



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

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SUMMER 2023

THE HOMESTEAD



OLMC is undergoing a major renovation which started on 24 June. As a result, some Masses are celebrated in St. Francis Canossian School next to the Church, and some in the lobby of OLMC.

If you would like to make a general contribution towards OLMC's church renovation, please click <https://www.olmcchurch.org.hk/en/forms> or if you wish to contribute specifically towards the benches or helping the English Speaking Community on replacing the curtains behind the altar, please scan:

Benches



Thank
You and
God Bless



Curtains

What Happened to Summer? It has Come and Gone in a Blink of an Eye!

At the start of summer, the church was unusually quiet, as the English Sunday School children went on their summer break (11 June to 8 October). But they are now back, freshly recharged and ready for more classroom fun!

Let us do a recap of major events this summer. On 17 June, Patrick Leung who is known to many of you, was ordained a Permanent Deacon. On 8 July, relics of about 150 saints arrived in Hong Kong for all to visit. This is a true blessing for Catholics in Hong Kong as we get to experience the living presence of God through these relics. On 20 July, our beloved Fr. Francis Elsinger was called home to the Lord. He will be missed dearly by many in Hong Kong. On 30 September, Bishop Stephen Chow was elevated to Cardinal by Pope Francis. Wow, what an unforgettable summer!

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Let Us Pray For A Eucharistic Life

By: Deacon Alex Kwok

After nearly a month of relocation preparations, our church renovation is in full swing. Masses are celebrated in two different venues: OLMC at Star Street 1 and St. Francis' Canossian School Chapel next door, less than a hundred metres away. Our parish priest Fr. Thomas Law ensures that there are enough priests to celebrate; sufficient number of extraordinary ministers, acolytes, lectors, choristers and ushers to serve masses because the Eucharistic celebration *"is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the font from*

which all her power flows" (SC #10)¹. The parish has the obligation to provide enough number of masses in a solemn and decent environment for all parishioners and visitors to draw strength from so that *"Nobody is left out"*.

Our Lord who promises to give us living water (John 7:38) is the font. To honour His pledge to accompany us until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20), Jesus Christ who is now seated at the right hand of the Father, defending us as our Mediator (Isaiah 53:12; 1 Timothy 2:5) against Satan's accusations day and night (Revelation 12:10), makes Himself present among us in at least four different manners.

1. John the Apostle and Evangelist tells us that Jesus Christ is the Word of God with whom the Father created the known universe (John 1:1-3). For our sake, God inspires elected people to write and hand down His Word for posterity. We encounter Jesus Christ when we read the Bible in a prayerful manner.
2. *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). Thus, when Catholics come together to pray, Jesus is present among us. The Eucharistic celebration is the most comprehensive manner of community prayer. We confess our sins, listen to the Word of God and sing psalms to thank and praise the Lord together.
3. During the Last Supper, Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist (26:26-28). When we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in mass, we become one with Him (John 6:56) and one with all who participate in the same Eucharist all over this planet.
4. Lastly, Jesus reveals to us that we are able to serve Him among the poor, the needy, the marginalized and the abused, *"And the King will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"* (Matthew 25:40). Thus, we continue to visit the homeless at eleven different locations all over Hong Kong during the renovation project on Friday evenings.

Brethren! What else has our Lord not done to make Himself accessible and available? Now, the ball is in our court. If you are unable to spare time reading the Bible on a daily basis, you can at least stop to pray for a mere five minutes a day. If you do not know what to pray for, look around you to see what is happening in your neighbourhood, in this city or even a wider region. Matthew 25:40 quoted above might inspire your prayer. If you are overwhelmed by so many things happening around you that you are tired of making choices, why don't you join the Pope to pray for the challenges facing humanity? At the beginning of each year, the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (aka **Apostleship of Prayer**) will publish the Papal prayer intentions for the whole year for us to pray.

What a remarkable coincidence! While we start renovating our church, the Apostleship of Prayer will pray for a Eucharistic life in July, namely that Catholics may place the celebration of the Eucharist at the heart of their lives, transforming human relationships in a very deep way and opening to the encounter with God and all their brothers and sisters. I suggest you make this your prayer intention during this renovation project. If you would like to know more, check out the following website². God bless!

¹ Sacrosanctum Concilium, Vatican II Constitution (1963)

² <https://popesprayerusa.net>

THE HOMESTEAD – SUMMER 2023

Pastoral



Mother Mary's Presence and Protection

By: Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM

As you might have noticed, on the Parish Feastday of Our Lady of Mount Carmel this year 2023, we were not able to celebrate solemnly like in the past. Understandably, it is because all our energies and attention are focused on the renovation of our Parish Church. Under the leadership of our beloved Parish Priest, Fr. Thomas Law, the process of the ongoing Church renovation is foreseen to run till the month of October, perhaps even November this year. Nonetheless, we hope that this will not

lessen our zeal in celebrating the liturgy and in carrying out our specific ministries in OLMC.

