



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

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MAR
2024

THE HOMESTEAD

Lent & Holy Week

Lent started on 14 February and runs through 28 March, followed by the Holy Week which takes us all the way to 31 March. And it is on the fourth Sunday of Lent that we see our priests in pink.



Technically, the colour is rose, not pink. The three traditional practices of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. But on the fourth Sunday of Lent, there are flowers on the altar again, and the priest wears these rose garments, which indicates a glimpse of Easter joy.

Laetare means "Rejoice" in English. This Sunday gets its name from the entrance verse for the Mass of the day. "Laetare Jerusalem" (Rejoice, O Jerusalem) from **Isaiah 66:10**. Laetare Sunday reminds us that the somber tone of the songs and the Gospel promises us that after the cross, after suffering and death, there will be resurrection and eternal life: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life" (**Jn 3:15**). At Laetare Sunday, everything is a bit brighter. The Sunday is considered a day of relaxation from everyday Lenten rigors, a day of hope with Easter at last within sight. Traditionally, weddings (otherwise banned during Lent) could be performed on this day, and servants were released from service to visit their mother church, where they received the sacrament of baptism.

Laetare prepares us for Holy Week – for the darkness and horrors of Good Friday, reminding us that this is only a transition to Easter Sunday morning. We need darkness to see the light, but we must be reminded that light always follows darkness.



Reflection on International Women's Day

By: Deacon Alex Kwok

This year, the International Women's Day fell on a Friday in the Lenten Season. Thus, allow me to take this opportunity to reflect on some similarities between Jesus' Passion and women's sufferings, based on the book of *Genesis*.

God says, *"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him"* (**Genesis 2:18**). Regrettably, all translations give a water-downed rendition of the Hebrew word עֵזְרָא into *"helper"*. No, it actually means someone who rescues or saves. For example, the name of one of Moses' sons (**Exodus 18:4**) and Moses' blessing of the Israelites (**Deuteronomy 33:29**) etc. Therefore, God did not make a domestic helper or a companion for man but a saviour. Let us take a look at how the woman saved Adam.

When the woman succumbed to the Serpent's temptation, she gave Adam a share of the forbidden fruit. Why did she do that? *"The woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and the tree was desirable for gaining wisdom"* (**Genesis 3:6a**). The woman did not want to be wise alone. She wanted to **share** the goodness with Adam. Rescuing Adam from dumbness and ignorance was her first instance to save Adam. Regrettably, as the aphorism

goes, *"the path to hell is littered with good intentions"*. But this rationalization applies only when things turn sour! When God asked Adam why he ate the forbidden fruit, Adam passed the blame to God and the woman (**3:12**). The woman saved the skin of Adam, her second act of *"deliverance"*. Since the woman was made from Adam, she shared his DNA and passed the buck to the Serpent! Probably it is a survival skill which all humanity inherits from Adam. Was Adam fair in blaming God for making him a helper? No, Adam was not fair. If one of the purposes of marriage is to procreate, why did not God simply clone Adam but took the trouble to make him a woman? Cloning seems to be a brilliant idea. God, clone me a Deacon Alex#2 so that he would do all the toils of homily and I could enjoy other good things. Sorry, cloning is a bad and inferior idea because the clone will suffer the same defects as the original. All the Deacon Alex#2, #3 ... etc. will suffer the same characters and diseases as Deacon Alex#1 does! It is not good for Adam to be alone because Adam alone was unable to make **new** life! With a woman, new lives can be made and new advancements can be possible. Thank you, ladies, for your capability!

Alas! My ladies, you have to work extremely harder than men in blood and sweat! When you give birth, the excruciating pains you suffer in your sacrifice to give new lives are comparable to those suffered by Jesus Christ on the cross. But joy follows. *"When a woman is in labour, she is in anguish because her hour has arrived; but when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy that a child has been born into the world"* (**John 16:21**). My dear ladies, when Jesus was speaking about your sufferings and sacrifices, He was alluring to His Passion and Resurrection. Men are unable to share this honour of yours. No wonder when God pronounced the Proto-gospel in *Genesis*, He did not mention Adam but the woman, *"I will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman, and between your offspring and hers ..."* (**Genesis 3:15**).

