

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

Parish Priest : Fr. Thomas Law
Address : 1 Star Street, Wanchai, H.K.
Tel : (852) 2527 7240
Email : mail@olmcchurch.org.hk
Website : <http://www.olmcchurch.org.hk>
Editor Email : olmchomestead@gmail.com

Autumn Edition

AUG-OCT
2024

THE HOMESTEAD



Pope Francis's Prayer Intention for Autumn

Pope Francis' prayer intention for autumn is for "a shared mission" and calls on all faithful in all vocations to do their best to contribute to a sense of co-responsibility in the Church. Pope Francis emphasizes to each and every Christian "to walk together, taking the path of synodality," explaining that "we are co-responsible in mission, we participate and we live in the communion of the Church". Regardless of one's career or work in life, Pope Francis underlines that the mission is the same, namely that of "witnessing with one's own life," "everyone contributing what they know how to do best."

Therefore brothers and sisters in Christ, have you embarked on a shared mission yet?

Did You Know That The Bible Has Beautiful Verses Relating to Autumn?

James 5:7-8 ~ Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Joel 2:23 ~ Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before.

Isaiah 40:6-8 ~ A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.

Ecclesiastes 3 ~ There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for everything under the heavens. A time to be born, and a time to die.

Psalms 69:30 ~ I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving.



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THE HOMESTEAD – AUTUMN

Pastoral



Render To Caesar What Belongs To Caesar

By: Deacon Alex Kwok

Catholics hold dual nationality. This is a reality beyond dispute. Catholics belong to the Kingdom of Heaven as well as the local state. Thus, we have to live with two different sets of laws, God's laws as well as local laws. Each local government has her own legislature to define laws appropriate to the local living conditions. What about God's laws? We can find God's laws in the Bible which was nearly 2 millennia old. You and I are historical animals living in a particular time and space. Therefore, we need to adapt God's laws to the living conditions of the present age. For example, the Torah which Moses wrote, requires that people should offer burnt offerings and sacrifices at the place God chooses as His dwelling place (**Deuteronomy 12:11**). During the time of kings, the place was the Jerusalem Temple which was destroyed in 70 A.D.

Nowadays, there is no Jerusalem Temple anymore and we do not offer burnt offerings because Jesus Christ is our perfect Paschal Lamb. Thus, the Church has a set of canon laws to help Catholics lead their lives in the modern world. We no longer observe Sabbath which celebrates God's rest after Creation; but the Lord's Day, the first day of the week to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. To meet the need of Catholics living in commercial societies like Hong Kong, the Church sets up anticipatory Sunday masses for parishioners who need to work on Sundays etc.

The Catholic Church seems to be very conservative in matters of marriage, but it is for the spiritual good of the faithful. First of all, the Church has to acknowledge the validity of civil marriages of non-believers because marriage is a natural human right and it serves social functions such as settling inheritance disputes. But the Church sees the union as something more than ordinary social contracts. Marriage is a covenant because Christ takes the Church as His spouse. Therefore, matrimony is one of the seven sacraments. Thus, in order for Catholic marriages to be valid, the Church requires clergy to marry Catholic couple, a man and a woman, in a church. This is a clear example to demonstrate how Catholics have to observe two different sets of laws. The good Lord's teaching is relevant here. When Pharisees and Herodians joined hand to trap Jesus, asking Him whether it was lawful to pay tax to Caesar, the good Lord gave us a crystal clear guideline: "*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's*" (**Mark 12:17**). Beloved brethren! What things are **NOT** God's?

Alas! People in power are more prone to playing God, grasping everything. Power blinds them so easily that they forget who the boss is. In secular terms, people vote them into office. They are mere stewards of the people they serve rather than being masters lording over the commoners. However, authority corrupts them so that they invest their efforts to fatten themselves instead of eradicating poverty; divert resources to build white elephant projects to prove themselves among world leaders instead of improving the living conditions of low-income families, creating more job opportunities for school leavers, enhancing the marketability of worker's skills and guaranteeing basic health care for all etc.