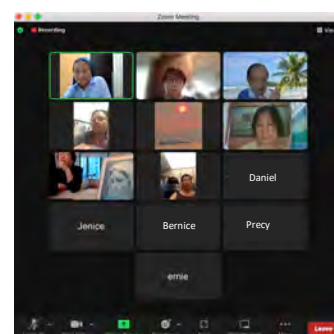
There is one specific ministry that I would like to highlight here – our ministry of charity. In these summer months, we noticed the recent upsurge of the number of Filipina domestic helpers who come to our Church asking for help because they lost their jobs. The motives are varied: relocation of employers, financial problems of employers, communication problems and misunderstanding, sometimes abusive relationships that end in labor case, and the like. It is sad and worrying that these things continue to happen. And how we wish that our migrant workers here in the city may truly take to heart what Fr. Law keep on repeating whenever he has the opportunity: ‘plan your life and do not stay too long in this city; save your money for yourself and for your ‘honey’ (your family) and never borrow or lend money that will bring about complications and rupture in relationships.”

Let us present this ministry and this appeal to the intercession of our Blessed Mother, the Lady of Mount Carmel. We pray that there may be a wider vision and a global action that will help ‘liberate’ people from material and spiritual poverty. We invoke her intercession so that fraternal solidarity may grow and may lead each of us to be aware of the needs of the people around us.

Our fervent prayer: “Mary, you are our model and guide in bringing the needs of the people to your Son Jesus. As you helped the couple during the Wedding at Cana, pointing out to your Son “they have no wine,” assist us too that we may be awakened to the presence of the needy people around us. Teach us to intercede for them, and whenever and however we can, to extend a listening ear or a helping hand. Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us and increase Christ’s charity in us.”

SUNDAY BEST – Bible Study with Sr. Victoria

Joining a Bible study is an important part of developing a deeper faith and understanding of God's word. It can be a rewarding experience as it helps us to grow spiritually by engaging in meaningful conversations about the scriptures, gaining fresh perspectives, and learning valuable life lessons. Remember, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness; so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Come and join us in person, or via Zoom (Every Saturday, 4:30 – 5:30 pm).



THE HOMESTEAD – SUMMER 2023

QMC's New Permanent Deacon

My Vocation to Permanent Deacon

By: Deacon Patrick Leung

I was ordained as Permanent Deacon of the Hong Kong Diocese on 17 June 2023. Alleluia!

Before 2008, I was still an atheist; I tried to look for an answer about the end-point of human beings. In November 2007, I attended a talk in Hong Kong on Buddhism conducted by the famous Master Hsing Yun, and then a Christianity talk by the famous Rev. Dr. Franklin Graham; I reckoned that Buddhism was a better way for me to get an answer to my question. Besides, I have already finished reading the entire bible on my own about 30 years ago, but I could not find anything interesting in it at that time. My wife, Garley, has been a Catholic since 1999; she kept praying for my conversion to Catholic throughout the years. And she took an initiative to look for a good catechumenate class for me in St. Andrew's Parish which was near to our home. At that time, I was very busy with my job and my voluntary promotional work in karate-do, and thus I barely have any spare time on other matters. Eventually Garley identified a new class conducted by Father Peter Lo, and thus she invited me to attend. Due to the hardness of my heart, I refused to attend the class and replied to the invitation by saying, "Do not bother "uncle" (me), you go on your own!".

Without giving up, Garley invited me again a couple of weeks later by saying, "In the class, Father Lo talks about bible stories which are very interesting, you may like to listen". I thought that the bible stories told by a Priest might be more interesting than reading them by myself, so I replied to Garley, "I will attend once but without any commitment, please do not blame me if I do not go again."

So Garley prayed to the Lord by saying, "My Lord, did you hear that? You have only one chance to convert Patrick, I put him in your hands". The following week, we both attended the catechumenate class; Father Lo did not tell any bible stories, instead he talked about the seven deadly sins. He explained the first sin, "Pride", in great details with lots of examples; I realized that God was talking about me, God even knew everything deeply in my heart which I was not even aware of until it was spoken out by Father Lo. At that moment, I admitted that there is a true God; and I converted that evening itself. I finished the whole catechumenate class and received baptism in St. Andrew's Parish in April 2009; I took the Christian name "Augustine" to signify too late had I loved God.

I bought a brand-new luxury German car to fulfil my long-time desire shortly before my baptism. I was so proud to drive the car to the parish to attend Mass every Sunday. In March 2010, I joined a "Seven Day's Poverty Living Experience". The programme made participants experience how the grassroots live in the society. Every participant could only use a maximum of HK\$400 in seven days.



