



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

Parish Priest : Fr. Thomas Law
Address : 1 Star Street, Wanchai, H.K.
Tel : (852) 2527 7240
Email : mail@olmcchurch.org.hk
Website : <http://www.olmcchurch.org.hk>
Editor Email : olmchomestead@gmail.com

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THE HOMESTEAD

Advent Is A Season of Anticipation

Deacon Alex Kwok



Probably you have read His Eminence, Cardinal John Tong's Advent message. He should have been happily retired had His Excellency, the late Bishop Michael Yeung not suddenly died in January 2019. His Eminence has gone through an extremely long season of Advent as the Apostolic Administrator of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong until the consecration of His Excellency, Bishop Stephen Chow, S.J. of Hong Kong on 4 December 2021.

Traditionally, Advent is an anticipatory season like Lent. The liturgical colour is rather gloomy — purple. But do not worry. Brightness is just around the corner. Christ the Holy Infant is the morning star at the dawn of our salvation. Before that, Jews were living in the dark age of captivity: Babylonian, Persian, Greek and finally Roman. After some thirty years, Jesus emerged from Nazareth where people did not expect anything good to come (**John 1:46**). His public ministry reached climax at His crucifixion on the cross, the darkest moment in human history but in the small hours of the very first Easter Sunday, Christ outshone the darkness of death like trillions of trillions suns and came back to life! At the end of history, Christ the King of the Universe shall come again in majestic glory to judge the living and the dead. Yes, darkness does not last!

Therefore, not only do we prepare for the birth of our Saviour during Advent, but we also prepare for the Second Coming of Christ the King. The liturgical setting of the Church arranges the first two weeks in anticipation of His Second Coming, not the first. This is an ingenious decision because the coming of Christ is always unexpected. Surely, nobody knows when the world shall end, nor when one shall die. But who would expect the Saviour of the world, the champion who would defeat Satan, to be born a nobody? The worst of all, Christ found no room to receive Him (**Luke 2:7**)

TO BE CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Brethren, we spend weeks, if not months, to prepare for throwing a birthday party / wedding banquet. But how do we prepare and to make room for the coming of our Saviour and King? We do not have to worry about how to throw a party in heaven because we are not yet there. Rather, we should worry about whether we have thrown away the invitation card which God gives us! God forces nobody to join Him but He generously invites all to partake in His eternal life and glory. Thus, we should worry about whether we have prepared a good enough wedding garment to join the heavenly banquet (**Matthew 22:12**)! It would be pitiful if we would be rejected at the gate of heaven by St. Peter in full sight of all the souls present. The advice of Pope Francis is simple. The invitation / identity card of Christians is the Beatitudes (**Gaudete et Exsultate #63**). Deacon's advice is even simpler. Pray, read the gospel, stay alert to see who needs help and act.

Together with the people of Hong Kong, His Eminence, Cardinal John Tong has gone through an advent of more than 34 months. All of us have! Has our faith vanished? Are we still anticipating the good Lord to manifest His justice? Are we helping the needy (**Matthew 25:40**) and acting as Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation in this world (**2 Corinthians 5:19-20**)? Be assured that our King and Lord shall come to reward all those who listen, follow and persevere. God bless! Amen!



First Sunday of Advent, Year C Theme: Stay Awake

Man is a rational animal. He is able to make plans to achieve his goals with minimum efforts. In other words, to work efficiently. To save energy, man makes himself an animal of habits. Since it would be extremely exhausting to make decisions on everything we do. Therefore, we develop habits and routines so as to function more efficiently. Then, we may be able to spend our energy elsewhere and to do more demanding tasks. In fact, man is also an animal of anticipation. We do not passively respond to demands at the moment. We envision a future, making plans and taking actions to actualize it. Pardon me if you find the language too abstract. Simply put, in order to throw a birthday party or a wedding banquet for ourselves, we spend weeks, if not months, to draw up a guest list, to look for a decent venue and the menu etc., do we not?

