



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

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SEP
2022

THE HOMESTEAD



Thank you Fr. Thomas Law, for using and promoting Liturgical vestment designed by PDDM sisters

God Loves You Jesus Loves You

Letting God's love flow to all....

On Thursday and Friday (1 and 2 September), volunteers from all ministries at OLMC came together to pack and distribute mid-autumn festival love packs to the homeless, elderly and underprivileged in Hong Kong. Each love bag contains a mooncake, drink, fruits, a pack of masks and prayer card. Thank you sponsors and volunteers.

"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have; God is pleased by sacrifices of that kind" (Hebrews 13:16)



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THE HOMESTEAD – SEPTEMBER 2022

Pastoral

Pray For The Abolition Of The Death Penalty

Deacon Alex Kwok



The God we believe in is a God of life. In His unfathomable wisdom and love, He created us in His own image and put us in a universe suitable for our existence with a Big Bang. At the moment, our scientists and cosmologists are still struggling to understand its mechanisms and new discoveries keep flooding in. These discoveries manifest the intellectual faculty of our souls which are beautiful. With the advancements of information technology and artificial intelligence in recent years, morality is becoming our last stance to differentiate what is human and what is non-human. Regrettably our morality is lagging far behind our sciences and technologies. For example, the Ten Commandments forbid us from stealing and upholds the right to private property. Yet today we can easily download any movie from the Internet without paying one cent simply with a click without any remorse!

The Ten Commandments also upholds the sacredness and dignity of human life and forbids the killing of innocent persons. Wait a minute! Who allows you to qualify this Commandment with the word “*innocent*”? Who decides who is innocent and who is not? Only the author of life may decide, not you, not me, nor any chief justice in courts! Our technologies of killing have been refining throughout the ages whereas our appetite for revenge remains unchanged. The death penalty has become less bloody and less brutal these days but still it terminates life. We justify the killing by declaring the defendant guilty of crimes so serious that only death is the most suitable retribution.

“*An eye for an eye*” is the rationale behind sentencing a murderer/treasonist to death. Yet death penalty is a retribution and not a restitution because the death of the murderer/treasonist compensates nothing and restores nothing. It is unable to bring the victim(s) back to life. In case of serial killers, the death of one killer is not in proportion to the deaths of tens of victims. Worse still, if the electrocuted “*murderer*” is later found to be innocent when the true “*murderer*” turns himself in, it is impossible to undo the miscarriage of justice! In case of a treasonist, had the administration been impeccable, the treasonist would have had no opportunity to incite rebellions/riots. So, instead of putting up a patriotic show, would it not be better for the administration to spend more resources and to focus more on improving the governance of the country?

God is the author of life which is a gift to all humanity, whether one is innocent or guilty, intelligent or stupid, dissident or loyalist etc. Only the giver of life can withdraw the gift of life. When we decide to kill legally, whether it be abortion, euthanasia and even death penalty, we are denying God’s majesty and declare that God is wrong in allowing those people to continue living. In short, we play God! It is a sin as ancient as Cain’s refusal to be the keeper of his brother Abel. It shows that we have made very little progress in our morality. No wonder it takes God the Son to incarnate and to die a bloody and shameful death on the cross for us in order to redeem us.

Brethren! Let’s pray together with Pope Francis for the abolition of the death penalty in each and every country on earth. Let us acknowledge the majesty of the author of life, the sacredness and dignity of human persons and stop abusing our authority to eliminate unlikable people. Remember, whether you like them or not, they are also images of God.

God bless!

THE HOMESTEAD – SEPTEMBER 2022

Pastoral

Life of Communion, Participation and Mission

Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM

With the month of September, we begin a new Pastoral Year wherein most of the parish programs on Evangelization and Faith Formation come into 'full operation' so to say. This is not to say that we 'ceased operation' during the summer months. As you know, our OLMC Parish is always open – in season and out of season!

In this Pastoral Year 2022-2023, we continue our 'Synodal Journey of Communion, Participation and Mission,' led by our Parish Priest, Fr. Thomas Law. We deepen our **communion** with each other in the Parish firstly through our prayers and liturgical celebrations. But not only that: we also try to find moments of sharing wherein we bring to the table our joys and suffering, successes and failures. And in the process of sharing, we are able to communicate compassion, concern and charity to one another.

