



Fr. Law's Christmas and End of Year Message



Brothers and sisters:
Emmanuel! The Lord is with you!

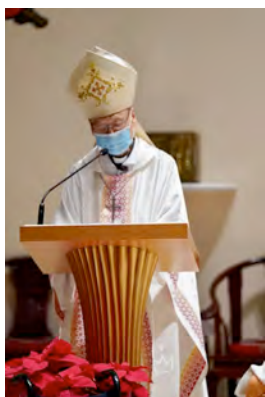
During the three years from 2019 to 2022, our church, our society, and the world have experienced unprecedented shocks. However, Acts 18:9-10 says: The Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent, for I am with you. No one will attack and harm you, for I have many people in this city." Suddenly, I felt that the Lord was speaking to me personally and to everyone too.

This year, for the Christmas season, our church has at least eight mangers of various types. Every manger has what Proverbs 14:4 says, "Where there are no oxen, the crib is clean; but abundant crops come through the strength of the bull". And so, I thought how can there be no cow shit in the manger? The Lord Jesus was born in such a messy world. He never gave up on any of us; He came to save me, with all "my cow shit".

What is more, on the day of Epiphany, in addition to the three kings in our manger, there are also innocent babies who were killed in memory of the unknown martyrs.

Let us then encourage each other! Pray for each other!

Fr. Thomas Law





A Big Christmas Dung

By: Deacon Alex Kwok

By the time this edition of Homestead lands on your desk, the Chinese Lunar New Year shall be just around the corner. May I take this opportunity to wish you and your beloved ones a fruitful and safe Lunar Year ahead, not just the 2022 New Year.

Biblical scholars who specialized in typology claim that Old Testament figures are “pre-figures” of Jesus Christ and events are “pre-figures” of the age of the Church. For example, Noah’s Ark is a common symbol of the Church. Isaac who carried the wood for the burnt offering to ascend Moriah (Genesis 22:6-8) was a pre-figure of Jesus Christ who carried the cross to ascend Mount Calvary. Joseph who was sold by his brothers into Egypt was also a pre-figure of Jesus Christ who was betrayed by one of His disciples. The burning bush symbolizes the perpetual virginity of the BVM. The crossing of the Red Sea is a pre-figure of the Sacrament of baptism. The life of Jeremiah the prophet was reminiscent of Jesus Christ’s for telling the truth etc. ...

We do not need to be biblical experts to be able to see the symbolism. Here I would like to invite you to discover the highlights of our crib decorations this year. Yes, I am sure none of you would have missed the “oxen dung” around our different cribs. In our daily life, there’s nothing likeable we are able to find in dung because a lot of unimaginable microorganisms are living inside and outside of it. Its shape and colours are disgusting and its smell nauseating. The worst of all, it attracts flies, thus spreading diseases ... etc. I suppose the last thing you want to appear in your nightmares is to find yourself chained inside a dungeon of dung! Perhaps you have not read it. Jeremiah the prophet, who was accused of treason by his enemies, was thrown into a dungeon where “there was no water but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.” (Jeremiah 38:6) It takes little imagination to reason why there was dirt and mud in the dungeon. The dungeon was nothing but a septic tank to dispose of the human wastes collected in the royal palace! Pardon me for being gross! This was exactly what I felt when Fr. Law decorated the cribs in our church with pieces of “oxen dung” this year.

His inspiration came from a verse one of our parishioners told him, “Where there are no oxen, the crib is clean; but abundant crops come through the strength of the bull.” (Proverbs 14:4) The book of Proverbs is a collection of aphorisms contrasting the life of the wise against the foolish. In this context, the author of the Proverbs was probably encouraging his readers to work diligently like a bull! But Fr. Law took the cue and combined it with the Christmas message of our Bishop this year: “Emmanuel”, i.e. the Lord be with us! All of us are the “oxen dung”. No matter how lowly and smelly we are, our Lord is happy to accompany us. No matter how bullshit our personalities are, Jesus Christ is willing to die for us. Like all innocent children, had the Blessed Virgin Mary left the Holy Infant crawling around the floor to explore the world, Infant Jesus would have been excited to discover the warmth the manure he was massaging around his crib, remembering prophet Jeremiah whom He had sent to speak the truth.

Brethren! Fr. Law made use of every means to remind us of the plights of the needy: wheelchairs, bags of rice and Christmas muffins. Therefore what the homeless eat, we eat. Where the fragile sit, we sit with them! This is the meaning of Christmas. May I challenge you one step further. Dare you to suffer like Jeremiah in a dungeon of dung for the sake of telling God’s truth in the present milieu of Hong Kong?