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OLMC's New Permanent Deacon

My Vocation to Permanent Deacon (continued from P4)

So, I could not drive my beloved car in those seven days anymore; instead, I took public transportation and spent the transportation time to read some books about St. Francis of Assisi. In my reading, I was so inspired by St. Francis that I became fond of living frugally like the Saint.

After the experience, whenever I drove the luxury car to the parish, vanity made me felt great pressure and guilty inside. Without hesitation, I sold the luxury car and bought a basic Japanese car instead. I felt exceptional happy in driving the basic car and experienced some callings from God thereafter.

With the consensus of Garley, I submitted an enquiry form to the Diocesan Commission for Permanent Diaconate in September 2012 for further discernment. In December 2015, I was accepted by the Commission as an Aspirant to go through a systematic formation programme on spiritual, theological, and pastoral training. In April 2018, I was elected a Candidate; and a few months afterwards, I was deployed to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church ("OLMC") to practice "word" and "liturgy" under the guidance and supervision of Fr. Thomas Law. I was also deployed to the Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Workers, Shek Pik Prison and Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre to practice "charity". "Word", "Liturgy" and "Charity" are the three key roles of a Permanent Deacon. In August 2019 and May 2021, the ministries of Lector and Acolyte were conferred on me respectively.

Almost 11 years after my submission of the enquiry form, I was ordained as a Permanent Deacon of the Hong Kong Diocese on 17 June; I took the Christian name of "Francis" in my ordination, for remembrance of St. Francis's poverty which had enlightened my vocation.

The five years of practicing in OLMC was wonderful, fruitful and joyful; thanks to the Parish Priest, Fr. Thomas Law, Deacon Anthony Sin, Deacon Alexander Kwok, Religious Sisters, parish staff, and parishioners, for their guidance, support and tolerance to me throughout the years. Also, thanks be to God for sending those angels to walk along with me on my vocation. Last but not least, thanks be to my wife Garley, for her unfailing support to and prayers for me.

After ordination, I am so happy to continue my service to OLMC as a Permanent Deacon. Apart from OLMC, I am also deployed to the Property Office of the Caritas Hong Kong to contribute my professionalism, and Stanley Prison on evangelization for prisoners. Let us keep praying to the Lord for my services in the diocese and in the society. Alleluia!



THE HOMESTEAD – SUMMER 2023

English Sunday School

Journey to the Promised Land

By: Teacher Levinna Natalia

The English Sunday School celebrated Appreciation Day on 11 June. The First Holy Communion Class 1B turned the celebration by playing "The Last Quest," a series of games prepared by the teachers by following the Israelites' journey to the Land of Canaan. The children need to work together in teamwork games that resemble the Israelites' experience in crossing the Red Sea, memorizing games to be part of Joshua's spying team, and finally, taking down the walls of paper cups like the Battle of Jericho. Hopefully, the games will become a reminder that the end of the Sunday School is not the end of their faith journey; in fact, it is just the early part of their journey. After successfully conquering the quest, the class is closed by enjoying mini doughnuts with their classmates. It has been an enjoyable and meaningful class, thanks to the support of the parents. And we wish the best for the kids, and hopefully, they can grow in their faith and be closer to God. See you in the next academic year!



IN A BLINK OF AN EYE, SUMMER IS OVER AND THE CHILDREN ARE BACK!

As it is the month of October, we asked the post-confirmand children from ESS to lead the Rosary before Sunday Mass. They did this extremely well!



Where have all the youngsters gone?

"Where have all the flowers gone, long time passing ..."

I am a Baby-Boomer. I did not suffer the atrocities of World War II nor the Chinese Liberation/Cultural Revolution. My parents did. Life in Hong Kong was still hard but full of opportunities. *"What your hands provide you will enjoy; you will be blessed and prosper"* (**Psalms 128:2**). How true the Psalter was. In those days when you are willing to work, you would be able to climb up the social ladder and your family would lead a decent life. The only war waging near us was the Vietnam War and we were fed with anti-war songs like *"Where have all the flowers gone (1955)"*, *"Blowing in the Wind (1963)"*, *"Bring 'em Home (1966)"*, *"Give Peace a Chance (1969)"* and *"Imagine (1971)"* etc. This excerpt from my autobiography would pretty much portray the cultural outlook of the author.

Today, the melody rings a different tune in the ears of many Church leaders. *"Where have all the youngsters gone, long time passing?"* Without exception, young people are departing from all Christian denominations in droves. The trend is worrying indeed. Sooner or later, the remaining ones would be completely wiped out from Church attendances together with all the elders and seniors! No denomination is exempted. What is happening? The Church has been evangelizing through alms-giving, schooling, taking care of the sick and the elderly etc. In fact, she has been very proactive in evangelizing through the mass media too: books, magazines, newspapers, radios, televisions and movies ... except the Internet. Indeed, the Church has caught on the bandwagon of Information Technology rather slowly!