Lighting the 1st Advent
Candles



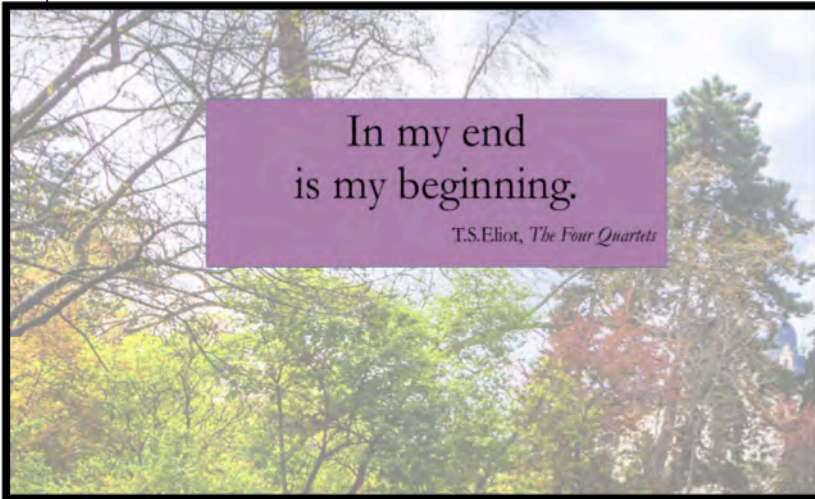
11:45 am: Rex & FeiFei Hung



1:30 pm: Liza Lee & son Adrian



6:00 pm: James & Kim Hong



Endings... Beginnings...

Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM

With the celebration of the Solemnity of Christ the King last 21st of November, we ended the Liturgical Year and we slowly transitioned to the beginning of a new one with the celebration of the First Sunday of Advent on 28th of November.

The Liturgical Year, the cycle of seasons and days, which commemorates the

mystery of Christ's life-death-new life, or what we call the Paschal Mystery of our Lord, offers us a means to renew our lives as well. In the natural human sphere, we celebrate births as beginnings, growth as expansion of life, death as endings. Our faith experience deepens this natural dimension. Journeying with our Lord and with one another as pilgrims on this earth makes us develop **new eyes**. With our faith to guide us, we learn to 'see' that nothing happens by chance. All of our human experiences even, or maybe especially, the most difficult and burdensome, are mysteriously laden with the grace of God. We see this most clearly in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ: no cross, no glory. There is nothing in life that God's grace cannot reach or touch. We simply need to believe and ask for this grace to be 'activated' so that we may learn to see beyond appearances.

The pilgrimage of life throughout the Liturgical Year also helps us develop a **new heart**, converting us from hard and insensitive persons to caring and compassionate companions of our sisters and brothers, especially those most needy and vulnerable. As we listen to God's Word day-by-day or Sunday-after-Sunday, we are reminded that every one of us is 'gifted to serve.' All of us have been given a gift from God, and we should use whatever gift we have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace (see 1 Peter 4:10). This 'service' could be a simple smile, a listening ear, a word of encouragement, a humble helping hand. It may not even be material but it can lift up the spirit and give a brother or sister renewed reason for living.

In this Liturgical Year 2021-2022 Year C, the Sunday Lectionary presents the **Gospel of Luke** as our guide in deepening our faith. Luke's Gospel is known as the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel of the Poor and also the Gospel of the Mission.

Let me end by wishing all of us then a 'happy New Liturgical Year!' May our Lord, through the intercession of our Lady of Mt. Carmel, continue to bless our life's pilgrimage as one People of God, together with Fr. Thomas Law, our Parish Priest!





God and Science

“For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope.” *Jeremiah 29:11*. How this was testified on the day recollection for our Confirmation candidates on 7 November at the Shek-O Retreat House! The audio-visual systems in both the conference room and the sitting room were not functioning at all when we tried to set up. In the end, we, a group of eight, had to sit on the lounge chairs around a low coffee table in the sitting, trying to watch the comparatively small screen of Deacon’s laptop! However, by the grace of God, this created a cosier setting and I believe that the interaction that followed was better than if we had used the conference room.