He Shall Be PEACE (Micah 5:4)

By: Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM

Thanks be to God, Christmas this year 2021 appears to be a bit 'better' than last year. The pandemic is not yet over but we have resumed our community celebrations, though still conditioned by some needed restrictions. We were even able to push through with the organized parish pilgrimage and Advent recollection this year, gathering a good number of participants from the different groups of our English community.

I am so grateful that notwithstanding the seeming instability of the present day society, we are able to let **PEACE** reign in our hearts. This for me is a solid proof of the Lord's presence in our lives, our families and our communities. You see, one of the most beautiful Christmas 'titles' of our Lord is found in Isaiah 9:6 and I

wish we could repeat this in our hearts during this Christmas time and beyond: *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace.**"* How do we continue to cultivate this peaceful presence of our Lord in our lives? May I suggest 5 things which I creatively compose from the word **PEACE**.

P –ilgrimage. Our life is a pilgrimage, a journey, and we must continue to move on. It is true, life sometimes stops us straight on our tracks; some events cause us to get 'stuck' at one point or another. But believe me, our pilgrimage is not a cul-de-sac, a dead-end road. I hope that after we have reflected and learned the meaning of the moment, we can gradually trust life again to lead us to the next step of the journey.

E –mmanuel (God with us). This is the name of God (see Mt 1:23), a Hebrew word which literally means, 'with us is God.' And this God journeys with us, through our Lord Jesus and his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is a giver of gifts: Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Piety, Fear of the Lord. These gifts cover all aspects of our life and relationships: with ourselves, with others, with our God. We cannot ask for more.

A –gape (Love). The most beautiful name of God in the New Testament: "God is love" (see 1 Jn 4:8), Love that springs from goodness, from sheer grace. In fact, God's giving of his Son Jesus for our salvation is 'grace upon grace.' Jesus' acceptance to be one of us, the mystery of his Incarnation, is a perfect act of love. In this act of love, he has raised our humanity to a totally new dimension, the dimension of other-centeredness. Believe me, with this love of God active in our lives, we can learn to go beyond ourselves and free ourselves from that slavish mentality that 'life-is-all-about-me.'

C -ommunion (Koinonia). If we believe that we are participants in the grace, love and fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (cf 2 Cor 13:14), then we are able to recognize the image of the Trinity in others as well. When this happens, we are able to walk in synergy, we are able to journey together, with the persons closest to us and even those from afar, in terms of culture, age, social class, even beliefs. In fact, this is one of the motives why Pope Francis decided on the Theme of the Synod 2021-2023 to be focused on Communion-Mission-Participation. There are many persons still remaining on the margins that we need to recognize and invite as dialogue partners in the Church. We need to work together intensely and intentionally to reach out to them. Our OLMC parish has long started to practice this not only through our liturgical celebrations and evangelization activities but especially through the Friday activity of the volunteers who go around the streets of Hong Kong reaching out to the marginalized members of the society.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

He Shall Be PEACE (cont'd)

E –ucharist (Thanksgiving). Our coming together at the Eucharistic banquet is a great act of thanksgiving, initiated, first of all, by our Lord Jesus Christ (cf Lk 22:19). Through the power of his Holy Spirit, this act of gratitude flows upon us believers in the offering of our lives. I believe that the 'liturgy of life' is one thing we need to learn to practice, overcoming the separation of our Sunday worship from the rest of our life during the week. Learning to be thankful at all times is one of the best ways to do this: discern and determine daily what things we should be grateful for, imprint them "in our memories" or even write them on our journals, and most importantly, express the word of thanks to persons who deserve it.

To end, let me express my gratitude to Fr. Law and all of the OLMC Staff especially those of our English-speaking community who make our pilgrimage of life a delightful and peaceful journey in the Lord. A blessed and merry Christmas to all! And a New Year full of the Presence of Christ, the Prince of Peace!

Lighting the 2nd Advent Candle – LOVE (5 Dec)



11:45 Pereira family



13:30 Maryanne & Angel



18:00 Gatela family



Lighting the 3rd Advent Candle – JOY (12 Dec)



11:45 Tan family



13:30 Wu family



18:00 Hatherly Family



Lighting the 4th Advent Candle – PEACE (19 Dec)



11:45 Li family



13:30 Hadiwidjaja family



18:00 Li family

The Homestead – DEC 2021

Living Rosary Group

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2022 December Birthday Stars

By: Jenny Cheung

December this year 2021 was very much different from last year!