Beloved brethren! Let us join the Pope to pray for political leaders in August. "*For kings, and for all in authority; that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity*" (**1 Timothy 2:2**). May God infuse the fear of the Lord in their mind and love in their hearts so that they work for integral human development and for the common good. May they turn their gaze to meet the needs of the poor and the unemployed. Amen.

God bless!

THE HOMESTEAD – AUTUMN

Pastoral

Season Of Creation (1 September – 4 October)

By: Deacon Alex Kwok

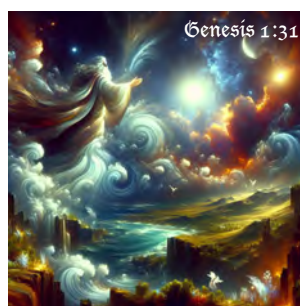
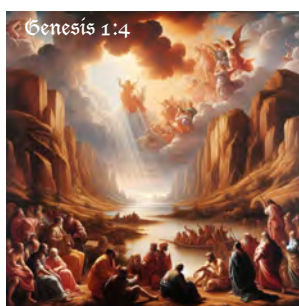
Hong Kong is truly a blessed city. While many regions on this planet suffer catastrophes from extreme weather such as heat-strokes, super typhoons, torrential rains resulting in flooding and mud-slides etc., Hong Kong is barely scorched and our reservoirs are hardly filled. It is difficult for Hong Kong people to feel the pinch if watching social media in an air-conditioned room/MTR/mall are the only source of climatic crises information. We heard from news that parents even brought their children to chase the wind at the height of Yagi, a super typhoon that visited us as recent as 5 September! I am afraid the only people who could feel the heat of extreme weather are tenants living in sub-divided flats. In order to pay less electric bill, they do not install air-conditioners and even do not switch on electric fans in summer! Their plight is compounded by injustices caused by rigid government policies! It is true that all of us are equal, but some are really more equal than others. All of us are living in the same space ship which is compartmentalized. When crises loom, the poor bear the lion's share of the brunt! We, who are living in the comfort of air-conditioning and convenience of bottled mineral water, find it difficult to imagine how helpless, hopeless and powerless our brothers in sub-divided flats can be!

Allow me to take “*No man ever steps in the same river twice for it is not the same river*” literally. If I were rich, and like most rich people, I would be able to choose where to live. Of course, I would choose to live on the upper stream of a river because the water would surely be purer. I would also have powerful people in the government to make laws for polluters to pay pollution related compensations. But my brothers living in sub-divided flats have no choice. Tell me, who would suffer more? I on the upper stream or the poor living downstream? Let me turn to the temporal dimension of the river now. For comfort and convenience, I led an unsustainably affluent life style, depleting whatever natural resources I were able to lay my hand on. In the meantime, I fully paid all compensations. Would I be held responsible? No! My conscience is clean and I could rest in peace. However, three generations later, no amount of full compensations would be able to recover the extinct resources anymore. In the meantime, I would not be around to be publicly criticized! Who cares? But my great-grandchildren have no more choices!

We claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. We cannot ignore Christ's commandment to love each other as He has loved us (**John 13:34**). In other words, we should take care at least not to harm our neighbour and our posterity. Then we should at least join hands with the non-believers in making our life style more sustainable and green: refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle!

As Christians, we can contribute more with our own conversion. Invoke the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts, to remove our arrogant desire to exercise dominion over our neighbour and our Mother Nature. They are not objects for us to spend but dignified beings to love and care, yes both human beings and natural beings because when God created them, God saw them good (**Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31**)!

Let us join the Pope to pray in this September that we hear and take to heart the cry of the Earth and of victims of natural disasters and climactic change. Let us undertake to personally care for the world in which we live. Amen.