In the aspect of **participation and mission**, we truly have a very active Parish, thanks too to the close collaborators who generously share their talent, treasure and time to contribute to the growth of our Church. But there is always room for growth and so, we also continue to invite our parishioners to work together with us and discover in which aspect of our mission they can participate more closely.

There are many areas of parish ministries that are open to the participation of committed lay persons: they can serve as lectors and commentators, as extraordinary ministers of Holy Eucharist, as choir members, as ushers and collectors, as teachers and catechists, as writers in our Homestead newsletter, as members of the broadcast team, etc. There is also the group of volunteers in our Parish who prepare the packs of goods to be distributed to the homeless and vulnerable groups in various districts of Hong Kong every Friday. Certainly, all these ministries need formation and commitment. And it is our hope that many other persons will be able to discover the beauty of participating in the life and mission of our Church. In the process of sharing, we hope to deepen our spiritual life and our belongingness to the church community, and the wider family of God.

Our church carries the name of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, hence the aspect of Marian devotion is also highlighted in our faith life in the parish. At the moment, we have the Living Rosary Prayer Group that meets every Thursday morning; they are mostly married women and mothers of families, therefore strengthening the intercession of Mary for the needs of the families and for the world at large. We also have several praesidia of the Legion of Mary: Shield of the Church which meets on Wednesday evenings; Miraculous Medal and Our Lady of Mount Carmel praesidia which meet on Sunday afternoon.

Through Mary's intercession, let us invoke the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we embark in this new Pastoral year and let us allow the words of Pope Francis to inspire us: "In the one People of God, therefore, let us journey together, in order to experience a Church that receives and lives this gift of unity, and is open to the voice of the Spirit."



THE HOMESTEAD – SEPTEMBER 2022

English Sunday School

Our Little Angels Are Back!

A new term of English Sunday School starts on 18 September 2022.
Welcome back to Our Lady of Mount Carmel students, parents and teachers!

“Children are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward” (Psalms 127:3)
“Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these (Matthew 19:13)”



Orientation
for the
parents
conducted by
Deacon Alex
Kwok and
Principal Jo
Basilio



Students settling into their new classes



Parents and Students attending Sunday Mass together



THE HOMESTEAD – SEPTEMBER 2022

LBS Corner ~ Discipline

Reference liturgical readings from the 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year 2022): Gospel *Luke 13:22-30*; 1st reading *Isaiah 66:18-21*; 2nd reading *Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13*

The liturgical readings for the 21st Sunday is a reminder that we must aspire for heaven, and encourages us to reflect on how we are going to attain the salvation gifted to us by God.

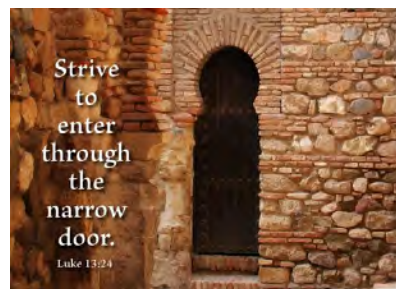
The 1st reading shows that the Lord is doing His part for us to receive all the blessings and graces we need. He offers salvation by sending His prophets reminding people to have a reason to aspire in reaching heaven. In the end of time the Lord says that "...I come to gather nations of every language; they shall come and see my glory." (*Is 66:18*)." This is the gathering of people includes those whom we know and loved who died ahead of us. We pray that they attained salvation, and we hope we will be able to see them again as we aspire as well to be in heaven after this lifetime.

The 2nd reading is about fulfilling the discipline of our relationship as children of God. St. Paul in his letter to the Hebrews reminds us: *Do not forget the comforting words which God speaks to you as children: "My son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reprov'd by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he acknowledges." Endure your trials as "discipline"; God treats you as sons. For what "son" is there whom his father does not discipline? (Heb 12:5-7).*" Discipline is not to make our life miserable. It's a sign of God's love for us that will guide us to live a life with discipline that could help us achieve the salvation that God is offering to us and which will bring us to heaven. *All discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it (Heb 12:11).* We should not be afraid of being disciplined. We don't turn our backs from it. It is never about punishment. The discipline being done by us is to develop our habits to strengthen us and straighten our ways by removing the wrong things and evil doings in our life. It should be a continuous practice of doing what is good and right and what God expects us to do to deepen our relationship with Him and our love for other people.