Last year 2020 as I came from Sydney, I had to do the mandatory 14 days hotel quarantine followed by an extra 7 days of home quarantine. Within that period, by the end of December, I lost my beloved mum! I was very sad then and my faith was at once weakened! However, after the introduction to the Living Rosary Prayer Group of OLMC by my long time friend, Shirley Li, a dedicated parishioner of OLMC, my faith was again strengthened.

Since then I have been connected back to the praying of the Rosary weekly via zoom; and later with the easing of COVID regulations our prayer group could have our rosary prayer meeting in person mostly at OLMC Church!

However, for the Prayer meeting on 9 December, I had the honor to invite the group to hold the rosary prayer meeting at my home as I had to say goodbye to them all due to my return to Sydney on 12 December ! I felt blessed as most of the sisters of the group came together with Sr. Victoria, Sr. Regina and Sr. Fatima. For our very special guest we had baby Anna with her mummy Christine! The meeting was memorable to me as I received abundant blessings and gifts! In addition, we ended with a joyful lunch together!

I am grateful to all sisters of the group giving me support and encouragement while I was in Hong Kong and I continue to seek spiritual guidance by connecting with everyone weekly via zoom. May God bless us all!



Let us rejoice to the coming of Christ our Lord.
Wishing everyone a joyful blessed Christmas and a
Happy New Year 2022!

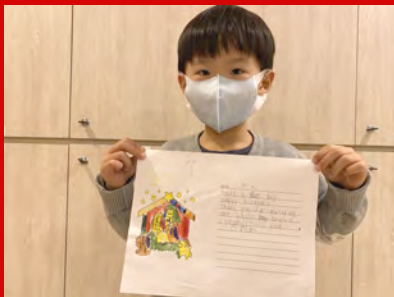


The Homestead – DEC 2021

English Sunday School

This Christmas season, Class 1B prepared birthday cards for Jesus to express their gratitude and joy. The age of the students is 6 years old. Do spare a moment to appreciate the work of these young artists!

By: Teacher Gwen Mailig



Alfons Leung with his card



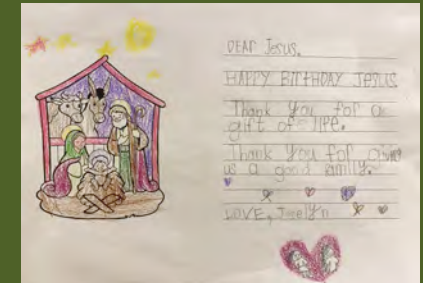
Alfons Leung's card



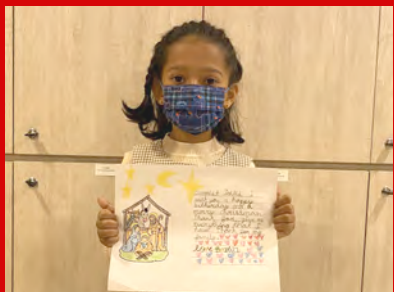
L-R: Emelia, Joselyn, Alfons, Nicole



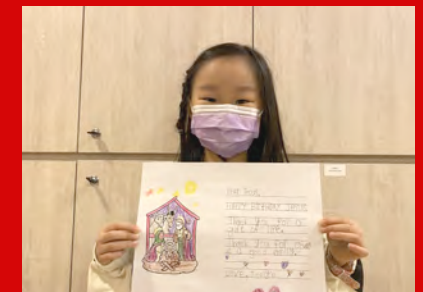
Emelia Matthias's card



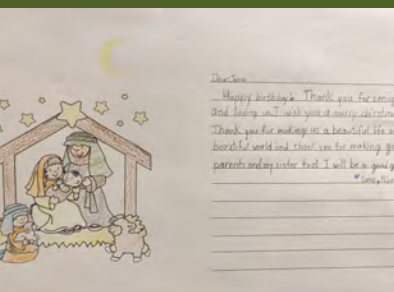
Joselyn Liong's card



Emelia Matthias with her card



Joselyn Liong with her card



Nicole Ng's card



Nicole Ng with her card



Teacher Remy assisting 1B students

The Homestead – DEC 2021

English Sunday School

This is Class 1A, the youngest children in OLMC's English Sunday School. Currently there are 5 children in this class, aged between 4 and 5 years old, headed by Teacher Joanne, Jovita and Enric. The class enacted the nativity scene, with the children dressed up as Mama Mary, Joseph, shepherds and the 3 Kings. They had their favourite stuff toys as the stable animals as well.

By: Teachers of Class 1A

Celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ



Look at how adorable they are!