On the other hand, young people have at long last found a turf where they are able to have greater control. In previous ages, young people were mere appendages of the masters of the house. In Greek and Latin, a son and a servant is the same word! Not only were they dispensable, but their opinions were also rarely heard. Thanks to the advances in technology, young people nowadays are able to gain access to and flex their muscles in huge computing power and the Internet. The youngsters' mind is like a sponge which is able to pick up and absorb all the skills and intricacies of computers and mobile phones in tremendous speed. In the adults' eyes, young people are addicted to computer games and social media. They do not care about getting a decent and stable job, nor getting married. They shut themselves inside their rooms, meeting their peers in virtual reality! *"A great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours"* (**Luke 16:26**) aptly describes the generation gap between adults and youngsters today! But remember too, *"Nothing will be impossible for God"* (**1:37**). So, what have the Church and the young people **NOT** done?

Remove prejudices and walk together. Listen to each other and understand. It takes time to mature and do not expect successes overnight. Therefore accept the *"unrealistic"* ideas of young people. Have we not all been exceedingly idealistic before? Let go and allow us to make mistakes together. Remember that our failures might not be our faults but that of the established institutions, meaning the faults of our fathers/leaders! If by chance my readers are young, I pray that you understand that aging is taking its toll on us. Forgive and be patient with us for we are slower, less flexible and more averse to losing controls ... However, the author is still full of hope because he saw more than 1.5 million young people gather together in Portugal to celebrate mass in open air ...

Beloved brethren! Let's pray with the Pope in August to the Lord to help young people and us live and bear witness to the conciliatory spirit of the Gospel in our lives. Amen.



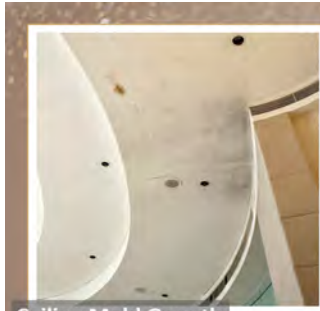
THE HOMESTEAD – SUMMER 2023

Church Renovation Project (24 Jun- 27 Oct)

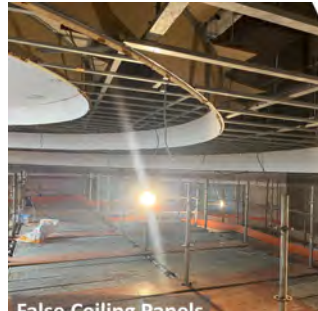
24 June 2023



29 July 2023



Ceiling Mold Growth



False Ceiling Panels



26/07/2023



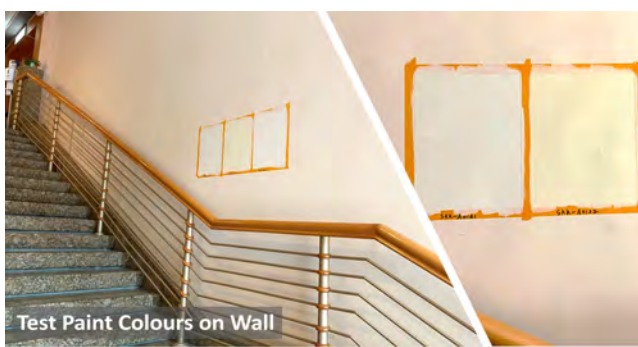
Ductwork Insulation Leaks



A/C Plant Room Deterioration



6 August 2023



Test Paint Colours on Wall

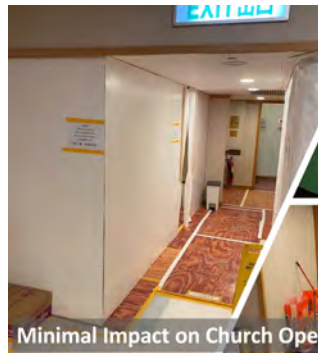


Male Toilet Renovation

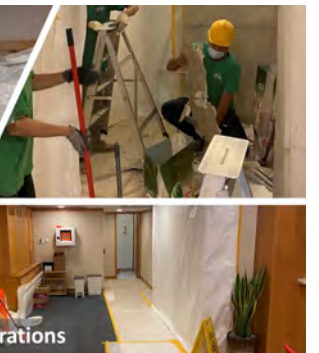


Concealed AHU Visual Inspection

08/2023



Minimal Impact on Church Operations



THE HOMESTEAD – SUMMER 2023

Church Renovation Project (24 Jun - 27 Oct)

August 2023



AC Plant Room Water Leakage from Roof

Water Leakage in the AC Plant Room - This issue has been known for some time, however as the problem was not fully examined in the past, the situation started to get bad during the recent heavy rainfall. The project team provided a visual inspection and understanding of the problem and created a video (still image can be seen on the left of the screen) that shows water dripping from the roof. The water leakage issue has caused significant damage to the AC Plant Room. The control panels have rusted, and the floor is fully wet. This situation is severe, and immediate action is needed to prevent any further damage. The project team will repair the roof area and fix the problem completely this time.

