



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

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THE HOMESTEAD



THE 40 DAYS AFTER RESURRECTION

Christ is risen. Alleluia! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Jesus' resurrection is a message of hope and joy to all of us. For 40 days after His resurrection, He walked and taught in places where His ministry had been, and ministered to His disciples, preparing them for His Ascension into heaven. He was seen in His restored body by thousands; He healed many; He continued to preach, He continued to love. The Savior's words during these 40 days provide a wonderful road map for us as we contemplate His assured triumphal return to earth. The Lord gave at least 3 highly significant messages to His disciples: (i) His Resurrection was real and all are inheritors of that wonderful gift; (ii) His Atonement was completed, but there would be requirements for us to fully partake of its blessings; and (iii) His disciples were responsible to carry the message of His gospel to the world.

One of the reasons Jesus stayed on earth for 40 days after His resurrection instead of ascending immediately into heaven was to encourage Peter. During Jesus' trial, Peter denied Jesus three times. After realizing he had failed Jesus, Peter felt guilty and unworthy. During Christ's time on Earth after His resurrection, Jesus questioned Peter three times in order to restore Peter to his position within church history.

For 40 days Jesus showed the world that He lived again. The Sanhedrin had called Jesus a blasphemer, and others claimed His miracles were of the devil... but His 40 days in Jerusalem and surrounding areas, being seen by multitudes, was scarcely disputed. The number 40 appears 146 times in the Bible, a number of God's significance. We think of Noah, of the years in the wilderness, of the days Moses was on the Mount, of Jonah and Nineveh, and, in Jesus' case, the number of days He was tempted of the devil... and the number of days between the Resurrection and the Ascension. We must believe the provision of prosperity comes closest to the risen Lord's season before He ascended. They certainly were active days. **John 21:25** tells us, "There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written".

Jesus' love for us & his church, was one of the driving force behind his decision to remain on earth for 40 days after His resurrection. He understood that the church was not just a gathering of leaders/disciples but a community of believers who needed his guidance and presence.

We love you Jesus, as you love us!



LET US PRAY FOR VOCATION IN MAY

By: Deacon Alex Kwok

On the first Easter Sunday evening in Jerusalem, 10 frightened men were nervously waiting behind locked doors and windows for a scout to return and to report the situation outside. The 10 Apostles were like caged animals frozen by fear because their master was crucified the previous Friday and their dreams were buried with Him in the tomb. Suddenly, Jesus came and stood in in their midst and said to them, “*Peace be with you*” (**John 20:19**). Later, like God who animated Adam He created out of the dust of the ground by blowing into his nostrils the breath of life (**Genesis 2:7**), Jesus also breathed on the 10 Apostles and said to them, “*Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained*” (**John 20:22b-23**). The risen Lord has just given the Apostles, and thus their successors, the ministry of reconciliation that gradually develops into the Sacrament of Confession nowadays.

In early generations, only bishops, the successors of the Twelve had the authority to forgive sins. It became impracticable as membership of the Church expanded. Therefore, bishops delegated the authority to forgive lesser sins to priests and retained some weighty ones for themselves. In a similar vein, previously only bishops might administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to confer the Holy Spirit on the newly baptized. Nowadays, we celebrate the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults on Easter Vigil in which the elected catechumens will receive Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion. It is impossible for a bishop to run through all the parishes in his diocese to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. For bigger parishes where there are hundreds of elected catechumens, it is also impossible for one single priest to do the same. Therefore, on that particular evening, all priests concelebrating the Easter Vigil are given the authority to confer the Holy Spirit on that particular occasion. This is the juicy part.