In the gospel reading from Luke, the story is about Jesus going to Jerusalem. *Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough (Lk 13:23-24).* The narrow gate is our Lord's encouragement that we will be saved when we respond and say 'yes' to the call to have a relationship with Him and be

disciplined. How? By limiting our options and trying to remove all the negative things and wrongdoings in our life is narrowing our paths in life so that our sole purpose is focused towards God. The Lord already done His part by gifting us salvation - through His death and resurrection. Now, we have to do our part by choosing to enter the narrow gate. The journey will not be easy for us, but the Lord is encouraging us to take this path if really want the salvation we aspire for, as it is not enough that we have faith to attain salvation, we have always do our best to change our ways as when...*the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from. And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets. 'Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where you are from (Lk 13:25-27).* This situation may happen to us because we have faith and know the teachings of the Lord, and yet we didn't listen and apply it. God's reminder is clear that when we received His message and offer of salvation, we have to live it and strive to apply everyday the demands of our faith – that is the discipline being taught by our beloved Catholic religion, as our religion's priest or spiritual mentors will help us grow with our chosen community of believers, and we discipline our ways and leave behind those things and situations that causes us to sin and hinders us to attain salvation.

Please note that we are still having our LBS online through Zoom Video Conferencing on Thursdays at 9:30pm (ID:320027131; PW:7NQKV6). Come and join us. All are welcome!



THE HOMESTEAD – SEPTEMBER 2022

Legion of Mary

By: Melanie Taasan



The essential aim of Legion of Mary is the sanctification of its members through prayer, the sacraments and devotion to Mary and the Trinity, and the whole world through the apostolate of the Legion.

I joined the Legion of Mary four (4) years until now. And as a part of the group, I am very blessed and thankful. It really changes my life not only through spiritual but emotional and physical. And also because of that, I improved my spiritual learnings, I got to know more about Mama Mary, know more about wisdom of God. And found the good community which makes my life happy to serving God.

Before I joined the Legion of Mary, I dreamed of Her (Mary), she gave me a special gift which I should give it to my sister. And that gift was in a big box and wrapped with white ribbon with sky blue color. As the years passed and along the way. I just discovered that, that gift of Mary which She gave me is my "mission" for my sister, which for her to overcome all the challenges that comes into her life. Because first of all my sister is not a Christian she is in a different religion. She does not believe in Mama Mary. And her life is not focused in one direction. She is confused in her faith. She managed to throw the rosary and images of Mama Mary. So, what I did, I encouraged her to join with me in Legion of Mary. I gave and help her everything just to let her faith back to God. And let her faith get more firm and stronger. And after such times, my mission accomplished. My sister is now back happy as Christian and serving God and Mama Mary whole heartedly.

In turn and total I thank Mama Mary and the Trinity for giving my sister's such a good employer for treating her so well, for letting her go to Church attending mass every sunday to receive Jesus. And she was converted and readmission as a catholic and she have an experience mass officiating priest by Fr. Jay Flandez. She has an adoration to Jesus and attending mass every day.

And in addition, when I did my "MISSION" to my sister, the mission to restore her trust in the Lord. Because at that time, our family had broken relationships, did not understand each other, did not agree with each other, the trust in the Lord is far away. My sister's son who is my nephew, his life has been turned upside down, he has no disposition and direction in life. And because of that "mission" that I did, I realized that everything that happens has a reason. Life events are gradually returning to order. Our family treated each other well, back to be a happy family together. My sister's son, who used to be crazy, now has a good life, got a job that somehow helps. And another incident, our mother who was sick before, could not walk, due to a problem with her back or spinal column. And because of that mission again now, our mother is so strong that nothing happened. She was able to walk and no longer it hurts. Aside from all that was received, many other blessings came.