We began the day with Sunday Mass with the local community and were blessed to have Fr. Heri Purwantao, the retreat house resident priest, hear Confession from our candidates. Deacon Alexander Kwok was the retreat master and gave grace filled talks on God’s plan in our lives and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Do you know that Jesus’ miracle of Five Loaves and Two Fishes (*Matthew 14:13-21; John 6:1-14*) can be explained by Einstein’s famous “ $E=mc^2$ ”? Contact Deacon Alex if you would like to find out more. The retreat ended with Deacon’s thought inspiring question, “What would you like to do with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in your life? It is up to you to decide.”

Thoughts from three of our Confirmation candidates on the recollection:

“It was a very enjoyable Sunday. I enjoyed the Mass and learning how to connect with Jesus.” *Andrew Rowe*

TO BE CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

THE HOMESTEAD – NOV 2021

English Sunday School

God and Science (cont'd)

“I found the retreat we had a very calming and relaxing experience. It was nice to have a break from stressing over school and have time to just think. We also did a confession on the retreat, and the last time I had a confession was a while ago. Being able to confess my sins to someone and getting rid of that weight on my chest really made a difference in my everyday life.” *Augustinus Kartono Tan*

“It was very peaceful knowing that I am very close to a church and it feels a lot safer being there”. *Kirana Larasati*

Some happy memories to share..



Spreading the Good News and Serving the OLMC Community as a Catechist

Vilma Allado

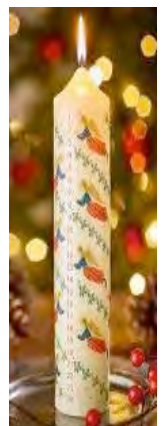
Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. (Mt 19:14)

This word of the Lord Jesus inspired me to accept teaching. Before I accepted to be a catechist, I thought about my purpose, what was my vision and mission in teaching catechism? Here, it came to my mind the “perfect Christian with living faith. To teach the teachings of the church and spread the good news.”

My class this year is composed of children aged between 9 to 11 years old. Based on my experience during these past two months of teaching the children, I can say it is a tremendous blessing that I have been a part of their lives. And here, I realized that many of the children need the Lord's guidance to draw them closer to Him. Our class has been full of life and laughter, showing care and respect for each other. We begin each class with a prayer, led by one of the children, a simple prayer that comes from their hearts. In the coming months, we will learn more and more about our faith as we prepare them to receive the Sacraments.

This year is my second year of teaching here in OLMC and I can say that I am blessed and honored because the Lord Jesus used me to be of service to the community and the children. Each year we encounter different young people and we need to adapt different ways to teach them. My hope in the future is that they will learn something and share it with others especially to their families.

It is my prayer for each of my students to continue to study the Word of God, to grow in their faith, to live and to be the Lord's servant. And for many more young people to come to know Christ Jesus better.

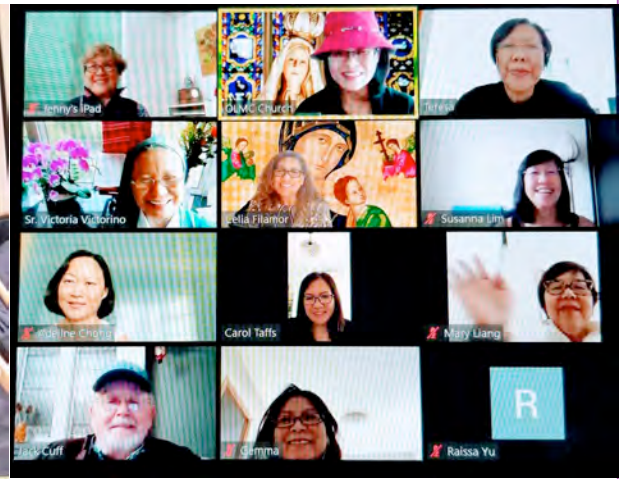


THE HOMESTEAD – NOV 2021

Living Rosary Group

Monthly Celebration of November Birthday Stars

This Is The Day!



