Francis.

The crucial point from Msgr Vaz was that the Gospel is inextricably linked to social justice. Since the Gospel is meant for all, we as Christians commissioned by Jesus to spread the Gospel, must ensure its relevance to all people, especially those in conflict and crisis. To divide the Gospel from its social dimension would be to undermine its integrity and authenticity.

The next session delved into its application in the area of online digital media. Different viewpoints were heard in this panel session. Some speakers were enthusiastic about the opportunities offered by online and digital communication. However there was also a view that online media did not create real human relationships, and in some cases may even have led to cyberbullying or the spread of falsehoods due to the anonymity and lack of accountability online. Participants had the opportunity to hear the viewpoints of distinguished guests such as Msgr Vaz and Msgr Manny Gabriel of the Philippines. These experienced pastors share their view that it was critical for the church to maintain the aspect of genuine human connection in all evangelization efforts. Msgr Manny made the profound point that things had moved well past the stage of asking if the Church should be engaged online or not, since it is already such a big part of the lives of people that it has become the given environment for people to relate to each other. Rather the question was how to be present for and to serve those who felt far away from the Church.

Our own Fr Dominique also presented an address, on the family as a domestic Church, highlighting the characteristics of the Christian family in the aspect of being a Christian

community, with close reference to the Popes' encyclicals. A key takeaway from Fr Dominique's address, which echoed Msgr Vaz, was that social justice and a concern for the common good is inextricably linked to the mission and character of a Christian family. The long day of talks on Saturday ended with Cultural Night. Delegates presented a cultural piece or performance unique to their country.

On Sunday, a session by seminarian Br Kevin Wee reminded us of the fundamentals and responsibilities of every Christian family especially the duty to live out the Gospel in our lives and to be an example for those closest to us. Msgr Manny gave food for thought when he added that we as God's people have a duty to understand and reach people and families in varied life situations, including those who may not conform to our expectations or ideal picture of a Christian family. We should '*broaden our tent*' so that the Church and the Gospel can truly reach all.

The conference formal proceedings closed on the most appropriate note, with a plenary by Brother Collin Wee, who runs Hope House for youth who are in difficult situations or even have had brushes with the law. Brother Collin's sharing was by turns funny, thought-provoking, heart-rending and deeply moving. In sharing with forthright honesty the challenges he had with establishing Hope House, including from within his own Lasallian community, he inspired us listeners to examine our own position, and our corresponding responsibility to spread the Gospel to those who need it most. His humorous and self-deprecating stories and anecdotes ensured that his sharing will not be forgotten. Brother Collin challenged us to look at our own immediate surroundings and our own lives, to identify concrete needs and concrete steps that we could actually and take.

Following the synthesis session, the conference then moved on to the fellowship activities. Delegates were shown around Singapore on a city tour: ending with the truest showcase of Singapore culture, a local food Satay by the Bay food centre.

The Conference was acclaimed by the regional delegates as a success with their special gratitude to all CFSM members who helped in one way or another with their attentive hospitality. Formally, the last day of the proceedings on Monday saw resolutions drawn up to guide the direction of the regional Movement for the next few years. Informally, the fellowship shared between all participants will hopefully provide the strength for the Movement to continue to grow in its witness and in its contribution to the Church in Asia.

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