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What if Christ was one of us?

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WITH tomorrow being the fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas just five days away, the spirit of the occasion recently took over me and made me think: what if Christ Jesus lived among us today? Not in a lowly manger in some remote corner of Bethlehem, but in one of the many mass housing communities that we have built. What could we expect?

Okay, I too see problems with parking. His neighbours wouldn't be able to squeeze into their driveways following His birth since the wise men and gang would have to tie their camels to whatever space they could find along the roadside as they come to bestow Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

This would continue into His early years as crowds gather at His doorstep to hear His parables and later, as they flock to Him in the hope of receiving His healing mercies.

But nonetheless, Jesus' neighbours would think the parking woes and traffic congestion a small price to pay. For His presence among them would bring about a deep sense of sharing, caring and serving, creating a community whose spirit would be rooted in one of the most important Commandments chiselled in stone by Moses: Love your neighbour as yourself (Matthew 22: 36-40).

It might sound easy to say, but its practice is as difficult as forgiving a neighbour who has carelessly encroached on your personal space, or who incessantly causes a racket during the wee hours of the morning.

Jesus, however, has the ability to make us see beyond such trivial issues and focus on the blessings that will come once we begin to abide by His Father's words.

And the blessings will be many. Loving your neighbour as yourself has a way of triggering a chain reaction that would result in a community which can live with the cohesion of a close-knit family. The self-sacrifices, caring and sharing extended by the members would produce harmony, effectively making it a place that is well maintained, peaceful and which can flourish.

Loving your neighbour is not dissimilar to the practice of "prospering thy neighbour" which former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad advocated for the Asean region. By helping our country's neighbours to achieve wealth, we too would be blessed. Imagine, if such rewards can be gained from an economic act, how much more can we attain with love?

Any leftover racial tension could be displaced; so too could any form of self-centredness and disrespect for other's belongings. In other words, our housing schemes can be made into heaven on earth and not degenerate into hellish cesspools so often seen even in developed nations.

Ultimately, this spells the benefit of appreciation as more and more people desire to own a slice of heaven.

However, wealth doesn't necessarily guarantee the gifts of heaven - this can only be bestowed on the faithful, the obedient and the deserving.

The good news is that many saints have already pervaded our schemes, working selflessly and tirelessly to make our habitats better places to live in terms of security and cleanliness through their thoughts, words and deeds, and it is my hope that during this season, more of us will follow in their footsteps.

After all, Christmas isn't merely about exchanging presents and feeding faces. It is our reminder to share, care and love one another in much the same way God shared His Son with us. Isn't that the best present anybody can give?

To all Christian readers, a very Merry Christmas.