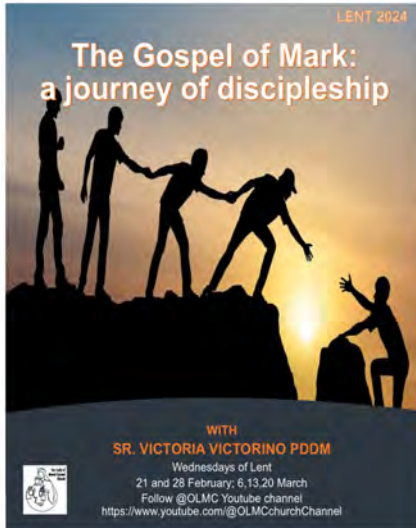
Beloved brethren! Let all of us, women and men, young and old, follow the ladies' examples and be generous in sacrificing ourselves to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven on earth and to make our world a better place. Amen.

God bless!

See also: <https://alex-kwok.blogspot.com/2024/03/how-woman-saved-adam.html>

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Community



The Gospel of Mark

By: Pritya Pravina

Have you listened to Sr. Victoria's new podcast series on the Gospel of Mark? If not, it is not too late to check them out on YouTube.

It all started when Sr. Victoria mentioned how she wanted to start this deep dive series on Gospel of Mark, but she felt it is difficult and less engaging to speak by herself to a camera. She was scouting for people to join her in a conversation when she reached out to me. The recording was to be done on Sunday evening, 18 February 2024, after the last mass at 6pm. I thought I did not have anything to do that evening so I obliged. We were lucky that we could have Vania and Angela, 2 other English-speaking Indonesian young professionals to join that very first episode. If they were like me, we joined with no expectation and just trust that Sr. Victoria has a plan.

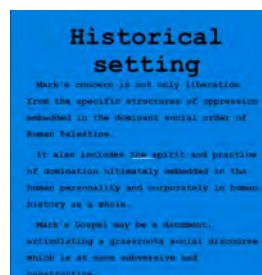
That evening turned out to be one of a kind Bible study. The session was very interesting firstly due to the tremendous amount of research and preparation done by Sr. Victoria. She prepared slides to explain the background of Gospel of Mark, complete with map and pictures to illustrate the points. That first episode talked about the historical background and Mark's journey as a disciple.

Secondly, as the topic uncovers new things about Mark and his writing, we got really intrigued. Sr. Victoria surely has a way of speaking to the youth, with her rich knowledge and references to Bible scholars. Hence, Vania and Angela, who initially said they were shy to speak in front of camera, became talkative in sharing their reflections as well. The intimate setting of conversation between 4 people made it very easy.

In that first episode, we were reminded that a disciple's journey is not a smooth and straight line but is a series of falling and rising, overcoming our fear and self-doubt as we continue to experience God in our lives. It gave us a strong message of hope and motivation in the beginning of Lent.

I rejoined the session for the third episode and again it was a lovely experience. Patrick Lo and myself learned about Jesus's teaching style and action that really focus on the weak and marginalized. A timely and relevant message of inclusion as we approached the International Women's Day. I am excited with what is in store for the upcoming episodes as we continue to uncover the rich message contained in the Gospel. It certainly is relatable and has a very personal message for everyone if we know how to uncover them. Thanks to Sr. Victoria for guiding us on this journey of learning and discovery, both for the mind and spirit. Hope this session will continue after Lent and whilst the recording is great (thanks to Mike Chew), I would strongly invite you all to join us in the room for the session, as nothing beats in person interaction.

This is the full Playlist - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNtADZGANIKPiN2SmTNmZC9nltcQZm_yW



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Liturgical Bible Study

LBS Corner: Tuesday, The 4th week of Lent

"Jn 5:1-16"

One man was there, who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked.

Thirty-eight years persistently trying to get into that pool but no one helped him. We understand the man's complaint: "Sir, I have no man." No one ever told him 'Listen, forget the pool. I know a better solution: go to Jesus. He can and would love to help you...' We have friends to help, people who need our assistance to go to God. Lent is a time to bring people to God. It does not matter how bad they are or how long they have been in that state. They need a push.