The Homestead – DEC 2021

English Sunday School & Community

Confirmation

By: Connie Wong

5 December 2021

The people of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Hong Kong, welcome the Candidates for Confirmation. We rejoice with you at the new gift you have received. We are proud of you and congratulate you for the progress you have made as you grow in faith and deepen your love for Jesus. In the sacrament of Confirmation you receive in a new way the gifts of the Holy Spirit which were first bestowed on you at your Baptism. They strengthen your faith and enliven your hope. They confirm you in your knowledge and experience of God's love for you. May the Holy Spirit accompany you each day of your life.

As your faith develops further we invite you to place your personal gifts at the service of all your brothers and sisters. Join the other members of our Church as we praise God and work to transform the world according to His divine saving plan. Let our caring for each other show all the people we meet that we are faithful disciples of our Lord and Saviour. In this way we will offer hope to a world that is anxiously searching for meaning in these difficult but also exciting and challenging times. We assure you of our love and offer you our ongoing support and prayers.



Congratulations to:
Maria Kirana LARASATI
Charlene LAMPACAN
Daniel MARANAN
Angel QUILLOPE
Andrew ROWE
Simon ROWE
Julienna RUIZ
Augustine TAN
Adrian WU



Preparation

[This LBS Corner reference is from the 2nd Sunday of Advent (Year 2021): Gospel [Luke 3:1-6](#); 1st reading [Baruch 5:1-9](#); 2nd reading [Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11](#).]



The gospel reading presented us the preparation for the announcement of Jesus coming, and so it was narrated that... *In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, (Lk 3:1).* These are the situations during those times so history could affirm the facts that the gospel gave when the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert (Lk 3:2).

Before Jesus started His teaching and healing, the preparation has been going on in the desert, where John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Lk 3:3-6). The season of Advent provides us with an opportunity to prepare for the first coming of Jesus, where John the Baptist is Jesus's precursor to remind us and help us in our preparation to welcome His spiritual coming each



Christmas into our lives and hearts to look back and reflect at our personal journey and straighten our path towards Him. Also, the gospel reading from Luke emphasizes the importance of Jesus's coming by highlighting how Isaiah prophesied not only the Jesus coming but even the appearance of John the Baptist.

Our LBS's connection for the 2nd Sunday of Advent Year 2021 is to "[Remain pure and blameless and discern what is of value are some of the ways we can prepare for His coming.](#)," with a collective call to action to "[pray for the LBS community and our families and loved ones](#) St. Paul's prayer to the Philippians "...that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God" a messenger of hope to someone".

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

Sacrament of Confirmation

A Journey to Become a Soldier of Jesus Christ

By: Julienna Ruiz



As I have been preparing to enter the religious life since last year, I realized that I did not have my certificate of confirmation. It is one of the requirements for my entry to the convent. When I was in my elementary days I thought I was already confirmed. But when I asked my parents about my certificate they said that they could not find it. So I told them to look everywhere, maybe it was in the old bookshelves. But they said that it was really nowhere to be found. Hence in July this year, Sr. Victoria suggested that I attend the catechism class together with another candidate for confirmation who is also a Filipina so that we will be confirmed together.

Confirmation is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. It is one of the foundational sacraments together with Baptism. Baptism is the first Sacrament, which is very important because it is the beginning of new life in Christ, in the sense that it washes away our original sin, which our first parents committed by disobeying the Father. On this Sacrament is added the Sacrament of Confirmation. I have to admit that I struggled in the catechism class since we were doing it on Sunday afternoons after late lunch, hence I found myself really sleepy. It was also because some words were difficult to understand. That is why what our teachers did was to explain it in our own language which is Tagalog. And the other teacher also used our native dialect which is Ilocano. It is more comfortable for us and to our teachers to explain it to us in very understandable words. Learning about the sacrament of confirmation is at the same time enjoyable especially when we were asked to share what was in our thoughts. Most of the time we explain it in our way, causing our teachers to laugh very hard. Learning again in my old age is something very unusual for me. Sometimes my whole being seemed to be there but actually my mind was flying somewhere else. But with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ together with our Mother Mary and all the angels and saints we overcame all the obstacles. Thank you to our teachers who gave us their time, love, patience, dedication and compassion for teaching us. We are really so grateful.

Then came 5 December 2021. During the 1:30 pm Mass in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Wanchai, the day that we were all waiting for arrived. Together with 7 other candidates from the Sunday Catechism class, we celebrated the rite of confirmation officiated by Fr. Hyacinth He, OP. The church was filled with the usual parishioners from different places, with the addition of our godparents and the parents of the younger candidates. Through the live streaming service provided by OLMC broadcast team, our families in the Philippines and elsewhere were able to 'participate and be present' with us on that day.

