



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

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JAN
2024

THE HOMESTEAD



Happy New Year!

Let us begin 2024 by thanking the Lord for accompanying us on our journey through time. We thank Him for He never abandons us. We thank Him for watching over our parishioners and the community of Wanchai, and we thank Him for His merciful love.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Pope Francis highlighted in his homily on 1 January, which is also the Feast of Mary, Mother of God: *"Let us entrust this coming year to Mary, the Mother of God". Pope Francis also spoke about the role God gave to women in the history of the world, and the important role women have to play in both church and society.*

When ringing in 2024 during Mass, Fr. Thomas Law also emphasized on the sacrament of marriage and asked the parishioners to read the book on Meditations on the Sacrament of Marriage. The value of marriage is that it renders Christ present in our midst. Like all sacraments, marriage is an action of Christ.

Cardinal Stephen Chow welcomed in 2024 by wishing everyone be blessed with good, supportive accompaniment and abundant divine grace to enjoy a hope that strengthens inner peace throughout the new year, as hope is all we want and need. He also reminds us that God has not and will not leave us to struggle on our own. We only need to believe and learn how to listen and follow God humbly. Always share our happiness and unhappiness with God, and be surprised with graces and opportunities that go beyond our expectation.



"May God bless us in His mercy"
(Psalm 67:2a)



Each of Us Is a Unique Image of God

By: Deacon Alex Kwok

We Christians believe that our God is the Creator of the known universe whose grandeur is captured by sophisticated telescopes sent into the outer space. While cosmologists are debating whether the known universe is infinite or not, we insist that, the Grand Designer and Creator of this known universe must be infinite. However, have you ever been amazed by the fact that humanity is able to handle the idea of infinity? Ignorance of the concept of infinity led to heresies against the Blessed Trinity that the Church refuted in the fourth century. Interested readers may visit this webpage to understand more.

What can we learn from the meditation of infinities?

- i. Since we were created in the image of God (**Genesis 1:26**) and God is infinite, so are we! Why? From the webpage mentioned above, we see that by removing members / attributes / characteristics from an infinite being, the resulting entity is still infinite.
- ii. God is an awesome mystery. So are we! If somebody boasts that he is able to read you like a book, he has not finished reading you yet because if you were a book, there would be infinite number of pages to read!
- iii. We should respect even the least of Jesus' brethren (**Matthew 25:40**) because no matter how poor, miserable, ignorant, irritating, cunning, unlovable and wicked a person is, he is an infinite mystery, an image of God like us. Obviously, some good things are missing in them. So are we! If we possess charismas given by God, he does too! Theirs are probably different from ours. That is why each one of us is a **UNIQUE** but **INCOMPLETE** image of God.

Since we are incomplete, we have to accept the fact that we are unable to do mammoth projects alone. We need to work together whenever we need to achieve some Herculean projects. Yes, together we are able to lift heavier, to scale higher and to sprint farther and faster!

How can we work together? In previous generations, people believed in the advantages of elitism. Let the professional be leaders to do the task! This was true even in the Church. The clergy knew best. They were shepherds and we laity should obey and follow. Six decades ago, St. Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council to modernize the Catholic Church. To paraphrase, he says, *"Let's open the window to allow the Holy Spirit in to renew us."* More than two thousand bishops and theologians came together to deliberate. Through these elites, we heard the voice of the Holy Spirit. Six decades later, Pope Francis calls upon the whole Church to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit from the grass-root as well. We need to hear what the Holy Spirit tells us through the laity because they are the People of God! The Church enters the Age of Synodality!

It is a tiny but crucial step forward and agrees with the teachings of St. Paul. When he taught against sexual immorality, he says, *"Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you...?"* (**1 Corinthians 6:18-19a, 2nd Reading, Second Ordinary Sunday, Year B**) Therefore, not just the elites, the bishops and theologians are temples of the Holy Spirit. All of us are! If the Holy Spirit spoke through the bishops and theologians six decades ago, what prevents the Holy Spirit from speaking through us today? St. Paul continues to teach his famous theology of the Mystical Body of Christ and affirms that each one of us receives unique charism, meaning spiritual gifts/talents from God to build up the Church. *"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone"* (**12:4-6**). Lastly, St. Paul exhorts us to be humble in this manner, *"Not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned"* (**Romans 12:3**).