THE HOMESTEAD – AUTUMN

Pastoral

Pray For A Synodal Church

By: Deacon Alex Kwok

The Catholic Church is huge. As of 2022, her membership (1.39 billion) amounts roughly to one sixth of the world population (7.951 billion). Some six decades ago, she went ahead with a long overdue modernization as decreed in the Vatican Council II which was attended by more than two thousand Catholic bishops from all over the world as well as no less than 500 theologians as advisers, together with many observers from other denominations and governments. This Council lasted for three years. The attendants experienced something unexpected: The Church Fathers (i.e. bishops) refused to ratify documents the Roman Curia had prepared before the Council. They collaborated with the expert theologians to redraft the documents in a different way! After the Council, they realized that they had rediscovered the original way the bishops governed the early Church: as a college of overseers, not as a monarch! Since 1965, Synods of bishops, attended by a smaller number of bishop representatives, would be convoked instead in the future, as an advisory body. Later, the term “*Synodality*” was coined.

Synodality is not a decision-making process with an opening prayer (**Acts 1:24-26**) nor a democratic institution within the Church, nor reaching a consensus through compromises! Rather, it is a process of listening carefully to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through the participants. It is not enough to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit spoken to the elites and experts like what was achieved in Vatican II. The Church cannot afford to leave out the voices from the major portion of the People of God, the laity whose status within the Church was recognized and given appropriate position since Vatican Council II. All the baptized should actively participate in the life of the Church as members of the People of God, clergy as well as laity alike. The “*sensus fidei*” of the faithful must be heard! Of course, the quality of listening is of fundamental importance. Indeed, both bishops, experts as well as the participants from the laity need training in listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit so as to achieved an enlightened conscience. Otherwise, synods cannot be fruitful.

Since 1965, Synods were held for wide-ranging themes such as “*Year of the Eucharist*” in 2005, “*The Word of God*” in 2010, “*The Church in Africa in service to Reconciliation*” in 2011, “*New Evangelization*” in 2012, “*The Vocation and Mission of the Family*” in 2015, “*Young People*” in 2018 and “*Pan-Amazon Region*” in 2019 etc. This on-going Synod is already the sixteenth which began in 2021! The theme is “*Synodality*”, a reflection on the Catholic Church as a synodal Church. One of the testing items on the agenda would be the restoration of the order of diaconess, an ecclesial order which has vanished from the Catholic Church longer than permanent deacons. Paul wrote, “*I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is also a servant [diaconess in Greek] of the church at Cenchreae*” (**Romans 16:1**). Attendants of this Synod must empty themselves of any pre-conceived solutions and listen humbly to the voice of the Holy Spirit to discern “*what God wants the Church to become in order to proclaim the good news better to the world*” instead of “*what God wants the Church to do better*”. Don’t forget, we Catholics bear a responsibility towards the remaining five sixths of the world population as well.

In October, let us pray in one voice with Pope Francis that the Church continue to sustain a synodal lifestyle in every way, as a sign of co-responsibility, promoting the participation, communion and mission shared by priests, religious and laity. Amen.



¹ <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2024-04/vatican-central-statistical-office-church-pontifical-yearbook.html>

² <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/a-short-history-of-synodality/15016>

³ <https://www.synod.va/en/the-synod-on-synodality/what-is-the-synod-about.html>

THE HOMESTEAD – AUTUMN

Pastoral

Mystery Of Faith

By: Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM

What is the mystery of faith that we highlight in the month of August?

I guess we get the answer to this by reflecting on two of the special liturgical feasts of this month. The first, on 6 August, is the Transfiguration of the Lord. In this feast we are given a glimpse of the glory of the Lord Jesus in Mount Tabor together with his favored apostles Peter, James and John. (See **Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36**) The biblical text says that Jesus was transfigured before His three companions, and “His clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them.” (See **Mk 9:2-3**) It must have been truly a singular experience that Peter himself wanted that they build three tents and just stay there. At any rate, what is highlighted here is the unique splendor of the Lord and his manifestation as God’s beloved Son, something that will be fully understood only after his resurrection.



The English Speaking Community at OLMC celebrated Sister's birthday

The other feast that zooms in on the glorious mystery of our faith is the Assumption of our Mother Mary. This is celebrated on 15 August and is one of the great Marian solemnities of the Church. With this feast we are invited to contemplate Mary’s bodily and spiritual glorification. And this is not only about the glorious end of Mary’s life; her assumption is also a symbol of hope for all humanity. With Mary’s assumption, we are given a glimpse of the glory that also awaits all those who are faithful in reflecting God’s love and holiness in their lives.

