



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

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DEC
2022

THE HOMESTEAD

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year from our family to yours



Let Us Be 'Stars' - Deacon Alex Kwok

Thank God, COVID measures have relaxed before Christmas. Yet, our economy is battered by the pandemic and yet to recover. Around the city, Christmas decorations are less radiant and less vibrant. In short, festive ambience is in short supply and our mood fails to reach the Christmas climax. Suddenly, we realize how much we rely on the commercials, which stimulate us to spend money, to remind us of the birth of Christ! How true it is for many of us, that there is no room in our hearts to welcome the Holy Infant (**Luke 2:7**) > P2

**"The Word Was
Made Flesh and
Dwelt Among
Us" – Sr. Victoria
Victorino, PDDM**

Let me begin by wishing you all a truly blessed and meaningful Christmas and a grace-filled New Year 2023!

We might not be acutely aware of it, or we simply take it for granted, but it is true that our faith in God's incarnation – the heart of the Christmas celebration – has changed our lives and our world.

> P3



Let Us Be 'Stars' – Deacon Alex Kwok

Continued from P1

... Since childhood, we were told that three wise men came from the East to adore baby Jesus. The gospel of Matthew mentions that they offered three gifts, namely gold, frankincense and myrrh. Therefore, we assume that there were three wise men. Actually, the gospel is vague in the exact number. It leaves us room for imagination. Then came "*The Other Wise Man*", a novel and later movies about the adventure of the fourth wise men. Compared with the Nativity story in Matthew, which reads more like power struggles among royals, this Fourth Wise Man is more heart warming. I'm sure you have already heard of the story. If not, look up *Wikipedia*.

Despite the fact that throughout his journey Artaban, the Fourth Wise Man, failed to meet Jesus in person, he had already found Jesus the moment he helped a dying man. Later, Artaban sold his ruby to save a little boy in Bethlehem and lastly a precious pearl to ransom a slave girl in Jerusalem. In doing those works of charity, Artaban actually did it for Jesus (**Matthew 25:40**)! This novel is heart warming because who on earth have met Jesus in person? This story is narrating our actual experiences and gives us hope. Yes, we are able to meet Jesus when we extend a helping hand to the needy. This too is our aspiration. While we hold dear the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, we can also learn to see and serve his equally 'real presence' in the poor and the needy as he says in Mt. 25. May we grow in our desire to meet Jesus in the person of the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the prisoners, the sick!

As time moves on, the meaning of some symbols have changed over time. Nowadays, we take "*light*" to symbolize truth. However, during the time the gospels were written, light symbolized something else. Take a look at the following gospel verse which becomes difficult to interpret if "*light*" symbolizes "*truth*". John writes, "*through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race*" (**John 1:4**). What would "*the truth of the human race*" possibly mean? The gospel of Matthew shows the way: "*Just so, your **light** must shine before others, that they may see your **good deeds** and glorify your heavenly Father*" (**Matthew 5:16**). Therefore, during the Apostolic age, "*light*" means "*charity*" and "*love*".

Brethren! We were created in the image of God (**Genesis 1:26**) and God is love (**1 John 4:8**). Therefore, we are capable of loving to some extent. Some are capable of loving slightly with reservations while others love more fervently. Some love only the loveable while others are able to love even their persecutors. In other words, we're like stars shining in different luminosities. Furthermore, like the Star of Bethlehem which led the wise men to adore the Holy Infant, we too are stars leading people to meet the great light prophesized by the prophet. "*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone*" (**Isaiah 9:1**).

Allow me to remind you, my dear readers, that the atmosphere is not always clear and most of the time turbulent. Sometimes, dark clouds may block even sunlights, not to mention our twinkling star lights. But one thing is certain. Dark clouds do not last. So, don't complain about darkness. Keep shining, however flickering our star lights are, to lead the people in darkness to our merciful Lord, the great light in which our lights will merge! "*The one who perseveres to the end will be saved*" (**Matthew 24:13**), pledged the Lord who is certainly faithful. Amen!



“The Word Was Made Flesh and Dwelt Among Us”

Continued from P1

.... Science tries to ‘explain away’ this precious gift of God by saying that some people have a ‘goodness gene’ in them and that’s it. Or that we are inclined to be good and kind to one another because of our family history and upbringing. Is it really all that there is to it? Reflecting on the Word of God this Christmas season, let me share a few insights. The ‘Word was made flesh’ means God’s Word – his Word of Love, his Choice to Share this Love – all ‘come together’ at one unique point in time to deeply participate in our human life. Knowing our weakness and our incapacity to heal and redeem ourselves, God chose to enter our messy human reality, experience and own the troubles of human life through the person of his Son Jesus. In his choice of showing the ‘face of God’ to us, Jesus leads us to a very definite path: the path of lowliness. Usually, the normal path of human life is a ‘path of going up.’ The world presents to us models of people who ‘immortalize’ themselves by achieving fame and fortune, ever increasing popularity and possession. But Jesus’ way is opposite. It’s like the ‘way of water’ – always going down.