Beloved brethren! Are you able to understand the toil of sitting inside the confessional for more than 6 hours in a row to hear confessions before feasts and the toll it takes on the health of our priests, not to mention the risks of breaching the local security laws? As of 2022, Vatican statistics report that there are 1.39 billion Catholics globally and there are only 407,730 priests (plus 5,353 bishops and 50,150 permanent deacons). In other words, a priest needs to hear confessions of 3,409 parishioners! Vatican statistics also report that priestly vocation keeps declining. Europe’s vocational crisis since 2008 continued unabated. In 2021-2022, the number of seminarians in Europe decreased by 6%! Other continents also drop except Africa which shows an increase of 2.1%. The numbers of non-priest professed religious men as well as nuns continue to contract.

Beloved brothers and sisters! The clergy are our civil servants. The professed religious are forerunners covering wherever needs arise while the Hierarchy has not yet been able to provide. The Lord is our Good Shepherd. He needs labourers to shepherd His flock. Let us follow the Pope’s prayer intention in May to “*ask the master of the harvest to send out labourers for His harvest*” (**Matthew 9:38**). Amen.

God bless!

FEAR VERSUS FAITH

By: Victoria Victorino, PDDM

In a blink of an eye, Lent is over and Easter marches on!

This swift transition of liturgical seasons reminds us of the experience of Jesus' disciples in that first 'Holy Week' and Easter. They saw their Master Jesus taken away from them, unjustly executed and crucified in the hill of Calvary. Then, in just a matter of few days, there he was again, in his glorified form! The evangelist John reports: *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."* (Jn 20:19)

The disciples were huddled together and shut in, because of fear. But the risen and glorified Lord broke the barrier and entered the 'space of fear' to challenge their faith. He did this first by bringing them peace, and then, by breathing on them the Holy Spirit. "Do not be unbelieving, but believe," he says to Thomas and to all of us. (See Jn 20:21-29)

Our daily lives are marked by similar transitions of 'Lent and Easter' or maybe the more technical term is the "Paschal Mystery." We participate in the Lord's Passion-Death-Resurrection experience by virtue of our Baptism. Usually, the barrier to the 'transition from death to life' is our fear. Fear shuts us in and to some extent, even de-activates our faith. Faced with discouraging experiences, we question the Lord, 'is there really a way out of this tunnel?'

As we celebrate this season of Easter, how do we strengthen ourselves to conquer our fear and walk by faith, knowing that the Paschal Mystery is woven in the very fabric of our lives? Allow me to use the Filipino word we use to translate "Faith." That word is a challenging 8-syllable word - *pananampalataya*. I divide it into two parts: the first is *pananam* which, in itself, is a word referring to the sense of taste; the second is *palataya* which comes from the root '*taya*' which means to 'risk,' even to 'bet or to gamble.'

Pananam is to let our faith 'add taste' to our lives by believing that with the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, our simple and poor humanity has been brought to another level. We are not mere children of our human parents; we are children of God. Hence, the gift of eternal life is already assured to us by our Lord.

Palataya could then refer to the courage and fortitude infused in our lives by virtue of our faith that God walks and works with us. We can 'risk' and take 'leaps of faith' in life because we are securely carved in the heart and hands of God. No matter how far we fall, we never fall out of God's hands.

May we let our '*pananampalataya*' add new taste, colour, energy to our simple, common lives; may we let it imbue our identities with new audacity and confidence in treading the deep and sometimes dangerous waters of life.

Happy and blessed Easter to all!





SHARING THE JOY OF MY BAPTISM – EASTER 2024

By: Lorena Sabalo

Hello sa inyong lahat. Ako si Lorena Sabalo, 30 yrs old. Isa ako sa maswerteng nabigyan ng pagkakataon para mabinyagan noong Easter Sunday.

Naniniwala ako sa Diyos, pero mas naging malalim ang aking paniniwala at tumatag ang aking paglilingkod noong naging isa na akong anak ng Diyos. At patuloy kong ilalapit ang sarili ko, upang pagsilbihan at mahalín ang Diyos. Nais ko ring humingi ng patawad, at ng gabay tungo sa tamang landas. Sana’y magamit ko ang lahat ng ito para maging magandang halimbawa ng kabataan na ilapit ang sarili sa Diyos, dahil siya ang bukod tanging makapangyarihan sa lahat. Ito ang pinaka masayang nangyari sa buhay ko.