I thank the LEGION OF MARY and TRINITY, because it is all the reason that everything changed. My mission is not just accomplished but it is the beginning of my life for eternity. I feel so blessed to be part of Legion of Mary. Thank you, Mother for guiding us in our everyday life and reminding us to follow your virtues in everything we do. Please give us more abundance of blessings not only through my family but also to my colleagues and friends, my sisters of Mary and all those who covers and builds the Legion of Mary. All to Jesus, through Mary.



THE HOMESTEAD – SEPTEMBER 2022

Community Sharing

OLMC Church Thanks Maggie Yu

Editor's Note: Maggie Yu is a graduate of the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts and is now based in United Kingdom to pursue her Master's Degree in Musical Direction. We thank her for assisting us in the 11.45 am Sunday Mass as organist of the Bethany Choir since 2020 up to August 2022. May the Lord continue to bless her with success in all her endeavours and ministries now and in the future. We would like to share with you now Maggie's reminiscences and reflection on her ministry at OLMC.

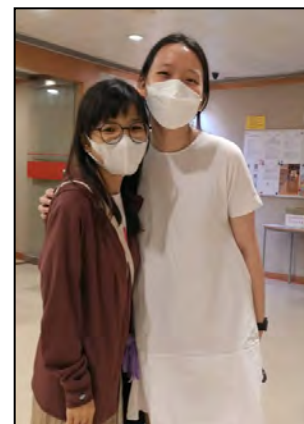
By: Maggie Yu

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church is a special place to me. I was baptized here back in 2015. One day in 2020, my friend Korn introduced me to Sr. Victoria. They were looking for an organist for the Sunday 11:45am mass. That is what I have longed for, to be able to serve at mass. And so I came to OLMC not knowing anyone but Sr. Victoria; the community however was welcoming and heartwarming. I immediately felt comfortable to be with everyone.

Every Sunday morning, I see these brothers and sisters greeting each other with warm smiles, like a close family. It is not only a time to sing together, it is also a time to connect with each other, and share the blessings from God. Being the organist, I might not spend much time with everyone as we do not have keyboards at our rehearsals, but I enjoy meeting everyone at mass.

The Bethany choir at the OLMC uses a variety of styles of music: uplifting pop music, solemn hymns, or even chants. I really appreciate the passionate music team who chooses so many songs, of one purpose, to gather in God's name and worship him. Given these talents by God, I witnessed how we use them as tools to humbly serve God. Some conduct, some sing, some harmonize, also with our lovely musicians playing guitar and percussions, we create harmony in the church. When every member gives her/his best, then all can work together, full of energy and love. It was the most beautiful thing ever when we all come together and praise the Lord with our unique voices. The Bethany Choir at OLMC is definitely one of the best places to serve and make meaningful connections with the faithful community. It is the best place I will always remember.

When I had my last Mass with the community in August before I left Hong Kong for London to study abroad, everyone wished me good luck and shared with me about church communities in London. I will always remember the care I received from the lovely members. Love among the family also makes us spread love with others in the church, and bring love to people around us in our daily lives.



THE HOMESTEAD – SEPTEMBER 2022

Community Sharing

Season of Creation: Enjoying the Garden of Joy!

By: Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM



"On the 27th of September, during our Morning prayer, we praised the Lord as we prayed: *"You, Lord, care for the earth, give it water, you fill it with riches. You level it, soften it with showers, you bless its growth."* (from Psalm 65)

This set the mood of the day as I prepared myself to join the members of St. Joseph's Ladies Guild (SJLG) in their visit to the Catholic Sustainable Garden of Joy at Yuen Long, Shek Kong, together with two other members of our OLMC English Community. Part of my prayer for that day was also to ask for the grace of increased awareness to notice and enjoy God's creation in its magnificence. This included opening myself especially to the persons I will be meeting that day and enjoying the gardening activity we shall be doing together. At the center of this activity was also the liturgical celebration – the Mass, presided by Fr. Daniel Kim, MM. In the brief homily that Fr. Kim shared with us, I was particularly touched by his reflection on how we can help 'clean up' the environment by setting good

example and checking on our 'disordered' tendencies. He started by sharing how he noticed the trash that was thrown around the parking lot where we waited for another member of the group. He mused, "I wonder who was the first one who started to throw the first thrash; surely, he did not realize that that simple act would attract others to do the same." And he brought this to another plane of reality, the aspect of our spiritual life. Oftentimes, we are unaware how our 'disordered' actions such as unkind words, rash judgment and the like, become precursors of negativities that snowball and affect the whole atmosphere of our life, making it 'noisy and unclean,' at times, even sinful. This reflection was enough for me to help me catch myself at every instance when some negative tendencies come up, to stop and reflect before I end up 'polluting' the environment where I live.