Fr. Hyacinth mentioned in his homily how in the Sacrament of Confirmation, we are sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and are enlisted in the service of Christ forever. Hence we are considered sacramentally mature and become strong witnesses of the gospel. We can stand for the truth because we are given the wisdom to discern what is right and what is wrong. Sharing in the mission of Christ, we are called to spread and defend our faith. With the power of the Holy Spirit, our lives become 'fragrant offering' filled with the aroma of Christ. We also learned from our teachers how we become perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ as we continue in this stage of maturation. Fr. Thomas Law, our parish priest, present in the occasion, reminded us also of the anointing that we received through Confirmation. "Christ" literally means 'anointed one' and with the anointing that we receive we are totally associated to the life and mission of Christ.

I am so grateful to my two godparents who accepted my invitation and joined me on this special day. Our godparents are true witnesses of Christ. They faithfully fulfill the duties entrusted by Jesus to act like our parents to watch over us, help us and remind us to live our Christian life more devoutly. Thank you very much indeed to my friends in the English speaking community of OLMC and OLMBS who always gave me their full support. Above all, thank you to my teachers for their compassion and dedication and most of all for their understanding. Thank you especially to Sr. Victoria, my guardian angel, who has always been there to guide me and give her support all the way. May God be praised for all the persons who helped me in this process and in my pilgrimage of faith.

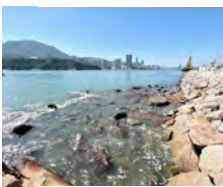
A Pilgrim's Way Journeying Together With The Lord

By: Ernie Basilio

On 19 December 2021, the ministries of the different OLMC English masses, English Sunday School teachers and Legion of Mary, went for our pilgrimage and advent recollection at St. James' Church in Yau Tong.

Our pilgrimage that day took us to the coastal area of Lei Yue Mun. Weaving our way through the string of seafood restaurants, it was easy to get lost and because we had to keep ourselves socially distanced, it was easy to get separated from the group. The hike was so much fun, from the lighthouse to Tin Hau Temple. There was also a lot of colourful street art and murals along the way. Our lunch stop was at the old Lei Yue Mun quarry, where we divided into small groups and sat together to eat, like the feeding of the multitude in the multiplication of the bread. And indeed, it was! I came with a sandwich and a bag of fruits and I ended up feasting on fried fish, vegetables and rice. It was such a blessing. After lunch (and a few more photos), our final stop was the Church of St. James for our Advent Recollection.

Fr. Francis V. Mahilum, CICM who is the assistant Parish Priest, extended a warm welcome to us. An explanation about the church was given by Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM, followed by Mass presided by Fr. Ambrose Mong. A pilgrimage is more than just traveling to historic sites and viewing religious relics, it is a journey of faith, to feel closer to the Lord.



The Homestead – DEC 2021

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

JOURNEY INTO MY HEART (CHAPTER 2)

Attraction to The Word



How did this relationship start? What were the markers along the way?

As a child, I used to be fascinated by Bible stories. But that fascination soon wore out as other interests took over. In high school, being enrolled in a parochial school helped me rediscover the fascination, especially with the help of a very creative and resourceful priest director of the school. I remember even winning in a contest and receiving the prize of a two-volume illustrated Bible, which I read avidly. In this sense, I could say that I have read the whole Bible as a youth and I was able to gain a primary idea of the history of Israel, the life of our Lord Jesus and his followers. However, this knowledge and interest was again suffocated as I started college life in a highly secular state university. I should confess though that my fascination with Israel as the people of God did not completely disappear. I remember that one of my research works in English literature at that time was entitled 'Is Israel really the people of God?' Very strange title for paper work, but my professor accepted it. Perhaps she was curious too!

It wasn't so obvious to me then, but I guess the good Lord was intent on catching up and winning me back. My closest friend in college, Rowena Rivera (now a prominent ob-gyne doctor) belonged to the Presbyterian denomination and was very much interested in the Bible. So she used to invite me to their Bible study group where I recovered my attraction to the Word of God. It is from this group that I learned how the Word, which could appear as 'history' to some, re-connects my origins to the present, the now. The group introduced me to *The Way*, known at that time as the new living translation of the Bible. That captivated me and since then, the Word of God has been my constant companion, guide, inspiration.

This was the first significant marker in my love relationship with God. His son Jesus, the Word-made-flesh (Jn 1:14) penetrated the depths of my heart. Knowingly or unknowingly, Jesus 'grew' in me, as his Word exerted its mysterious energy in me. His Word became my living and powerful companion throughout the journey of life.

To be continued...



OLMC Main Page
on Facebook



OLMC Page for English Speaking
Parishioners on Facebook



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