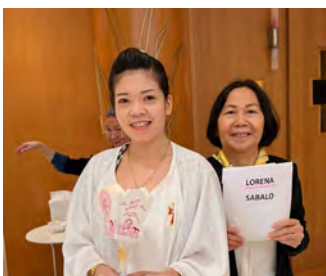
Nagpapasalamat ako kay sister Remy bilang godmother ko, na siya rin ang nagdala sa akin sa OLMC Church. Nagpapasalamat ako kay Sr. Victoria sa pagtuturo sa amin para mabigyan kami ng linaw at pang-unawa, bago kami mabinyagan. Salamat po; Thanks to all of you for being part of my faith journey.

~~~~~ TRANSLATION ~~~~~

Hello to all. My name is Lorena Sabalo, 30 years old. I was one of the lucky ones to be baptized on Easter Sunday.

I already believed in God, but my faith grew deeper and my service became stronger as I became a child of God. I will continue to draw myself closer, to serve and love God. I also want to ask for his forgiveness, and for guidance to walk always on the right path. I hope I can use all of this to be a good example for the youth to draw themselves closer to God, because He is the only one who is all-powerful. This is the happiest thing that ever happened in my life.

I am grateful to sister Remy for acting as my godmother; she was actually the one who brought me to OLMC Church. I thank Sr. Victoria for teaching us and giving us clarity and understanding, before we were baptized. Thank you! Thanks to all of you for being part of my faith journey.



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Diocesan English Youth

We, the Diocesan English Youth (“HK-DEY”), were filled with gratitude and joy as we came together to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our community’s Eucharistic Adoration earlier this month on 9th April. We were blessed to have Cardinal Stephen Chow, Fr. Michael Sloboda, Fr. Tito Lopez, Fr. Miguel Diez, Sr. Clara Pires, Sr. Maryrani.... and many friends and family join us to celebrate.

Our hearts overflow with thankfulness as we reflect on the journey that has brought us to this special occasion - a unique 10th anniversary Eucharistic Adoration evening and prayer gathering that brought us together with our Lord Jesus Christ, our new friends in HK and old friends who have left Hong Kong.

We are deeply grateful to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church (“OLMC”) for opening its doors to us all for us to host this monthly Eucharistic Adoration evening that has become a cherished tradition in our community since 2014. Your warm welcome and the support of your clergy have been invaluable to us, and we extend our sincerest gratitude for your constant support and hospitality. We were doubly grateful that for this month’s Adoration, OLMC also helped us stream the evening live on YouTube, allowing those who have moved aboard to join us online. This has meant a lot to the extended team!

It was an honour to invite Cardinal Stephen Chow to our gathering and share his wisdom with us. His reflection on the Pope’s monthly prayer intention for April 2024—The Role of Women—resonated deeply with all who were present, and we are grateful for his presence.

As we look back over the past decade, we are humbled by the countless blessings, friendships, and spiritual growth that have blossomed within our community. This monthly Eucharistic Adoration evening has been a constant source of solace, strength, and renewal for us, and we are grateful for His guidance and grace that has sustained us throughout the years. In this moment of reflection and thanksgiving, we renew our commitment to serving our communities and living out the teachings of our faith. Your active participation and dedication have made a great difference in our community, and we look forward to the next decade filled with opportunities for further fellowship, prayer, and service as we continue to grow in faith and love. With hearts full of gratitude, we offer our thanks to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Cardinal Stephen Chow, and all who have journeyed with us on this remarkable path of faith. As we look to the future, we hope that our Eucharistic Adoration evenings will continue to be a beacon of light and hope for years to come. Amen.

Mathieu