It is always a special time for the OLMC Living Rosary Group when we meet face to face as it is also the day we celebrate the birthday celebrants of the month. And so it was my turn in November. We met up on November 18 where we also welcomed **Adeline**, a newcomer to the group. We also had the special participation of the youngest member of our group, baby Anna! Celebrating life for me is very meaningful as we remember that God created us. We rejoice and we are grateful for another lease on life. We give thanks and praise to God. *"This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it."* ~Psalm 118:24 **By Carol**



It is my first birthday celebrating with my daughter Anna and is also her primary meeting with Rosary group members. Ever since I joined in OLMC, I have practiced my faith through various classes such as Catechism and Formation class, Emmanuel group activities and Sunday Masses. I very much hope that Anna follows the path like I am doing in the church. A few years after, she will read my message written here when she grows up, starting to explore the world. *"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 18:3) Only with the purity and wholesomeness of your heart as an innocent child, that you can enter God's kingdom. When I pray the Rosary with my group members, and enjoy all the precious blessings given by them, I am warmly touched. The members are all beautiful and benevolent angels to Anna and me. At the meantime, I realized that we all sowed good seeds in the field and Anna would be the fruitful harvest in the future. Rosary members have a significant influence on me and now I should pass this spirit to Anna. Therefore, I hereby express my grateful appreciation for all angelic members in this group. My hope for Anna is she will grow earnestly with praying in Rosary group and attending mass every week. I believe God has given us purposes to fulfill our life and Anna will be my task in my life. She was born with Our Father's blessing and she was literally baptized twice, one in my womb (my baptism in May 2021) and the other one when she was three months old (August 2021). Anna was kicking so intensely

and strongly during my baptism, crying so hard during her own baptism, baby's talking thundering when we prayed Rosary. If I think of all these episodes in the bright side, I foresee how, in the future she might be very delighted to participate in all activities in the church as she grows to be God's faithful servant. For that I will not force her but humbly pray, *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) **By Christine**

Contrasting Life & Generosity

[This LBS Corner reference is from the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year 2021): Gospel **Mark 12:38-44**; 1st reading **1 Kings 17:10-16**; 2nd reading **Hebrews 9:24-28**]

The gospel reading reminded us on how a widow redefines the meaning of generosity, and how it contrasts with the way people live and consider what kind of life that mattered really means.

Jesus said to the crowds, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext recite lengthy prayers. They will receive a very severe condemnation" (**Mk 12:38-40**). The scribes were described as a group of people who lived for oneself, getting hold of everything they could get their hands on, regardless of the effect and damage to others of such taking or devouring caused.



Then, while Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury, many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood" (**Mk 12:41-44**). In contrast to the scribe cited above, the life of the widow is that she gave away for others and not to keep for oneself, regardless of its damage to herself that would be caused by her generosity as compared to the others who contributed out of the surpluses. The widow's generosity reflects on how we also trust our mother church and the God we serve in contributing our time, talent and treasure no matter how small its measure may provide for someone who is in need. The attitude of our heart towards being generous is not about the amount of what is given, but of how little is kept for oneself. Sincere giving is not about what excess we hold but we know the needs of others and we keep what is enough for us.

Another contrast in generosity is shown to us between the 1st reading and the gospel reading, where the prophet Elijah asks a widow for food. "Do not be afraid. Go and do as you propose. But first make me a little cake and bring it to me. Then you can prepare something for yourself and your son. For the LORD, the God of Israel, says, 'The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'" She left and did as Elijah had said. She was able to eat for a year, and he and her son as well; the jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, as the LORD had foretold through Elijah. (**1 Kings 17:13-17**). Out of respect and trust, the widow showcased her generosity, and gave what is left for her and her child. They were blessed by such gesture to Elijah. Similarly, when we believe and trust and we put our mind and heart into it, God will always provide for our needs and fill-up what we lack.

