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# **The HeArt of Living Seminar: One Event, Three Offerings**

The HeArt of Living Seminar was held on 30 September in Singapore at SFX Major Seminary in Upper Bukit Timah with about 50 cooperators and friends in attendance. The aim of the event was to elaborate on the human and divine aspects of life and how a complementary mix of both makes life meaningful.

03/05/2024

Participants had to choose from three concurrent sessions covering significant stages in life. They were titled *Work-Life Balance*; *Death: Embracing Life, Embracing Death*; and *Marriage: Building a Life of Shared Purpose*.

The event started with Mass celebrated by the regional vicar of East and South Asia, Fr Ralph Valdez, who reminded everyone of the importance of setting aside time to think about what is meaningful in life and how to live it better. The sessions kicked off after Mass with an air of eagerness and anticipation evident in each of the breakout rooms.

*Lively discussions about work-life balance*

Light-hearted and deep sharings were the highlight of the session on Work-Life Balance. Everyone engaged in an interactive session with the three leading presenters,

Adel, a single young professional, Stephanie a mum-preneur and Krizia a young working mum. It was an open conversation that covered a wide range of topics to foster Work-Life Balance, such as being fully present in each moment, having God as an anchor, better self-awareness to help in setting clear boundaries and last but not least, the importance of having hobbies to help one unwind after work. “The session was a great way for me to reset and gain perspectives and ideas to help me find balance in life and manage feelings of guilt when things fall between the cracks. I learnt a lot from the sharings, especially how to be realistic and show more kindness to myself,” shared Anne who was invited to the session by a friend.

*What is your comfort level when discussing death?*

Deemed a taboo topic that's not often broached, the session on Death drew

much interest. The key thrust of the session was the focus on how to embrace life by embracing death. Dr Janet Ong, a medical doctor, led the discussions, along with Cecilia and Wendy who had both recently accompanied loved ones in their last days. At the start of the session, participants were asked to reflect and indicate by placing a sticker on a graph on the board, their comfort levels discussing their own death as well as the death of their loved ones.

*Participants sharing their thoughts on preparing for death*

Three breakout groups were then formed, each discussing a different theme ranging from helping loved ones to say farewell to one's own preparation to bid farewell. Every group watched various videos, each covering a different theme before the discussions. All 3 videos were emotionally riveting and sparked off deep and interesting discussions

with the different viewpoints on death shared. The key takeaways from the session were mostly centred around the importance of being prepared for death, learning to let go, and accepting help. For many of the participants, it was a good opportunity to think and learn about death - not only to prepare for it but more importantly, to live differently as a result of accepting and understanding death better. Serene who attended the session with her husband David enjoyed the short activities in the session that opened many ideas for them to think and talk about. David commented that it was time well spent discussing a topic most people would not want to talk about. Many of the participants left wanting to spend more time with the discussion.

*Bernadette sharing conflict management tips*

Bernadette, a psychotherapist trained in the Gottman Method Couples Therapy, led the session on Marriage with her husband Ignatius assisting her. She taught the attendees different conflict coping mechanisms such as self-awareness, the skill of self-regulating, recognising “flooding” signals in oneself and one’s spouse, and to listen with curiosity and compassion before going into problem-solving mode. These would help foster deeper connections and replace negative conflict patterns for a rekindled friendship between spouses. Claire and Kirk, a couple married for more than 20 years with six children, also shared how they lived St Josemaria’s teachings in their marriage and how they have been able to live virtues in their marriage with God’s grace. It was an eye-opening experience for many of the participants as many of them learnt new views and mindsets on marriage

as well as very useful and practical evidence-based tips on how to deal with conflicts in marriage. “I never thought of it like this, but it was really enlightening to learn that marriage is my pathway to sainthood,” said Angela, a participant who attended this session.

*Participants and presenters from the session on Marriage*

The event ended with a lunch and everyone mixing and mingling. New friendships were formed but most of all each left with new inspiration and resolve to live their lives just a little differently, with a bit of human and a bit of divine, and definitely a lot of HeArt.

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The HeArt of Living 2024 takes place on 6 April this year. Click the [link](#) to find out more and sign up.

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