Dear Friends! So good to see the beautiful community and to have got the chance to sneak in the live adoration between business meetings. I felt so touched by the video recapping our 10 beautiful years. Thank you so much for putting it together with so vivid memories! Having Cardinal Chow present as well has been a true blessing, Thanks be to God!

Anna

What a wonderful way to start the day! I was so touched to hear the same songs we used to play, beautiful guitar and singing tonight 🙌 just grateful to be part of this tonight 😊 Hopefully, I can join more in the future somehow 🙌

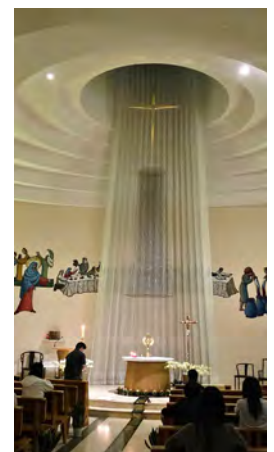
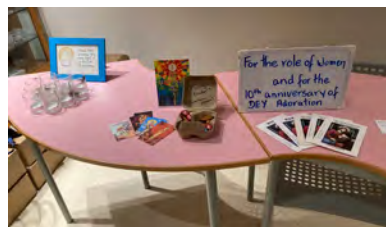
Gabriel

I joined at the beginning and was encouraged by Cardinal.

Gloria Agatha

Thank God! It is a really good memory of our family...

By: Annette Hon



THE HOMESTEAD – APR 2024

Easter Talks

Regnum Christi Hong Kong 2024 Easter Talks series



April 11, 2024, Thursday
Talk 7:30pm

Easter morning
departure from the
quiet empty tomb

April 18, 2024, Thursday
Mass 7:00pm
Talk 7:30pm

Christ is risen in the
midst of the community
of stubborn people

Speaker: Fr Marco Cho, LC
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

Free, donations are welcome Enquiries: Whatsapp 6292 4038



REGNUM CHRISTI

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION IS NOT THE END, BUT THE BEGINNING

By: Fr Marco Cho, LC

*(Excerpt from a talk given at our church on 18th April, entitled
"Christ is risen in the midst of the community of stubborn people.")*

The easter narrative is full of stories of unbelievers. Although Christ was resurrected, their own Christ remained dead in their hearts. This was their limit experience, the limit of their faith. Is it not death the end of everything even for Christ? We all have our limit experience - the more we are able to accept this - and there are many among us who pretend to have a limitless faith - the more God can be God and work his power in us.

We are not Lent people, we are Passover people, resurrection people. Not because we are now perfect but because we're learning to follow Christ through the passover experience, like the people of Israel followed Moses and trained in faith that way. When Moses was leading the Israelites out of enslaving Egypt, having to face the Red Sea was their limit experience. What to do when the furious Egyptian soldiers and chariots were closing in and not

Having anywhere else to march? The Red Sea without Christ is death, but with Christ is the beginning of passover. But you have to first go through it.

The red sea experience took different shapes for the disciples of Christ. What is my red sea? Can I recognise even one limit experience in my faith journey today and in my past? Death of Christ nailed on the cross, the empty tomb in the early morning, were limit experiences for the disciples of Christ. Christ rises again to meet these people, unwilling to believe in their stubbornness, in their limits and imperfections. One by one Christ meets them and journeys further with them in order to resurrect the dead Christ of their hearts - as if his resurrection on Easter morning itself isn't powerful enough to bring about faith in their hearts. In the locked room the eleven disciples cower in fear and confusion from the Jews. What is the fear in our locked room of our hearts? Can it be a fear of seeing the limit of our faith? "As long as I put what I have under lock and key, nothing bad will happen." Christ comes in their midst, "peace be with you" he says. He does not need to wait until they are perfectly schooled... having invaded their limit experience, he sends the community out to bear the good news.

How about the despondent disciples on the road to Emmaus, scandalised and broken hearted by the events in Jerusalem. Christ appears alongside, patiently. He takes his time and lets them take theirs, walks at their pace.

He does not rush to the conclusion, with a dramatic immediate reveal. There is time, space, an interchange of dialogue. And then, their eyes are opened in front of his Eucharistic gestures of breaking the bread, and silently the fire in them rekindled. All this, not by their own will and effort alone - witness their despair beforehand - but transformed by the work of God in our limit experience.

