



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

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THE HOMESTEAD

JAN
2023



I wish everyone a Happy Chinese New Year in the year of the Rabbit and may the 5 blessings 五福臨門 descend on you and your family. The 5 blessings are:

1. Longevity 長壽
2. Prosperity 富貴
3. Good health 康寧
4. Virtuous 好德
5. Good death 善終.

- Fr. Thomas Law

A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP

"May you all enjoy success and be nimble like rabbits this year, and at the same time be able to have peace of mind, reflect, and find God with you in the quietness. To be nimble means to have energy, to be full of vitality, to be able to translate faith into actions. Both are needed meditation and action. May we all be healthy and fit to do these things. Don't let the old things haunt you in the New Year; instead, have a new mindset, give yourself new opportunities, and receive new blessings from the Lord. I wish you all a happy and prosperous Year of the Rabbit".

- Bishop Stephen Chow Sau Yan, SJ
(extracted from *Boiling Point*, the online platform for the diocesan youth)



Happy
Chinese
New Year

2023

May the year
bring heavenly
blessings, happiness &
prosperity into your home
& the lives of loved ones

新
年
快
樂

THE HOMESTEAD – JANUARY 2023

Pastoral

LET'S TALK ABOUT RABBITS

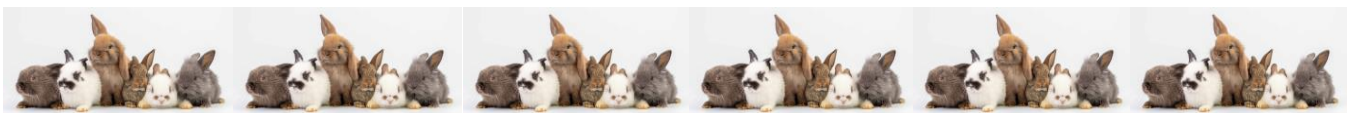
By: Deacon Alex Kwok

In the Lunar New Year of the Rabbit, may I wish you all an agile and fertile year ahead like rabbits. Rabbits look innocent and have long been domesticated, becoming our friends. They supply us with food and clothing. Culturally, the rabbit has been employed as symbols in various areas. For example, Aesop left us the famous fable of **"The Tortoise & the Hare"** to warn us not to be overconfident. Rabbits appear in modern children stories as friendly characters. Their fertility inspires the construction of the famous Fibonacci series in mathematics. Nowadays, many people keep them as pets.

Rabbits also occupy a place in the Chinese culture. For example, in Chinese literature, the moon is often romanticized as the **"Jade Rabbit 玉兔"** because legend has it that there is a rabbit on the moon accompanying the lonely Chang'e 嫦娥 who has stolen the elixir of immortality from the archer emperor Houyi 后羿, taken it and flown to the moon. There is also a well-known poem about the story of Mulan 木兰 who joined the army in her father's stead. After the war, her comrades were surprised to discover that Mulan was a girl fighting alongside with them in battles. The final stanza of the poem says, "(When stationary) The legs of male rabbits are restless 撲朔, the eyes of female hazy 迷離. But when they run side by side, who can tell the female from the male?" From this stanza comes the idiom "pu shuo mi li 撲朔迷離" which means "mysterious". But the most well-known idiom is "Crafty rabbits have three lairs 狡兔三窟" which has a biblical connection! Lord Mengchang 孟嘗君 was a statesman of the Qi Kingdom 齊國 during the Warring States Period 戰國時代 in ancient China. He was famous for hospitality, keeping around three thousand guests at any one time. One day, Lord Mengchang asked one of the guests Fengxuan 馮諼 to help him collect debts in a local county and buy what he lacked. Instead of collecting debts, Feng wrote them off, telling the county people how Lord Mengchang cared about their livelihood. When he returned to the Lord, Feng reported that he had purchased for him benevolence and righteousness. Lord Mengchang was unhappy but did not drive Feng away. Later, when Lord Mengchang lost favour with the Qi king and was forced to leave his own household for the local county, he was surprised to meet a huge welcome party! Then he understood what Feng had prepared for him. But Feng said that one lair was not safe enough for a rabbit. He had to do two more things for the Lord in order to secure his safety and later his political ascent. The famous idiom was derived from his three strategic manoeuvres. Do you find this story familiar? Yes, Jesus tells us the Parable of the Dishonest Steward (**Luke 16:1-8**) to teach us to make prudent use of temporal goods for eternal life. Biblical scholars have long been puzzled and have difficulty explaining the last verse. Why did the master praise the dishonest steward who had embezzled him (**16:8**)?