Beloved brethren! Be humble. Never think too highly of yourselves. Respect the charismas of the others. Recognize and acknowledge the diversity of charismas among our partners, co-workers and parishioners. Let us work together for the good of all, especially the needy. May we enrich the life of each other through Synodality in the Holy Spirit. Amen.

https://alex-kwok.blogspot.com/2024/01/each-of-us-is-unique-image-of-god_26.html



Celebrating God's Word

"Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful song" (Psalm 100:2)

During OLMC's major renovation, many parishioners had donated for church kneelers, and plaques were then made and displayed on the kneelers with the name of saints or a Bible verse. Tonight, various groups from OLMC recited a Bible verse and then sang a song to reflect on the same. What a beautiful way to celebrate God's Word. We started the evening with "Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church" song. These are the groups that participated in tonight's celebration:

Cornerstone Choir | Legion of Mary | OLMC Choir | Bethany Choir | Holy Family Choir | Eucharistic Ministers | Lectors | Rabboni Choir (8 groups in total)

You can watch the recording again by typing in this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5W885Re_3MY

匠人棄而不用的石頭，反而成了屋角的基石：那是上主的所有所為，在我們眼中，神妙莫測。—— 瑪 21:42
The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes. — Mt 21:42



願賜望德的天主，因着你們的信心，使你們充滿各種喜樂和平安。—— 羅 15:13
May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing. — Rom 15:13



上主是我的牧者，我實在一無所缺。—— 詩 23:1
The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack. — Ps 23:1



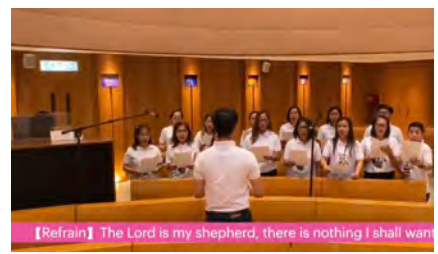
看！我同你們天天在一起，直到今世的終結。—— 瑪 28:20
Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age. — Mt 28:20



耶穌，當你來為王時，請你記得我！—— 瑪 24:42
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. — Lk 23:42



誰能使我們與基督的愛隔絕？—— 羅 8:35
What will separate us from the love of Christ? — Rom 8:35



"The Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings" (Rom 8.26)

THE HOMESTEAD – JANUARY 2024

Christmas

Christmas Eve



Christmas Day



THE HOMESTEAD – JANUARY 2024

English Speaking Community



Fun in the Park



Come and See

[Reference liturgical readings for The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B): Gospel (John 1:35-42); 1st reading (1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19); 2nd reading (1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20)]

After all the celebrations during the Christmas season, we go back to Ordinary Time. The subject of the liturgical readings for this time is the Lord's invitation for us to be part of the mission. The reason why the Lord was born is to bring God's presence within us and let others experience His mercy and love through us.

In the 1st reading, Samuel approached the prophet Eli when he was called by God for the 3rd time. *Eli understood that the LORD was calling the youth. So he said to Samuel, "Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'* When Samuel went to sleep in his place, the LORD came and revealed his presence, calling out as before, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening." **(1 Sm 3:8-10)**. Like Samuel we listen to the voice of God. Let us read the words of God and let us be encouraged as we start this year 2024 in reading and understanding the scriptures more so that we will be able to connect and hear the voice of God. Spending some moment in silent meditations every day and spending extra time with the Lord praying and listening with our heart to what He is telling us will help us grow spirituality and strengthen our faith. In doing so, like Samuel, we will be encouraged to listen to the Word of God so that we'll be guided by the Holy Spirit and be able to respond to His calling anytime and anywhere.

In the gospel reading, we are told of the story of the call of the disciples. *"When John was with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" (Jn 1:35-38).* The question of Jesus is also directed to us. For the Lord is asking us what are we looking for. Is it similar to what Andrew and the other disciple were looking for? Sometimes we also don't know what we are really looking for in life. We can identify ourselves with the 2 disciples and we should simply desire to know our God more. Then our Lord will say *"Come, and you will see."* **(Jn 1:39)**. When our Lord invite us, are we ready to say "yes" to the Lord and respond the same way as Samuel said to the Lord...*speak Lord for your servant is listening?* Like the apostles in the gospel, are we ready to take the path of discipleship and follow Jesus?

As we start the new year, let us know more our Lord through listening in prayer, consistently trying to understand the Word of God, to do His will (not our own will), and to grow in our catholic faith through the sacraments. When we answer "yes" to His invitation to come and see, and let His will be done, we will experience what we are looking for - the enormous blessings, mercy and grace of God. Let us also be like Andrew in today's gospel. After Andrew experienced what it is to be in the presence of the Lord, he first searched his own brother Simon and told him, *"We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). Then he brought him to Jesus."* **(Jn 1:41-42)**. Similarly, God is calling us to become an instrument to our brothers and sisters to bring the presence of God, that through us, they will also witness the beauty and the mercy of God.



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