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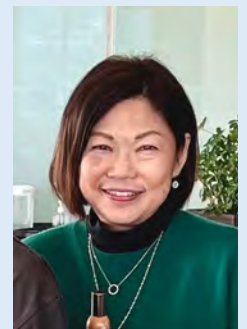
Easter Talks

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And then Thomas, also called Didymus, meaning twin. He is our twin in faith, my twin in my doubt and uncertainty, my clinging to proofs and evidences. Christ meets him person to person, inviting him to assuage his doubts on his physical wounds. And amazingly, Thomas, the last to convert is the first to confess: "My Lord and my God!" Entering the locked room and standing in the midst of the fearful eleven, accompanying the two disciples on their despondent retreat to their past, facing doubting Thomas head on displaying with his wounds and inviting him to touch - each was met in the only way possible for their faith to be redeemed. All these disciples were accompanied through their limits by Christ, making it a passover experience instead of a death experience, a passing by experience. Still imperfect, still stiff necked and stubborn, but touched by God in a personal contact.

Christ still wants to touch us today. In our prayer we can allow God to show us how to transform our faith. Experience of the resurrection only comes after the experience of death. Even Jesus went through this order. Passover, not pass by! Only after the resurrection we can understand a little the meaning of suffering and death. All the testimonies of those who experienced this passover - the church is built upon, Christ the head and we the body.

As a born catholic, Easter to me is indeed the most important event of the catholic church; with all the weeks of lent preparation, building up to the joyful celebrations of Easter Sunday, but after which, everything seems to go back to normal. Especially for those who cannot attend daily mass during the Easter Octave, but thanks to Fr. Marco Cho LC, the spiritual director of Regnum Christi Hong Kong, he gave the first of his two talks on Easter last Thursday, titled "*Easter morning departure from the quiet empty tomb*". It gave me a chance to meditate again on what happened on that Easter morning, that is something we can all do at home and beyond Easter Sunday, in order to keep up our faith in the risen Lord and to remind ourselves to encounter and follow Him every day.



Fr. Marco's talk was mainly on John 20 1:18 and going through it, Fr. Marco pointed out that Mary Magdalene, who was in such tears when seeing the empty tomb that she did not even had the mindset to raise some logical questions; like who was so nice to roll away the big stone that the chief priests and Pharisees paid soldiers to have it securely guarded, or who had driven away the soldiers who were guarding the tomb? She was just weeping and keep thinking of where they had taken Jesus's body! And then when Jesus called her by name and asked her to go to His brothers (**Jn 20:16-18**), which Mary Magdalene went right away, she didn't even ask for more details or questioned Jesus further like what if they don't believe me. We can see from her actions here, that she took her relationship with Jesus seriously, and by building this relationship, she grew in her faith as well. Also not based on how much she knows or knowledge she has (unlike today we learn from the bible and many more), but by being totally obedient to Him and His words, she became the Apostle of the Apostles. Let's all learn from St. Mary Magdalene!

Another point Fr. Marco raised was the fact that the empty tomb let us see who Christ really is. He said, what question is the empty tomb asking me? I think it is asking if I belief that Jesus Christ is risen and because of this, sins are forgiven? And of course, I belief that He is Risen indeed, and our sins are forgiven! This is also why after Jesus died, **Matthew 27:52** says *tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised*. The Empty tomb indeed deepens my faith, hope and love in the Lord and I felt the drive to keep evangelising! Lastly, Fr Marco asked us to meditate on what is the 'absence' of my life like the Empty tomb? I invite you all to join me and meditate on this and share with your good friends, edifying each other!

~~ In Christ, Michelle Hui ~~