Our LBS' connection for the 32nd Sunday is that "**When we have faith and follow God's instructions, we have hope that keeps us going even if we seem to lack something in life**" with a collective call to action to 'be a messenger of hope to someone'.

Please note that we are still having our LBS online through Zoom Video Conferencing (ID: 320027131; PW: 7NQKV6).

“Can We Be Saints?”



"Can We Be Saints?" was the first book written by Frank Duff in 1916 at the age of 27. He reflected that:

"In the heart of every right-thinking Catholic, God has implanted the desire to become a Saint. Yet few make a serious attempt to realize the ambition. The cause for this is to a large extent discouragement, due to the misunderstanding of what a Saint really is."

"Thus, there is another definition of what a Saint is. It is this: One who, with the object of pleasing God, does his ordinary duties extraordinarily well. Such a life may be lived out without a single wonder in it, arouse little notice, be soon forgotten, and yet be the life of one of God's dearest friends. It is obviously an encouragement to look on sanctity in this way."

Five years later, along with a group of Catholic women and Fr. Michael Toher, Dublin Archdiocese, Frank Duff formed the first praesidium of the Legion of Mary on 7 September 1921 in Dublin, Ireland.

"The Legion of Mary! What a perfectly chosen name!" (Pope Pius XI). "The Legion of Mary presents the true face of the Catholic Church" (Pope John XXIII). "You are a movement of lay people who propose to make faith the aspiration of your life up to the achievement of personal sanctity... Yours is an eminently Marian spirituality, not only because the Legion glories in carrying Mary's name as its unfurled banner, but above all because it bases its method of spirituality and apostolate on the dynamic principle of union with Mary, on the truth of the intimate participation of the Virgin Mary in the plan of salvation." (Pope John Paul II)

This year 2021 is a thanksgiving year for legionaries (members of the Legion of Mary) from all over the world on our Centennial Celebration. With the graces and love of God, legionaries have been continuously working towards the objective of sanctifying ourselves (i.e. becoming saints together) while sanctifying others (supporting others to become saints). Fr. Francis Tam, OFS, Spiritual Director of the

TO BE CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

“Can We Be Saints?” (cont’d)

Hong Kong Comitium, gave an Allocutio (a short talk) on this Centennial Celebration as follows. “It takes ten years to grow trees, but a hundred years to rear people.”

“Who is she that comes forth as the morning star, fair as the moon, bright as the sun”, the Catena Legion is expressly describes Mary – She, is the “light” of our lives!

A hundred years ago, Our Lady’s “light” shone in the heart of Brother Frank Duff; this fire of blazing love led Brother Frank Duff to the founding of the Legion which belonged to Mary, “terrible as an army set in battle array”! We are not guarding earthly boundaries, but protecting spiritual conscience; we have to overcome the lure of the devil, the worldly greed; we have to fight for the virtue of love!

Although a hundred years have passed, this was only a snippet in the history of the Church; but this snippet has nurtured generations of inheritance, in the journey of life, Legionaries grew generation by generation. “It takes ten years to grow trees, but a hundred years to rear people”, we, with the grace of Mary, have successfully maintained the Legionary spirit and learnt from Her the virtues of “humility and obedience”, to serve the Church and the world.

“The glory of God through the holiness of its members in advancing the reign of Christ” is our motto as a Legionary: through prayers and active cooperation in the provision of service, we become the “the most glorious star”! With a grateful heart, we thank God in illuminating us in the past hundred years which allowed us to reflect the goodness and love of God, let us praise God, “My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour!”