Had biblical scholars known the Chinese story of Lord Mengchang and Fengxuan, they would have easily come up with a satisfactory explanation. By reducing the debts, the dishonest steward had created a three-win situation: the debtors were relieved, the master was highly praised for his benevolence and the steward had a safety net if the master fired him! That explains why the master praises the prudence of this dishonest steward! As a Chinese, we're honoured to have the Son of God made use of our plot as His teaching materials. However, prudence is not wisdom. Chinese are very pragmatic in thinking ahead with Plan-B, Plan-C and Plan-D etc. But as a Catholic, being prudent and pragmatic is not good enough. Instead, we are called to *"be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect"* (**Matthew 5:48**). We trust in the Father and He will provide (**Genesis 22:8**). Jesus Christ teaches us to be clean of heart so that we will see God (**Matthew 5:8**). Furthermore, He reassures us once again that we should *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides"* (**6:33**).

Brethren! We don't need any extra lairs. Let's invoke the Holy Spirit to breathe fire into our hearts, purify them so that we desire God and God alone. Amen. God bless!



THE HOMESTEAD – JANUARY 2023

Pastoral

LIFE IS A JOURNEY

By: Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM



I thank the Lord for the beautiful gift we received at the beginning of this year 2023 when we had our Church Pilgrimage to Mother of Christ Church (“MOC”), Sheung Shui, followed by picnic and Nature Walk! We were able to refresh our spirits and our bodies as we got connected to the Lord through our Mother Mary. On that occasion we also got to know some new friends both in MOC Church and in the backdrop of the beautiful North District Park in Sheung Shui. Personally, it was an enlightening moment for me too, of the need of many of our Filipina migrant workers here in Hong Kong, to join church and social activities during the public holidays to help them be relieved of the stress they experience from work and from family problems. Somehow, I felt that we were able to let everyone feel that OLMC Church is really a ‘family’ for us all, ready to embrace everyone.

As we reflected on the central mosaic of MOC church portraying the Risen Christ, I remember sharing to the group the ‘journey’ which our Lord embarked on – from his Incarnation (coming down from his eternal home with the Father), to his life among us, his passion, death, resurrection and finally his return to the Father in his ascension. Similarly, all of us are in a journey here on earth. Even our own homeland, the Philippines (for most of us), is not the ‘final destination’ so to say. We are all ‘passing by’ as pilgrims and we hope that at this point in our journey, we have already learned that the Lord himself is guiding our path. He is **Emmanuel: God-with-us**. He walks with us and will not abandon us. It is also our hope that along this journey, we will be able to interiorize some of the values that are most important in life like, patience in the midst of life’s difficulties, acceptance of the challenges that come our way while remaining pro-active in the midst of these challenges. Most importantly, we need to learn to be always grateful for every blessing received, even to learn to see things and events with a ‘new pair of eyes’ in order to recognize that sometimes, even the difficulties and challenges are ‘blessings in disguise!’

May we always remember this quote from Pope Francis: *“Life is always a journey. We become that which we move toward. Hence let us choose the way of God, not of the self; the way of Yes, not If. Together we shall discover that there is no unexpected event, no difficult climb, no dark night that cannot be faced, with Jesus by our side.”*

I take the occasion too to wish everyone a happy and meaningful Chinese New Year! May this Year of the Rabbit not only bring forth agility and flexibility but also peace of heart and spiritual abundance. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to empower us with his gifts, especially of wisdom and fortitude today and throughout the New Year. May we continue our earthly pilgrimage and grow in the love of God and in caring for each other, through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace and Our Lady of Mount Carmel!



THE HOMESTEAD – JANUARY 2023

Community

JOURNEYING WITH OUR BLESSED MOTHER IN 2023

On 2 January, OLMC Church organized a pilgrimage followed by a nature walk for 120 parishioners. The pilgrimage took us to Mother of Christ Church in Sheung Shui. Mass was celebrated by Fr. Efen, assisted by Deacon Alex Kwok and Sr. Victoria. After Mass, a spokesman from the Church briefed us about the church's history, and showed us a statue of Santo Nino in its grounds. We took some group photos before going to North District Park, where we had our picnic lunch and games. Lastly, everyone was given free time to take photos in the park with its beautiful display of vivid autumn colors. A blessed day indeed. We thank our parish priest, Fr. Law, for sponsoring this day.