September 2023



Rebuild the Sidewall of Skylight Dome

Rebuild the Sidewall of Skylight Dome - Due to the site constraints, OLMC relies on skylight as the sole source of natural light. The natural light signifies the bridges between heaven and earth. The Project Team has inspected the structural frame, dismantled the old sidewall and reconstructed a new one for the skylight dome.

Patching the Featured Wedding of Cana Mosaic Wall - The Wedding of Cana mosaic wall holds immense historical and artistic significance. The damaged areas of the mosaic wall were patched, the surface cleaned and loose fragments removed. Next will be the finishing touches, such as grouting and colour adjustment, to achieve a harmonious blend between the original mosaic and the patches.

Mass during Renovation Period



Mass in St. Francis Canossian School Chapel

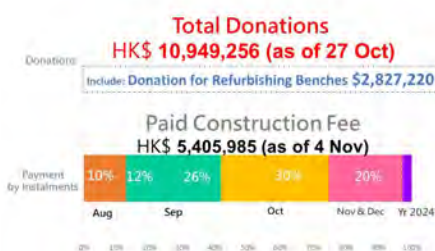


Mass in the Lobby of OLMC

Budget for Parish Renovation



Cashflow Status



OLMC wishes to thank each and every one of you for your contribution to this project – be it financial, your time and man hours put in, your patience and your prayers!

THE HOMESTEAD – SUMMER 2023

Pilgrimage of Saints' Relics

Cloud of Witnesses – Walk with the Saints

By: Michelle Mishka Wu

I have been asked at least three times to give my testimony on the Pilgrimage of the Saints Relics Exposition which took place in July and rightly so, because I have been there four times with my husband. Yet like St. Peter, I had rejected the requests in all previous occasions, with one excuse after the other, until now.

You probably would like to know how He may work in us through learning about the saints' and others' stories with the saints. Therefore, let me tell you right from the beginning what you should focus on or get out from reading the following:

- 1) prayer and the power of prayer
- 2) our relationship with God
- 3) our relationship with others (saints and angels included) in God
- 4) how to know if our prayers are answered



I am not going to go online and share with you all the facts, years and details of every saint, because everything is on the internet and what you will find will be the same as what I will find, so do your own research, it will be good for you! It is a wrong concept to think that we MUST ask for the saints' intercessions by reciting the SET prayers endorsed by the bishops or authoritative Church bodies, NO, the saints are NOT dead, they are in Heaven like angels and they can speak and make HUMAN (and of course angelic) conversations, you DO NOT always need a script. Let my somewhat radical little observation shake not just yours, but my rigid mind also to think that, we cannot talk to God, to Mother Mary or others WITHOUT our prayer cards or even Rosary in hand. Of course we CAN and commendable if we have them, BUT these are rigidities we set for ourselves, not the Church and certainly NOT God's intentions. Talking NORMALLY & NATURALLY would make MOST people comfortable, surely for the saints TOO! Of course no swearing or bad jokes of any kind, RESPECT is key but still, treat them like our BEST friends (for they are!)

I would like to share my stories about 12 saints but due to constraints, I will share about one saint in particular for this Newsletter – my most favourite saint, i.e. St. Gemma Galgani!

I am very excited to tell you about this saint. Why? You see, she is the featured saint in this praying photo of mine that I specially picked! Even by the first look, you will love her! She is young and beautiful, but more importantly, you can see the humble, gentle humility in her countenance. And you know her look is like, "do not look at me, look at Jesus please!" She would not like people to draw attention to her, not her piety, not her mystical experiences or even her stigmata. But to tell you how important and powerful her testimony was, her autobiography that her spiritual director asked her to write, was burnt in Hell before it was returned later on. She had spine problems amongst many other ailments, her mother was also taken away from her like St. Therese the Little Flower. In fact, she is called the "Passion Flower"! There is a beautiful website specifically devoted to St. Gemma and trust me, this hidden gem will show you indeed that Jesus was really "Shine Jesus Shine" in her life. There was NOTHING boring or theologically advanced in St. Gemma's faith journey, it is human, it is personal and a beautiful love story of a beautiful girl in love with her beautiful God, beautiful Jesus and Mary was her beautiful Mother. And in what way am I related to her? Well, not only that she became my favourite saint after learning everything about her, BUT, a former teacher friend of mine once gifted me her second-class relic, keychains and booklets about her to me from Rome after learning of my keen interest in her. I then passed on those to friends in South Africa and a friend who was injured in an accident at that time which affected her spine. And then years later at my parish, our sister in charge and another organist both serving the English Community: the former was called Sr. Gemma before and St. Gemma was her patron saint, the later, was born on the feast day of St. Gemma! And the 3 of us have been serving in the music ministry, performing, composing

➡ P11

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Pilgrimage of Saints' Relics