This is why, even in the infancy narratives in the gospels, we already hear of the pre-announcement of the passion and death of our Lord. Consider for example, the story of the Magi: one of them brought ‘myrrh.’ What does that symbolize? Myrrh is a key ingredient in the mixture of spices used to prepare the bodies for burial (see John 19:39-40). So the fathers of the Church interpret the gift of myrrh offered to baby Jesus as a sign of Jesus’ humanity and the manner in which he would save his people; he would go all the way in his love and die for us (see John 13:1). Or consider the Christmas song ‘What Child is this?’ You might not notice it but the second refrain of the song goes: ‘Nails, spear shall pierce Him through; the cross be borne for me, for you. Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the Babe, the Son of Mary.’

But of course, we know that this ‘way of lowliness’ is also the ‘path of the resurrection,’ the path of rising ‘above.’ We read this in all the gospels and in particular, we find it in the Letter to the Philippians 2:1-11. Let me end this sharing then by quoting the lines which contain both the life lesson and the reason for Christmas. “If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard

equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”



OLMC Main Page
on Facebook



OLMC Page for English Speaking
Parishioners on Facebook



OLMC Website
<http://www.olmcchurch.org.hk>



Lighting The Advent Candles



11:45 Mass ~ The Wong Family



13:30 Mass ~ The Chu Family



18:00 Mass ~ The Rosales Family

1st Candles (27.11.22)



11:45 Mass ~ The Tan Family



13:30 Mass ~ The Lee Family



18:00 Mass ~ The Yabut Family

2nd Candles (4.12.22)



11:45 Mass ~ The Li Family



13:30 Mass~ The Velasquez Family



18:00 Mass ~ The Galetea Family

3rd Candles (11.12.22)



11:45 Mass ~ The Pereira Family



13:30 Mass ~ The Kwok Family



18:00 Mass ~ The Maranan Family

4th Candles (18.12.22)

ADVENT RECOLLECTION

WHAT JESUS DO YOU
EXPECT TO MEET THIS
CHRISTMAS?



WE all know that the Advent season focuses on expectation, and it serves as an anticipation of Christ's birth in the season leading up to Christmas.

The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word "adventus", meaning "coming," which translates to the Greek word "Parousia". Scholars believe that during the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God's incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (**Matthew 2:1**), his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (**John 1:29**), and his first miracle at Cana (**John 2:1**). During this season of preparation, Christians would spend 40 days in penance, prayer, and fasting to prepare for this celebration.

Advent symbolizes the present situation of the Church in these "last days" (**Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2**) as God's people wait for the return of Christ in glory to consummate his eternal kingdom. This Advent hymn perfectly represents the church's cry during the Advent season:

O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here, Until the Son of God appears. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eo56VIgklnI>





*If Jesus Were Born Today
Performed by English Sunday School Afternoon Session*



Do Not Be Afraid

[Reference liturgical readings for the 4th Sunday of Advent (Year 2022): Gospel *Matthew 1:18-24*; 1st reading *Isaiah 7:10-14*; 2nd reading *Romans 1:1-7*.]

The gospel reading is the narration *how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. (Mt 1:18)*. As we know there is an annunciation to Mary by angel Gabriel, and this time, we have an annunciation to Joseph in a dream...*Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home (Mt 1:19-24)*.

In our life there are a lot of good things that come. However, these good things arrive in the most unexpected times which we call 'blessings in disguise.' We often think that various situation and life encounters with problems bring us inconveniences. Blessings may come in the irony of our life; this is because such 'blessings in disguise' bring us results not according to our own personal plan. Such ironies may come in the form of a defeat, a failure, a disaster or a suffering. But through God's boundless grace and mercy there is blessing in it that we can't recognize and understand right away as God has a much better plan for us. It may appear then that every misfortune that comes our way can become an opportunity for blessing. Joseph and Mary have their marriage plans; all these disappeared after the angel gave good news to Mary that she will conceive Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we may ask, was this good news, for Mary to bear a child without physical contact? How can anyone believe then that Jesus is conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit? Nowadays, we believed that such conception may happen as it happened more than 2,000 years ago. During the time of Joseph, it was difficult to accept and understand such conception as there was nothing before in history to prove that such conception happened. However, Joseph believed it as the angel told him..."*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her (Mt 1:20)*.

Thus, in the process of turning our misfortunes into blessings, do not be afraid! How to turn our fear into a source of our strength and faith? Do not be afraid! What we need in addressing our own fear is inner strength and strong faith. If we don't have the courage and won't dare to work hard in overcoming our hardships in life, how will we get up? As God is with us (*Mt 1:23*), let us allow Him to transform our lives. Allow Him to lead us into a better plan that is according to His will, and let Him work in our life to turn our misfortune into blessing.

We pray for God's grace: May He always guide us to have courage and strong faith, that we may not be afraid and that we may cooperate with him so that His will may be done.



Christmas Reunion



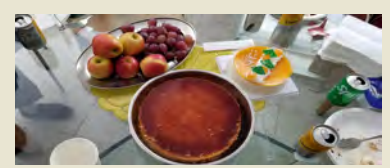
Heavenly Father, we are all gathered here for our **Christmas Party**. May you bless us with your generosity and love so that everyone present here would be able to partake of the joy of your birth.