While it may be difficult to consider August as the ‘month of glory’ because of the oppressive heat that characterizes this peak of the summer months, still I believe we can always transcend the natural conditions we find ourselves in. We can connect the invitation to consider the glorious mystery of our faith by relating it to the beauty of resting with family and friends, and with our Lord as well, as we spend our ‘rest and recreation’ with them. Those who are fond of ‘nature trip’ can also consider the beauty of creation as a way of lifting up one’s body and soul to experience the splendor of this world given to us by God as a gift.

Here in OLMC we are also promoting the deepening of the prayer experience by practicing the silent meditation prayer. Since July this year, we have scheduled the gathering of persons twice a month, moved by the common desire to experience God’s presence in the depth of our being. While we are still in the initial stages of this initiative in this Year of Prayer in preparation for the Jubilee 2025, I feel that we are already reaping the fruit of ‘greater hunger and thirst for God’ and a deeper connection to one another as one community of faith. Hopefully, through our faithfulness in opening ourselves to God’s Spirit, the Teacher of Prayer, we can become a conduit of God’s glory and presence to others.

Let us thank the Lord for these wonderful opportunities given us to experience a ‘foretaste of God’s glory’ through prayer and mutual service to one another in love, peace and joy, as we continue our journey of faith, with the guidance of our Blessed Mother Mary, our Lady of Mount Carmel.

The
Transfiguration
of the Lord



THE HOMESTEAD – AUTUMN

English Sunday School

About Sunday School – Catechism

By: Jenice Li

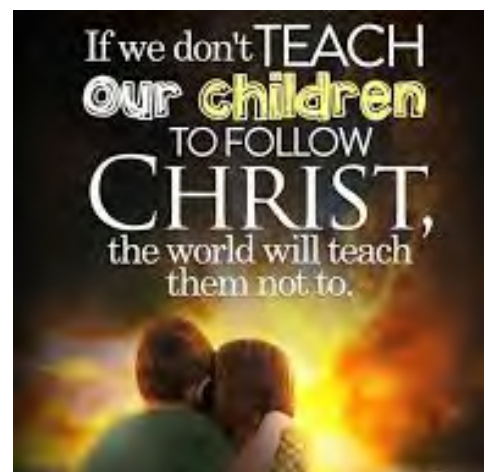
Summer is over and the kids are finally back in School! As a mother of two lovely and vibrant children, that is a Big Hallelujah for me. But while my children are back in school pushing boundaries and developing their wonderful cognitive minds for their future, the CATHOLIC MUM in me thinks about what I can do to develop their spiritual minds and soul? After all, these beautiful creatures are the greatest gift God has given to me. And since God is the BEST, should I not then give my kids the BEST?

As parents, we have the first responsibility for the education of our Children (**CCC#2223**). They learned tenderness and love from us when we woke up every 2-3 hours to feed and change them, or when they were sick and we spent countless hours checking in on them and nursing them back to health. They learnt compassion and forgiveness when we hugged them after a tough day in school or when we say “I am sorry”. We already try to live the faith by being the best examples we can be to our kids. But like the saints, there is always more that we can do and must do!

In **Psalm 78**, the passage talks about the passing down of the Faith Legacy to our children. It teaches us hope in the goodness of God and warns us of the consequences of continual disobedience. This is a stark reality, as we witness how secular our world is evolving to. How easy the enemy has made it, for our children and even for ourselves to be drawn into the digital realm of “despair and hopelessness”. We forget about ourselves and even about God. It is so important for families to rekindle that practice of “old” - of praying together, to stay together!

But all is not lost. God already has his promise for salvation in place (**John 3:16-17**), through his amazing son JESUS. And to understand that he is not here to condemn the world, but that the world THROUGH Him might be saved! In the hands of the Holy Spirit, the learning of God’s word through catechism will help our children grow up to withstand the storms of life with confidence and conviction.