Cloud of Witnesses – Walk with the Saint (continued from P10)

... coordinating together for some good years already and still go on from in person to online. I have also introduced St. Gemma to many other friends especially those who have had accidents, spine, pains and other complicated health problems. What initially draw them to me and them to her would be for her being patron saints of this or that illnesses, but upon learning her story, many if not all were drawn to her personal journey and experiences with God. She was definitely holy, but she was not unapproachable. You would understand her intentions, her struggles. We could relate with her aside from admiring her. She is willing to be our friend and introduce us to be friends of Jesus. And her being my favourite saint, her favourite saint was another Passionist saint, St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother! Do visit this website dedicated to St. Gemma Galgani! <https://www.stgemmaalgani.com>

I think this is a good place to stop and digest. **Omnes Sancti et Sanctae Dei, intercedite pro nobis** (All holy men and women, Saints of God, intercede for us)

Fr. Carlos Martins brought more than 150 saints relics to Hong Kong so that people will have an opportunity to venerate them & experience the living faith of the Church and its 2,000 history



THE HOMESTEAD – SUMMER 2023

Living Rosary Group

Fr. Francis Elsinger – Mother Mary's Most Beloved Son and My Most Beloved Priest

By: Michelle Lam

My most beloved Fr. Elsinger passed away on 20 July, exactly on the Feast of the prophet Elijah, considered by the Carmelites as their Founder. It was a very significant day: now both of them may intercede for us that we may be granted greater zeal for God! I was just so blessed and lucky to see Fr. Elsinger off and kiss him goodbye just in time on that day. Rest in Peace in the arms of Almighty God, my dearest Fr. Elsinger 🙏💜🙏

Fr. Elsinger is a Saint to me. He was one of the last few truly devoted Marian Priests left on earth and he should be respectfully treated as a 'specially protected species.' In 2013, 10 years ago, at the Feast of Assumption, during the 33 days Mass for Consecration to Immaculate Heart of Mary, Fr. Elsinger granted me the Brown Scapular. Since then, he turned me from a Sunday Church goer into a devoted Marian follower. I learned again how to become a real Catholic under his guidance.

He was first and foremost, the promoter of (1) The total consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and (2) Cenacle Prayers in Hong Kong.

In 1996, he led all the children who love the Virgin Mary to do the "Cenacle Prayer" as he also promoted "Thirty-three prayer preparations, dedicated to the homage to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary." Together with some religious sisters, they set up a long-term pilgrimage to the Eucharistic Prayer Center. With another priest he opened the "Family of One Heart" as a center for the Eucharist, prayers and other spiritual activities.

Cenacle Prayers is also called the Cenacle of Prayer for Priests, a particular reflection time and prayer for the intention of priests and laity in general, introduced by the Marian Movement of Priests (MMP). The MMP is a Catholic association founded by the Italian priest, Fr. Stefano Gobbi (22 March 1930 - 29 June 2011) following what he reported as an interior location in 1972 at the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima. Here in Hong Kong, Fr. Francis Elsinger was the priest-in-charge of MMP Cenacle for five years from 1998 to 2003. After him Fr. Petro Leong took over and he remains the reference person until now. In 2000, Fr. Elsinger directly got permission from Fr. Gobbi in person to print the MMP Chinese Book in Hong Kong. Fr. Gobbi's letter and foreword in the front of the Chinese version was written in his presence. The first Chinese translation was done by the Franciscans in Taiwan and then edited and published in Hong Kong.

After his funeral, I met Fr. Elsinger in my dream again. He came to me, 'Risen' from the dead! He held my hands with strength and passion like those days when he was alive.

The truth is he is always ALIVE in my heart. Without pain and suffering, Fr. Elsinger is now happily united forever with Mother Mary and our Lord Jesus. Wishing one day we would have such privilege to see him again in Heaven. I love you and I miss you, Fr. Elsinger!



THE HOMESTEAD – SUMMER 2023

Relax, Renew and Reinvigorate

The theme says it all. As parishioners come together to contribute towards the church renovation work, the English Speaking Community of OLMC invited parishioners to meet up to enjoy some food and drinks together. It was so nice see everyone relaxing in OLMC as a community!



RELAX, RENEW & REINVIGORATE

The OLMC English Community invites you to join us, enjoy a moment of "renewal and relaxation" as you participate meaningfully in the ongoing renovation of OLMC Church by sharing your donations...

Contact: 9858 5646, 9127 8127, 5322 5474

A MAN CALLED OTTO

Saturday, 9 Sep 2023
7:30pm to 9:30pm

Donation Form

Still Human

Monday, 2 Oct 2023
10:00am to 12:30pm



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Still Human

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My Awesome Trip to Malta, Rome & the Vatican with APAVM and I got to meet the Pope!