During a retreat, a man heard this piece of advice: "Never let a day pass without talking to someone about God," and he decided to put it into practice. One night, arriving home, he remembered that he had not talked to anyone about God that day. At that moment he met a neighbour in the elevator. He hesitated for a moment because he was not very familiar with that man, but then he thought, 'This is going to be my last chance.' He turned to him and said: "Good night! I am going to say the rosary with my family in a few minutes; do you want me to pray for anything in particular?" The neighbour was shocked for an instant; then he said, "Please pray for my fiancée." He explained that they were going through a difficult patch in their relationship. They chatted a bit more and agreed to meet again. That was the beginning of a long friendship. Ten months later, in a ceremony in the parish, that neighbour – by now a close friend – and his fiancée became Catholic, received their first Holy Communion and Confirmation, and got married all in one go! What would have happened if he had not decided to talk to that unknown person that God had placed in front of him in the elevator that night? The neighbour could have complained, 'No one has ever talked to me about God!'

Holy Mary, Queen of Apostles, may I never miss any opportunities to bring people to your Son.

Source/reference:

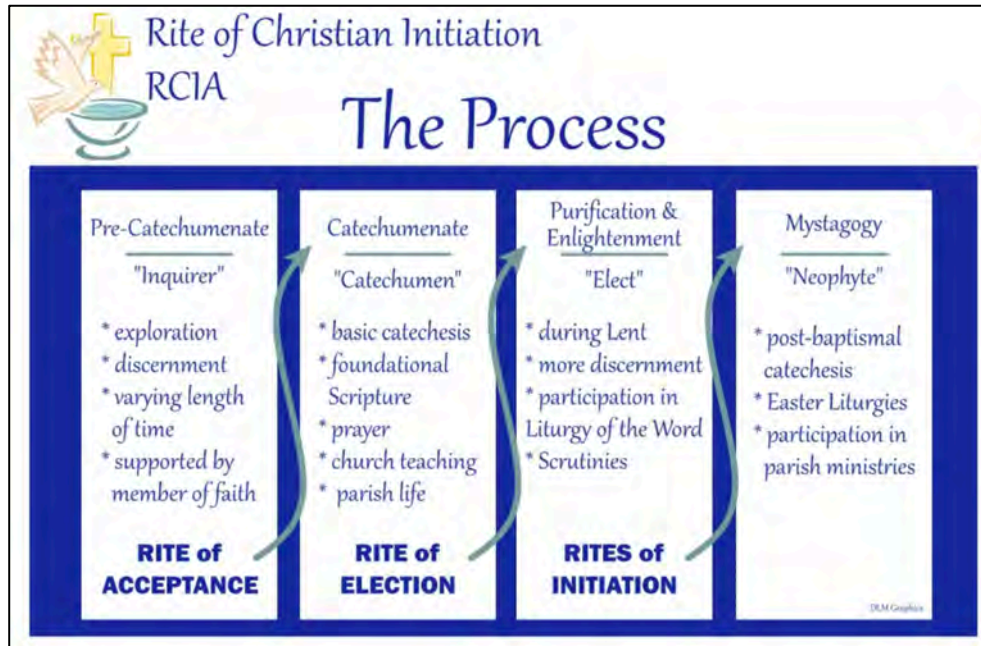
Rev. George Boronat M.D. S.T.D is a Catholic priest from the Prelature of Opus Dei, working in the Archdiocese of Southwark in London. He is the Chaplain of The Cedars School in West Norwood, and of Kelston Club & Study Centre (Balham). He also works in Oakwood School (South Croydon) and has developed his pastoral ministry mainly with young people.



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RCIA

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) is a process in which participants undergo conversion as they study the Gospel, profess faith in Jesus and the Catholic Church, and receive the sacraments. The RCIA process follows the ancient practice of the Church and was restored by the Second Vatican Council as the normal way adults prepare for baptism.