It is a great blessing how God’s love shines greatly in our OLMC church community. With a committed group of catechism teachers and leaders to help Shepard our children towards HIS grace and mercy. As, catholic parents, this is our covenantal promise to HIM, to lead our children to GOD and we know that they will be in the BEST hands.



THE HOMESTEAD – AUTUMN

Community

Gift To Respond To An Invitation

By: Chyn Llanura

I believe that anything that is offered to me can be an invitation from God; only He can assure me that I can do things which might seem impossible for me to do.

When the PDDM sisters here in Hong Kong invited me to join the group of candidates to be formed as members of the Association of Pauline Cooperators-Friends of the Divine Master (“APC-FDM”) I hesitated at first. But then after attending the session facilitated by Sr. Maria Luz, Sr M. Victoria and Sr. M. Liying on 30 August 2024 at OLMC, I came to learn about the vision of the Blessed James Alberione, the Founder of the Association which is part of the big Pauline Family. His vision is to live and give Jesus Master, the Way, the Truth and the Life to all men and women.

And I thought, why not? Indeed, as a lay person, I can truly serve the Church and make the Eucharist as the center of my life and mission. I can assist the clergy and religious personnel to reach out beyond limits, to go where they cannot probably go for one reason or another.

Thus, I thank God for this invitation. I am grateful beyond words to be given the chance to deepen my spiritual life and hopefully be part of the big Pauline Family in the future.



THE HOMESTEAD – AUTUMN

Community



The Search

By: Sally Ho

It was the first time I have been to St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Tsing Yi. As I walked into the church, as usual I looked for the Holy Water in order to make the sign of the cross and genuflect. My habit is to face the tabernacle as I do these. However, the tabernacle was NOT in plain sight.

Genuflect or not to genuflect, that is the question.

There was a strange feeling inside about “genuflecting to nothing”. Do I believe that reverence to God inside a church is only needed when the tabernacle is present? At the same time, I have no doubt that I believe God is in all things. This wanting to see the tabernacle was really bothering me and I was restless.

As the Mass reached the homily, the priest used the searching of Saint Thomas the Apostle in disbelief during his pain and grief while his friends joyfully told him that Jesus has risen. That was the moment the penny dropped, and I knew it had to be intentional in the design. I also understood my uneasiness my uneasiness and the searching. I was searching to see the tabernacle for the “presence of Jesus” in the church, as Saint Thomas wanted to see with his own eyes the risen Lord.

After Mass I went to the Chapel where the Tabernacle was, as well as a relic of St. Thomas the Apostle. As I was walking down, I felt the restlessness, the apprehension that St. Thomas would have felt as he was searching for Jesus in mist of his grief.

I pray that all of you can allow yourselves to have this search when your heart is restless and learn to allow Jesus to see you in your restlessness.

I thank God and the late Mr. Mo (RIP) for bringing me to St. Thomas the Apostles church, to have this experience so that I can become more intentional to my faith and that I could share this experience with you.

Reflections:

1. Are you aware of the meaning of the gestures that you do when you enter a church?
2. Have you ever searched for Jesus the way St Thomas did on your own faith journey? Or are you holding onto a false understanding to “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” (Jn 20:29)
3. In your own grief, sadness and hardships, are you able to admit to Jesus that you are finding it hard to see him and ask for help?

As I am contemplating on my own faith journey, I know and admit I am more Thomas than St Thomas on my conversion of heart. God has graced me with so many encounters to see Him. Now you might want to know what I mean by “seeing”? I shall save it for next time. If you see me around Church, say Hi; I am always happy to hear all about your faith journey. Maybe I can be your ghost writer 😊



THE HOMESTEAD – AUTUMN

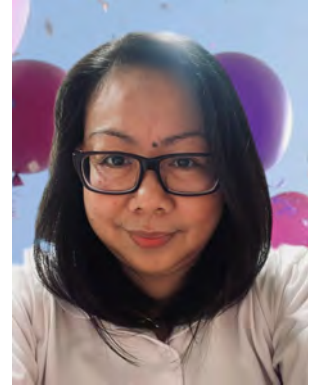
Legion of Mary

Crowd Contact: Challenge Accepted! Legionaries In Mission

By: Marites Monis

It has always been a challenge to go and reach out to people without fear of rejection and prejudice especially when it is about faith and religion. Sr. Victoria Victorino talks about taking on challenge to go out on the streets and talk to people. However, we cannot seem to find the time to put it into action due to our busy schedule at the church during Sundays and religious events and activities during statutory holidays.