Our Church sees the dedicated work and shining examples of many legionaries with the virtues and solicitude of Mary to serve and work for the salvation of souls and glory of God. Brother Frank Duff and Brother Alfie Lambe, have been called the Servants of God, and Sister Edel Quinn, the Venerable. For all legionaries, we are called by Mary, our Lord Jesus’ mother, to pray and work and to become the dearest children of God under her Army, her Legion family. Becoming a saint, for oneself, seems difficult and impossible. As for legionaries who are committed to our promise to Our Lady, “I am all yours, my Queen, my Mother, and all that I have is yours”, every week each legionary attends a Legion meeting lasting for about 1.5 hours and undertakes assignment for 2 hours, under God’s blessing and in union with her, the wonder of becoming saints will gradually emerge. May all legionaries continuously be united to always think of the heavenly things and overcome worldly temptations, humbly and perseveringly serve like Mary serving her son Jesus Christ, and bravely and devotedly respond to the call of Jesus for all His people:

“So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48)

Shield of the Church Praesidium, reflection on Centennial Celebration, 2021



Legion
of Mary

THE HOMESTEAD – NOV 2021

Community

2 November 2021
All Souls Day Mass



English Sunday School
(random photos)



Sunday Best – OLMC
Bible Study Sessions



Advent Candles



*Advent is a time to Prepare
Our Heart for Christmas*

<= Fr. Thomas Law designed this advent candle stand. It is made out of bread trolleys. Teams of volunteers go around Wanchai with Fr. Law every Friday pushing these trolleys to hand out bread, masks, sanitizers and other essentials to the poor & disadvantaged in Wanchai



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 in the book, and one chapter will be featured in Homestead every month.

JOURNEY INTO MY HEART (CHAPTER 1)

The Heart of the Call



Ages ago, I passionately desired to become a medical doctor, or so I thought. As soon as I finished B.S. Psychology-Premedicine at the University of the Philippines, I looked forward to the interview for the entrance to Medicine Proper. Strangely though, when I was asked why do I want to become a doctor I blurted out, *'I want to serve God and heal people.'* The interviewer responded *'why don't you become a nun?'*

That question remained with me. I went home crying, wondering why I ever gave that answer. And yet, it was quite obvious: God is at the center of my consciousness, of my existence, of my present and my future.

A month or so after that interview, even before I had the result of my application to the medical school, I was invited to a discernment retreat with the sisters of the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master (PDDM) in Antipolo. I met two of their sisters two years back as I attended a liturgical music seminar where I was sent by the Parish priest for my continuing formation as church organist and music director. My Mom and Dad had

already an inkling that something strange was going on inside me. I talked to them earlier of this nagging feeling of being called by God. My Dad was hesitant to let me attend the retreat but in the end he allowed me to leave, albeit with a severe warning: *"Go, but if you don't come back, consider me dead!"* Why was my Dad so dramatic, I thought. Why in the world, did he give me that ultimatum?

Perhaps because he knew all along that the 'call' was getting serious. It was time to decide. And indeed, I didn't return home after that retreat. But I found a way to write him and tell him that I don't want him dead. I just wanted him to understand what I was going through, to give me time to find out for myself what is this calling that won't leave me and give me peace. My Mom came to the convent after three days of my 'elopement' with the Lord; she pleaded that I return home. I begged her, repeating the same lines I wrote my Dad: *'please let me find out what it is that God wants from me.'*

I didn't meet my family for some time after that intrepid action. But I did find peace, and meaning. Every little thing I did inside the convent was linked to my search for God and my desire to answer God's call. After a year, I was allowed to go home for a family visit. By that time, I was already at peace with my family. Even my Dad confessed to me that he was beginning to understand my vocation. When I asked him, *'what do you think is the meaning of my vocation?'* he simply answered, *'when I see you, I remember God.'* I guess that in the end, my Dad's insight was on the mark. Religious life is not so much a belonging to this or that religious institution. Being 'religious' means being 're-connected' to God - the origin, the source and the giver of meaning as I continue to journey in life.

To be continued...