After the beautiful garden Mass, we proceeded to an hour of 'farming' activity coordinated by the staff of the place. With their guidance, we were also graced with the opportunity to harvest some organic vegetables for us to bring home and share with our families and friends! In the process, I realized the existence of other species of vegetables like the red okra, the lemon with smooth skin and the varieties of sweet potatoes. We ended this activity with a time of reflection led by Carol Leung, one of the members of the Staff of the Garden of Joy. Reflecting together on the origins of the earth (see Genesis 1), we were reminded of the goodness of God's creation and how many blessings come to us through it. This then becomes an invitation and a challenge to be more conscious of our responsibility towards taking care of our common home and the whole of God's creation.

I carried with me the challenge that was very well expressed by one of the members of our group that day: how to strike a balance between consuming and conserving. As we enjoyed our sumptuous meal at an iconic restaurant in Yuen Long as part of the closing part of this awesome day, we immediately tried to respond to this challenge. Learn to take only what you need. Try to live with no waste or as little waste as possible!

Thank you to Lolita Yuen and Agnes Chiu of SJLG who organized this event and to all the beautiful persons who were with us in praising the Lord for the gift of his creation!



THE HOMESTEAD – SEPTEMBER 2022

Spiritual Reflection

Journey into my Heart is a mini autobiography book written by Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM. Sr. Victoria shares her story as compass to pilgrim searchers of God. There are a total of 11 chapters (1 introduction and 10 chapters) in the book, and one chapter will be featured in Homestead every month.

JOURNEY INTO MY HEART (CHAPTER 10) – Constant Desire of The Heart



I can say that the missionary calling has been sown deeply in my heart from my youth. In fact, in the process of my religious discernment, I even considered serving as a medical doctor in far flung areas in case I won't be able to respond to the religious vocation.

The call to the mission has been deepened still as I underwent religious formation. One very significant figure for me in this regard was Cardinal Guadencio Rosales (now emeritus). I was an aspirant when he was Bishop of Antipolo. And I remember how he spent some days of rest in our convent twice a year. At that moment, he would gather the community around him and share some news about his ministry as member bishop of Propaganda Fide (the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples). In one of those informal sharing sessions, I was struck by his reflection on Jesus as the first missionary of the Father, citing John 3:16 – *God so loved the world that he sent his only son*. To follow Jesus is to take the missionary calling seriously. It means going out of my comfort zone and accepting to go where there is a need for the Gospel to be heard.

And I remember in 1980 how enthusiastic I was as a novice when the Congregation decided to send the first three missionaries from the Philippines to start our foundation in Taiwan. Sr. M. Lawrence Consulta, one of the three pioneers, was crying during the send-off party for them so I told her, *"Please let Mother Tiziana (then Regional superior) know that she can send me instead of you."* I have always had a very special place for China in my heart. Perhaps because my Dad's closest friends were Chinese and I experienced first hand his high regard for them. Anyway, that suggestion fell on deaf ears.

In 1999, the PDDM Philippine-Taiwan Region started planning to open another foundation in Hongkong, which at that time, was already a special administrative province of Mainland China. Again I attempted to get my name shortlisted as a pioneer in the planned foundation. But surprise of surprises, I got elected as General councilor during our 6th General Chapter in Rome! And that meant another failed attempt. The blessing part of this was that I was able to bring forth the importance of the

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Spiritual Reflection

JOURNEY INTO MY HEART (CHAPTER 10) – Constant Desire of The Heart ~ Cont'd

proposed Hong Kong foundation to the attention of the Superior General and the General Council. And I would like to believe that this and the succeeding discernment process all helped in concretizing this project.