By: Lilian Chin

What a blessed summer! I went on an unforgettable 9-days trip to Malta, Rome and Vatican, with the Asian Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museum ("APAVM"). What on earth is APAVM and how are we linked to the Vatican Museum and the Pope, you ask? Well, The Vatican Museums, the oldest art museum in the world, was founded in 1506 by Pope Julius II and comprise a vast collection of priceless works of art, monuments and the buildings of the Vatican. All art deteriorates over time and need restoration and preservation, which is carried out in 7 specialised restoration laboratories in the Vatican itself. Patrons contribute to the conservation and restoration of the Vatican Museum's collection, through their annual subscriptions and specific donations for special projects.

Let me share my awesome journey with you. The theme of our 2023 APAVM trip was "Beauty Ever Ancient, Ever New". Originally planned for 2020, the trip has been postponed due to the COVID pandemic.

Our trip started in Malta. A destination often overlooked, Malta's past importance came to life with the history of the Knights of St John, the holy and militant order which made their home there for more than two centuries. We were given a private visit to the baroque St John's Co-Cathedral, the conventual church (home church) of the Knights. There we viewed Caravaggio's "The Beheading of St John the Baptist" and heard of its spiritual and artistic significance. We went to the medieval walled city of Mdina, where we visited Malta's main cathedral and its museum with its excellent artifacts. Birgu, the historical city across the harbour from the capital Valletta, it was from here that the Knights victoriously defended the island against the Ottomans in the Great Siege of Malta in 1565. We visited their stronghold, Fort St Angelo. As if to further immerse us in the Knights' history, our lunch consisted of food made from ingredients commonly used in the days of the Knights! That evening there were dazzling fireworks and drone displays over the Grand Harbour and an optional opportunity to taste typical Maltese food in a nearby village. Malta is not without history before the Knights' arrival. The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hagar Qim is a megalithic temple complex which shows ancient man's mysterious ability to place huge slabs of stone atop others to build places of worship. Said to date back to 4000-3000 BC, it is the earliest free-standing stone building in the world. The Hypogeum, another World Heritage site, is a subterranean three-storied structure, hewn out of rock that was used as a burial ground as well as a place of worship. Originally containing the remains of 7000 individuals, this necropolis dates back to 4000 BC. One of the most striking aspects of the Hypogeum is that some of the chambers have been cut to imitate architecturally the above-ground megalithic temples.

Leaving Malta, we flew to Rome. The Pope's General Audience in St. Peter's Square fell on the next day, and we set off early for the Vatican. As Patrons, we were given special seats in the front rows on the side of the same raised podium where Pope Francis sat. The excitement of seeing the Holy Father up close gripped us. When the Popemobile with the Pope in it finally appeared, there were loud cheers of "Viva Francesco, Viva Francesco" from the crowd. Marching band music added to the exuberant atmosphere. Soon Pope Francis was seated in his papal chair and a passage of Scripture was read. He then gave a teaching, and his message was translated into different languages to underline the universality of the Church. The audience concluded with Pope Francis blessing all the pilgrims. **I got to shake hands with Pope Francis!** ➡ P15



THE HOMESTEAD – SUMMER 2023

Editor's Special

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From the excitement, we transitioned to a more sober visit to the restoration laboratories of the Vatican Museum. We witnessed the painstaking restoration work in the mosaic, paper, painting and tapestry labs and saw the Patrons' donations at work. In the evening, we were in the company of the Dominicans, a.k.a the Order of Preachers. At the San Clemente Basilica, the learned Fr. Paul Murray welcomed us with a thought-provoking talk, **"Why Remain in the Church Today?"** Then we were given a private tour of the fascinating Basilica. The current 12th century basilica sits on top of a 4th century church built over a 1st century Christian meeting place that is above a 1st century BC Mithraic temple! After that, we proceeded to the Angelicum, the Dominican Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, where we met our dinner companions – the professors and students studying theology, philosophy and canon law there. Dinner conversation was naturally stimulating, and the striking location, on the top floor loggia of the Casa dei Cavalieri di Rodi overlooking the ancient Roman Forum, made it all the more special.

The next evening began with a Mass in the white and light-grey Church of Mary, Mother of the Family, in the Governor's Palace, celebrated by Monsignor Terence Hogan. We then set off on a private guided tour of the Vatican Museum and the Apostolic Palace, which took us to the Belvedere Courtyard designed by Donato Bramante, the Braccio Nuovo gallery of sarcophagi and friezes, and the sculptures of the octagonal courtyard of the Pio-Clementino Museum. Entering the Apostolic Palace itself, we were ushered into the Pauline Chapel, a most private chapel of the Popes, as it is not on any tourist itinerary. On the walls were two Michelangelo frescoes, The Conversion of Saul and The Crucifixion of St Peter, and we were told it was before the second painting that Pope Francis prayed immediately after his election as Pope in 2013.