Allow us to share with one another your all-abounding love, just as you have showed us. Bless all our families, friends and everyone, so that as we enjoy this **Christmas party**, we would also realize that this is a celebration of your birthday; that **Christmas** is not about expensive gifts and grand parties but it is about love and generosity to everyone, especially the underprivileged.

Make us realize that in celebrating your birthday, we should also spread joy and love not only here in this party but also when we leave this venue.

Bestow your **Divine Wisdom** so we would be able to make every day a **Christmas** day from this day onwards.

Bless this **Christmas Party** so that everyone will have fun in a Christian atmosphere. We ask all these through your son, **Jesus Christ**. Amen.





The Promise of God

– by Charlene Lampacan

“So do not fear, for I am with you, do not be dismayed for I am your God, I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)

Twelve years ago, when my flight to Hong Kong was already confirmed and the agency handed me my ticket, that was the only time it dawned on me that I would be leaving my family. I would be leaving the life that I was used to, leaving the comfort and protection of my family. I was embarking on a journey to a foreign land where I do not know anyone, and do not know anything. A feel of uncertainty and fear crept slowly into my whole being, a sudden burst of unexplainable emotions followed. I locked myself in my room and had a good cry with the Lord. For the first time, I humbled myself and offer all my worries and concerns to Him.

That was the first time I acknowledged that I cannot do anything and I will be lost without Him. I had a moment of silence and I listened to Him and these were His words for me, which I hold up to these days. “So do not fear, for I am with you, do not be dismayed for I am your God, I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)

All these years I have been in Hong Kong, the Lord kept his promise since the first day up to now. He blessed me with good employers. He led me to a great community where I get to know more about Him. In this community I received an overflowing love, I was pampered and was spoiled. I got too much support and encouragement. I was well protected and guided by this wonderful people. But at some point, because of too much love and protection from the community, I became vulnerable. When I received a demeaning comment from outside the group I felt broken and all the confidence that I used to have collapsed. I left that community and became a loner. I allowed myself to be alone for months and I wallowed on that person’s opinion about me.

But thankfully, God did not let me stay on that situation for too long. He used another person to wake me up and go back to Him. I received a call from a good friend inviting me to attend mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel church. This started another journey, the journey to become a member of the Legion of Mary began. I was so excited when I first met all the members. Everyone was so happy to see me, and they were so friendly and kind. A new community, new family, new friends. I started as a visitor, and after encouragement and few good words from the members, I agreed to become a probationary. Everything seemed so smooth. I enjoyed attending the meetings, I was always excited to go for home visitations, and also visiting the home for the elderly.

And time flew fast and I needed to decide to make a promise to our Lady. I was so reluctant and always asked the officers of the group to delay it, because I was not ready for a commitment. I was always doubting if I was in the right group. And at that time, I was also having an emotional conflict: my patience and obedience was being tested as I was also struggling to overcome an unfavourable treatment from someone in the group. And also, in my thoughts I was afraid it will not be easy because I might not fulfil my duty as a legionary. After almost a year in that situation, through the encouragement and words of wisdom from the members and their prayers, I accepted what I believe is a part of God’s plan for me. I made a promise to our Lady on 27 November 2016 and I became a full-pledged member of the Legion of Mary.

My growth as a member was slow, but a lot has happened in my life. I had the privilege to teach in OLMC Sunday School and I had fun with the children. I visited the prison and wrote letters too, I visited the elderly and the sick, and I also met wonderful and beautiful people along the way. Furthermore, I managed to lessen my stubbornness. I can say I am slightly more obedient now and determined to extend a little bit of my patience. I learned to be more understanding and to listen more to others. I have learned to focus on God and not on people and always asked for Mama Mary’s guidance for me to follow her virtues. I always try to remember that everything that I do is for the glory of God. I am still lacking in many aspects and I know I have a long way to go, but through the guidance of our Lady and with the prayers of the OLMC community, I hope to become a better person and a faithful legionary.

The Promise of God

Continued from P10

My dearest sisters and friends, OLMC family, thank you so much for your love, for your guidance, for the friendship. Thank you for all your advice, words of wisdom, encouragement and blessings. Thank you for the wonderful memories. And most of all thank you so much for all your prayers. I will forever be grateful to all of you! I love you. I will miss you all. See you in the Philippines!



Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses

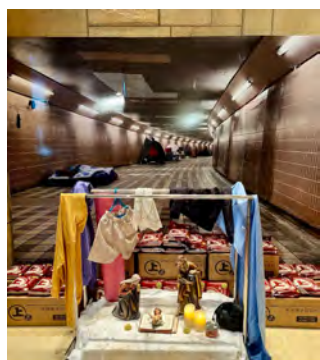




Christmas Caroling

Every Christmas, when the circumstances allow it, we will go carolling to spread the spirit of Christmas because it is a way of telling the story of the nativity and the birth of Jesus Christ. This year, we sang Christmas carols to the homeless, street cleaners, the underprivileged. We also sang at Lee Tung Avenue, to the community of Wanchai.

On the Streets



And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace to those whom his favour rests." (Luke 2:13-14)



Rabboni Choir



Bethany Choir