WELCOME 2023 WITH MOTHER MARY
"OLMC ENGLISH COMMUNITY PILGRIMAGE AND
NATURE WALK"

Date: Monday, 2 Jan 2023
Time: 10:00 am (assemble in OLMC)
Pilgrimage: Mother of Christ Church
Nature Walk: North District, Sheung Shui
(Transportation, Lunch & Water will be provided)



Reciting rosary in the bus



Mother of Christ Church



The welcoming committee waiting for us!



North District Park



Pebbled path for
foot massage



THE HOMESTEAD – JANUARY 2023

Community

CHINESE NEW YEAR COUPLETS

Couplets or 揮春 (faichun in Chinese) are commonly seen in homes and offices during Chinese New Year. Couplets are composed of a pair of poetry lines vertically pasted on both sides of the front door and a four-character horizontal scroll affixed above the doorframe. Pasting couplets expresses people's delight in the festival and wishes for a better life in the coming year. Traditional couplets are done with ink and brush, and require excellent calligraphy skills that not everyone has. The essence of the couplets is demonstrated by the implicit good meaning and stylish calligraphy work. OLMC is blessed to have Josephine Yue, from the Holy Family Choir and her friend prepare couplets in different styles of calligraphy writing for our parishioners on 15 January. All offerings collected will be donated to the Diocese for church renovations.



CHINESE NEW YEAR MASS (22 January)

Fr. Thomas Law had arranged a laisee for all parishioners in OLMC. This is truly a blessing for all of us!



THE HOMESTEAD – JANUARY 2023

Liturgical Bible Study

LBS CORNER: “EPIPHANY”

[Reference liturgical readings: Gospel *Matthew 2:1-12*; 1st reading *Isaiah 60:1-6*; 2nd reading *Ephesians 2:2-3a,5-6*.]

The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord commemorates the visit of the magi to worship the baby Jesus as told in the Gospel reading of Matthew: “Behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.’” (*Mt 2:1-2*).



The name Epiphany comes from the Greek ‘*epiphaneia*,’ meaning “appearance” or “manifestation,” and epiphany refers to the manifestation of Jesus Christ to the entire world, and it also means a moment of sudden and great revelation or realization. At Christmas we celebrate Jesus’s revelation to the Jewish community, whereas the magi were not Jews. They were Gentiles like us, members of the non-Jewish community. The magi went out of their own religious tradition to encounter what they believed to be a great religious revelation in following the star that led them to Jerusalem. In the 2nd reading, St. Paul puts it well in his letter to the Ephesians said that this is the revelation that the *Gentiles are coheirs* (with the Jews), *members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.* (*Eph 2:6*)

As we read in the gospel, *Herod was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.” Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star’s appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage”* (*Mt 2:3-8*).

There are different responses to Jesus coming to the world. The gospel shows three distinct responses.

First: On the part of Herod shows deception and pretended to be interested in looking for the newborn king of the Jews. We know the result of Herod’s action by ordering the slaughter of the young innocent children who are aged 2 and below. As Jesus coming shakes up our world because He offers to be in the center of our life and our heart, as He wanted to be the Lord of our lives. His coming to our life is a threat as we may experience inconveniences if we allow Him to change us and make Him the center of our life. Like the way Herod responded with jealousy, anxiety and anger as his throne is threatened.

Second: The chief priests and the scribes who have the knowledge on the prophesy that Christ will be born in Bethlehem, and yet they don’t do nothing about it even to accompany the magi to the place in the land of Judea to where the Messiah is born. The act of doing nothing even though there’s a realization of extra ordinary thing happening similarly happen to us whenever we nurture our faith though the Sunday mass and doing nothing afterwards in changing and re-orienting our life so we can be an instrument of peace and in loving others.