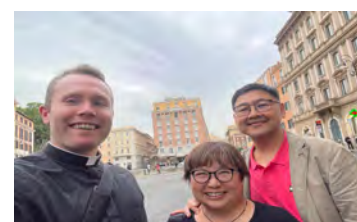
As we stepped into the adjacent Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo's frescoes on the walls and ceilings compelled us to contemplate the Bible story, from the Book of Genesis to the Revelation. The vivid colours and the grand scale of master's paintings, especially the painting of The Last Judgement behind the altar, were breath-taking and no amount of superlatives could describe the work of the genius. To be surrounded by such exquisite beauty, and having the chapel exclusively to ourselves could rightly be called an experience of a life-time.

We then ascended the stairs to the Etruscan Terrace, the highest level of the Vatican Museum, where we faced St Peter's Dome slightly on the right and a view of Rome on the left. As we sipped champagne, twilight and the rising of the moon cast an aura of magic on the gathering. All too soon, it was time for the black-tie gala dinner in the palatial Gallery of Statues and Busts. We were honoured to have Sr. Raffaella Petrini, the Secretary General of the Vatican City State, among us to enjoy the fine food and the superb music.

For the last two days in Rome, we were treated with more art and history. The walking tour "Baroque Ecstasy" took us to several churches where we got acquainted with Bernini's sculptures, notably The Ecstasy of St Teresa, the architecture of Borromini and of course, the painter of chiaroscuro, Caravaggio. The walking tour "In the Footsteps of the Early Christian" took on another period, Republic and Imperial Rome, which gave us the historical background and the context in which the early Christians had to survive and evangelise. Both guides, Elaine Ruffulo and Jill Alexy, are experts and scholars in their field, and their commentaries were of the highest quality.

We also visited an interesting art gallery run by a Franciscan priest, Fr. Sidival Fila, who recovers and uses old disused fabrics, some going back to the 15th century, to create contemporary art. We also met with priests from the Legionaries of Christ over dinner - Fr. Thomas Montanaro LC, Fr. Devin Rosa LC, Fr. Andrew Dalton LC, Fr. Michael Bogart LC and Fr. Joseph Tham LC. I even managed to see Gerald Gayou (a Parishioner of OLMC) who is now studying to be a priest in the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

Privilege is a word often used to mean special, but it is not used lightly here. What we beheld, what we learned, who we met, the venues where we were taken to – none of this would be open to us were it not for the arrangement of the Patrons Office in the Vatican accorded to us for our small part in supporting the Vatican Museum, conserving and restoring beauty. Alleluia



THE HOMESTEAD – SUMMER 2023

The Biggest Buzz in Hong Kong



His Eminence Cardinal Stephen Chow, S.J., Bishop of Hong Kong – From Bishop to Cardinal

Bishop Stephen was named as the new Cardinal on 9 July 2023 by Pope Francis, and on 30 September 2023 was elevated by Pope Francis as Cardinal in a much publicized ceremony at St. Peter's Square. Bishop Chow was among the 21 bishops created as Cardinal in this ceremony, making him the fourth in Hong Kong's history to hold the title of Cardinal, following in the footsteps of the late Cardinal John Baptist Wu Cheng-Chung, Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-Kiun (91y) and Cardinal John Tong Hon (83y).

Fr. Joseph Chan Wing-Chiu led a delegation of supporters from Hong Kong to attend this memorable event at the Vatican to witness the ceremony, and many were seen with tears of happiness and pride on their faces. After the ceremony, there are a total of 241 Cardinals, of whom 136 are eligible to vote in a conclave to elect a new pope.



When Bishop Chow initially received notification from the Pope in July, he said it was somewhat unbelievable to learn that he was picked, and that he felt it is a new mission that God assigned to him through the Pope. Bishop Chow was having dinner with his family on 9 July when he received a WhatsApp message from his friend and reporter based in Rome saying 'Warmest Congratulations on being named Cardinal..'. "I thought that my friend had misheard it, but my friend said No, it is true, check the Angelus. What a blessed and shocking surprise! Needless to say it pretty much threw my dinner into chaos", Bishop Chow said to reporters in July, adding the cardinalship brings a strong sense of responsibility. He also mentioned that Pope Francis is a "Pope of Surprises". None of the 21 Bishops knew that they would be elevated as Cardinals.

Pope Francis issued a new mandate on July 9, whereby all the 21 Bishops are missioned to assist the Holy Father in realizing *"the universality of the Church, which continues to proclaim the merciful love of God to all people of the earth."* It is a new mandate besides the usual mission of strengthening the bond between the See of Peter and the local Churches spread throughout the world. With this new mission, Pope Francis reminds that, celebrating God's merciful love in the faith community and communicating it to the world should not be the favour of the year. Instead, it should be the core practice of who we are as a Church.

We are all very happy for you, Cardinal Stephen Chow! May Hong Kong be further blessed as a result of your new role!



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