In 2005, towards the end of my first term in the General Council, I started dreaming again of the China foundation. Through hard work and study, I was even able to get a diploma in an Irish Language School to teach English as a Second Language (TESL). This could serve as a springboard to start a PDDM mission in the Mainland. After a heart-to-heart dialogue with Mother M. Paola Mancini, then Superior General, I discreetly applied for a teaching post in any university in China with the help of the Columban Fathers' agency, AITECE short for the Association for International Teaching, Educational and Curriculum Exchange.

In April 2005, as we were again having our General Chapter in Ariccia, I continued to pray and discern over this desire. On April 25, the day when I got the reply from AITECE that they have found a placement for me, I was also re-elected as General Councilor! What a heartbreaking situation! I couldn't say no to this call to obedience coming from the authority of my religious family. Again I reinterpreted that as an act coming from the Lord. He has not yet finished teaching me the lessons of obedience and poverty of spirit in this life of discipleship.

I consider these experiences as 'diminishment,' some kind of 'death experiences' woven into this missionary dream, which I don't even consider as my own. I know, in fact, that our Founder, Blessed James Alberione, prophetically said in 1947, at the time of the PDDM Diocesan approval, that we are meant to be in China.

But why the repeated smashing of this dream, I wonder. It happened again in 2011 after I finished my second term in the General Council. With the blessing of Sr. M. Regina Cesarato, PDDM Superior General at that time, I went to Beijing in July to study Mandarin, in view of a possible assignment in Hong Kong, which served as our 'stepping stone' to China mission. But lo and behold, after a month long study, I was called back to the Philippines to lead the PDDM Province as Provincial Superior of PDDM Philippine-Taiwan-Hong Kong Province. Obedience took the upper hand once more.

In 2017, after finishing my term, I asked Sr. M. Micaela Monetti, PDDM Superior General, to please let me help in the Hong Kong mission to explore other possible ministries there. The permission was granted but only for eight months. I started working as Pastoral assistant to the English community in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Wanchai, under the leadership of Fr. Thomas Law. But in August 2018 I had to leave my pastoral ministry in Hong Kong to go to Rome and serve as Delegate Superior of our Vatican Communities.

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THE HOMESTEAD – SEPTEMBER 2022

Spiritual Reflection

JOURNEY INTO MY HEART (CHAPTER 10) – Constant Desire of The Heart ~ Cont'd

I served our Vatican communities from August 2018 up to September 2020 and helped in the coordination of our ministries and the formation of our members. But as the desire to serve in the China mission continued to beckon, I had to dialogue again with my Superiors and undergo a prolonged discernment process. The time spent in the Vatican could also be considered as a time of purification, even as we all went through the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, restrictions and lockdown, and the eventual re- structuring of our ministries and communities.

I am grateful to Sr. M. Micaela for understanding the deepest desire of my heart and for allowing me to return to the PDDM Hongkong mission. I have been here since September 2020, coordinating the ministries of the same Parish where I worked in 2017.

Even as I continue my mission here together with my PDDM community and OLMC Parish groups, I examine myself time and again to check if I am not trying to 'chase this China dream and use this mission' for my own purposes. I continuously remind myself that this missionary journey is not about me. I am not its 'center,' I am its servant. I am simply responding to a call. Each step is an act of devotion, an act of submission to the Holy One who calls me, who loves me. He will infuse in me his own energy, his Spirit, in order to endure the hardships of the journey.

I would like to end this sharing with one of my favourite quotes from Pope Francis' Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, as I pray that my Master-Lover-Friend Jesus sustain me in this missionary journey, a gift and a task received from him. *"Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others."* (EG 10)

Indeed those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others. (Pope Francis EG 10)



~~ The End ~~

THE HOMESTEAD – SEPTEMBER 2022

Next..... October



The Church dedicated the entire month of October to the Holy Rosary so that individuals, families, and communities would pray the Holy Rosary, if possible, on a daily basis for peace in the world. "Not only do we earnestly exhort all Christians to give themselves to the recital of the pious devotion of the Rosary publicly, or privately in their own house and family, and that unceasingly, but we also desire that the whole of the month of October (in this year) should be consecrated to the Holy Queen of the Rosary" (Pope Leo XII; *On Devotion of the Rosary*, 1 September 1883).