Third: On the part of the magi from the east, they studied the stars and they believed that there is a moment of revelation and realization that the light of the star will guide them to their destination towards Bethlehem. *And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.* (*Mt 2:9-12*). The magi are on a quest and were willing to go outside of their comfort zone from where they came from to discover the truth about the prophesy. They were led to the truth about the Messiah because they ask (‘Where is the newborn king of the Jews?’ – *Mt 2:2*), they search, they probe and willing to go beyond their own tradition to learn and understand where the star leads them to the epiphany as they look up into the sky. Like in our faith we need to be inspired the way the magi responded applying the same traits in searching for the truth in growing our faith, and we have the star in our catholic tradition in person of our saints whose light shines bright in practicing their faith that gives us examples that help us to reach our destination...in heaven.

We pray in the observance of the Epiphany of the Lord: “O God, who by the guidance of a star did on this day manifest Your only-begotten Son to the Gentiles, mercifully grant that we who know You by faith may also attain the vision of Your glorious majesty. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

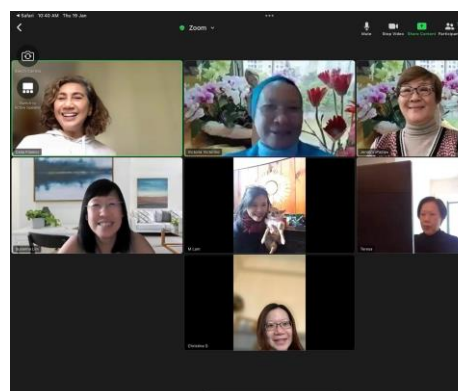
THE HOMESTEAD – JANUARY 2023

Living Rosary Group

CHINESE NEW YEAR PRAYER OF BLESSING

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you that in all cultures the New Year means a chance for a fresh start and a new beginning. We pray especially for our Chinese brothers and sisters as they celebrate Chinese New Year that they will come into a deeper knowledge of You. Thank you for putting the hunger for better times ahead and the hope for renewal of goodness and health into every heart for your purpose of motivating us to find Jesus who is our Redeemer and friend. Thank you that Jesus died on the cross to sweep clean our sins and make it possible for us to have new life in a relationship with Him that brings prosperity to our souls.

And now we pray these traditional New Year's greetings as a blessing for their spiritual prosperity. Amen



Come rain or shine, we will have our weekly prayer meeting

THE HOMESTEAD – JANUARY 2023

Ministry of the Word

LONG-TIME LISTENER, FIRST-TIME CALLER

By: Daniel Rupp



Dan reading at the 11:45 am Mass



Dan's mom Mary, wife Taryn and sons Nate (6) and Freddie (3) at Christmas Mass in North Carolina

Some of you youngsters may not recognize what that title refers to. In the days before the internet, radio talk shows were a common form of entertainment. These shows explored topics that run the gamut: sports, politics, religion, etc. and would rely on a steady interaction between the radio host and callers to discuss the issues of the day. With this brief backdrop in mind, I would like to introduce myself to the OLMC community.

At 17 years and counting, I have been a long-time resident of Hong Kong. Having lived mostly in the Mid-Levels area, I attended Mass at St Joseph's on Garden Road but I generally kept a low profile. With my first son approaching 5 years old, I explored other congregations in the area to try to find one that felt right for the beginning of his religious formation and Sunday School. Registering him with Sr. Victoria and the kind teachers of the 10:30am English program elevated our family's profile with the church, and a few months later I was asked to help as a lector. While my parents have been eucharistic ministers and lectors their entire adult lives, I had never volunteered myself. I must admit, the first few times I read I was nervous as I do not have much experience with public speaking. I usually wear an Apple Watch and the first few times I read my heart rate would be elevated while approaching the pulpit. The Mass organizer also told me to speak a bit slower. But with guidance from Lilian Chin and some practice, I have become more relaxed and now enjoy this more active, albeit minor, role within the church.

I am usually accompanied to Mass by my two sons. They are generally well behaved in church, and I think they enjoy seeing me take part in the service. Feel free to say hi to us and should you be interested in helping with the reading, please reach out to Lilian or Sr. Victoria. When it comes to reading for OLMC, you too can be a long-time listener, first time caller!

SUNDAY BEST WITH SR. VICTORIA – BIBLE STUDY CLASSES AT OLMC

The purpose of Bible study is to collectively grasp an understanding of God through His Word. The Word of God is not merely read during the Sunday Mass liturgy. It is proclaimed. Our bible study class helps each reader grow spiritually and mentally. This is open to all. Come join us if you can. Saturday, 4:30 pm.



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