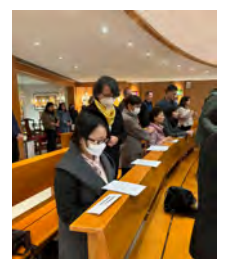


Among these rites are the scrutinies, which are solemnly celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent. The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright and good.

Here, we would like to share some photos from the First scrutiny that took place on 3 March and the Second scrutiny on 10 March.

First Scrutiny
(on the Third Sunday of Lent)

In OLMC at the 1:30pm Mass



In Christ the King Chapel, Mass
presided by Cardinal Stephen Chow



Second Scrutiny (on the Fourth Sunday of Lent), in OLMC



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Holy Week

Pope Francis spoke about the grace of Holy Week in a video address to the Confraternity of Merida Spain, and what it means for us: 'Holy Week is a time of grace, let us not forget; it is a time of grace that the Lord gives us so that we can open the doors of our hearts, our parishes and our confraternities. To "open" and to "go out" is what we are asked to do in the Holy Week, to open the heart and go towards Jesus and others, and also to bring the light and joy of our faith to others. Always go out! And do so with love and tenderness of God, with respect and patience knowing that we give our hands, our feet, our heart, but it is God who gives us and shows us the way'. What a wonderful reminder to all of us. Let us look at how we have celebrated Holy Week at OLMC

Palm Sunday

This marks the beginning of Holy Week and memorializes Christ's entrance into Jerusalem; palms are a symbolic gesture of "laying our hearts before Jesus"



Holy Thursday

This day commemorates Jesus's Last Supper with His disciples and reminds us of the importance of humility, selflessness and service to others



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Holy Week

Good Friday – Celebration of the Passion of the Lord

Good Friday is the day we recognize Christ's ultimate sacrifice for each of us; His death on the Cross. On the afternoon of this day, Jesus was crucified at the place of skull, Golgotha, after being flogged and nailed by His wrist and feet to a cross. We commemorate the Passion in three parts – The Liturgy of the Word, the Adoration of the Cross and the Holy Communion.



Good Friday – Stations of the Cross (Via Dolorosa)

The Stations of the Cross commemorates Jesus's last day on earth as a Man. The 14 stations focus on specific events of His last day, beginning with His condemnation. At each station, the individual recalls and meditates on a specific event from Christ's last day. The objective of the Stations is to help the faithful to make in spirit, as it were, a pilgrimage to the chief scenes of Christ's sufferings and death.



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Holy Week

Holy Saturday – Easter Vigil Mass and Baptisms

Holy Saturday is the third day of the Sacred Paschal Triduum and it is the Saturday before Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord. The Easter Vigil begins between sunset on Holy Saturday and before sunrise on Easter Sunday. It is the turning point of the Sacred Paschal Triduum, the Passover of the new covenant, which marks Christ's passage from death to life. The Mass starts with the service of light. A blazing fire is prepared so that people may experience the flames dispelling the darkness and lighting up the night. The Paschal Candle is then brought forward, and the light is passed on to the candles that are carried by each individual. The Paschal Candle is the symbol of the "light of Christ, rising in glory," scattering the "darkness of our hearts and minds." Jesus is the light of the world. This is followed by 3 readings from the Old Testament (normally 7) and 2 readings from the New Testament. After the readings, the liturgy of Baptism begins. While the new RCIA members are baptized in the Baptismal Font, holy water is sprinkled on the congregation as we all join in renewing our promises and remembering our baptism. Finally, we are reminded "about the preciousness of so great a mystery, which is the climax of initiation and the center of the Christian life". The Easter Vigil comes to a climax in the sharing of the Eucharist. On this day, OLMC had 3 Vigil Masses – 4pm, 6:30pm, 9pm, with 52 baptisms (34 adults, 18 children) and 4 confirmations.



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Holy Week

Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord

He has risen! Alleluia! The resurrection of Jesus rescues all those who put their faith in Him. Take a look at Acts 17:31, "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." Praise God for the empty tomb. That is real life. In John 11:25 Jesus asked, "Do you believe this?" How about it, do you? Will you? If you do, step forth and receive the risen, living Savior today.

On Easter Sunday, there were 8 baptisms, including 1 baby, and 3 confirmations at the 1:30pm Mass.



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