Even then, it happened! The perfect time came in this month dedicated to the Mission and to Our Lady of the Rosary. So on 11 October 2024 we assembled at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church at 9:30 in the morning and after receiving blessings and prayers from Deacon Alex Kwok we were all set to go. With Sr. Victoria and Sr. Liying, teamed up in pairs, everyone headed to their chosen spot around Wan Chai and Central area, holding rosaries to give out.



During the encounter, we met Filipinas who were doing their usual gatherings. Eating together, chatting, laughing among themselves, playing cards and some were preparing for a birthday party. We approached them with greetings and introduced ourselves to them and what church we were from while giving out rosaries. We invited them to visit and attend mass in Our Lady of Mount Carmel church, where we then found out that most of them had no idea that there was a Catholic Church around the area. We tried having a conversation with them, offering prayers for their families and loved ones back in the Philippines. We collected prayer intentions too, saying a little prayer with them before leaving. We felt their reluctance at first, but as our interactions went on, they started to feel more comfortable and relaxed around us, even sharing what was weighing them down-family problems, personal battles with scammers, and some other issues that they are dealing with. We encouraged them to visit the parish if they needed counselling or someone to talk to and to go to confession.



This experience was an eye opener for us. Reaching out to people is somehow something that needs to be done regularly. People who are in the same faith do not know how to pray the rosary. Some of them were so happy to have the rosary with instructions on how it is recited. They attended mass but that is all. Nothing comes after that. It is saddening to know that there are Catholics out there who know nothing about the Catholic faith, why we need to go to confession, what is the importance of it, why we need to pray the rosary daily and why we need to read the Bible every single day. We must encourage people to know more about Catholicism. Tell them how lovely our faith is, how amazing to see the greatness of God's grace and mercy every day and reveal to them that the gospel is the source of life, our only salvation. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ alone that is capable of transforming our life, heart and soul making it capable to do good even when difficulties arise. We must also encourage everyone to spread the gospel to every person we encounter may it be in the bus, trains or subways. A small talk can lead to evangelisation and by the grace of God, through the intercession of Mother Mary, will eventually lead to enlightenment and conversion.



THE HOMESTEAD – AUTUMN

Legion of Mary

World Day Of Migrants And Refugees 2024

By: Catherine Fatima Yourey

After the Legionaries of OLMC returned from their mission work from Central, Admiralty and Wan Chai area to the church on 11 October, we had a sumptuous lunch and under the guidance of Sr. Victoria and Sr. Liying, all the Legionaries of the OLMC set out to Christ the King Church at Causeway Bay, by bus No.10. There was a lively chatter throughout till we alighted. Upon reaching the church we confirmed our registration at the entrance.

OLMC Legionaries were seated at the rear end of the church. The first three rows were reserved for the Religious followed by special seats allotted at the entrance of the church to the different nationalities namely Germans, Koreans, French, and Indians on the center aisle; Africans on the right-side aisle. On the extreme left were the Indonesians in their brightly coloured traditional dresses and the Choir in their pristine white Filipino dresses. On the extreme right were the Vietnamese in their light blue long suits representing Mother Mary's colours. They were followed by the Sri Lankan community. The rest of the church comprised the other guests and organizers and also the Legionaries of the different Presidia of the Legion.



The Mass began with the procession of the Celebrant and Concelebrants with the accompaniment of the Tagalog Hymn. The Homily by the Celebrant, Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha Chi-Shing spoke of all the migrants in Hong Kong in connection with the theme, "God Walks With His People". He emphasised that God is with us during our hardships and struggles. He mentioned that he was also a son of Migrants from Mainland China. He compared small acts of kindness to "a cup of water" taking the inspiration from the Gospel of the Mass. The Offertory procession was preceded by the Indonesian dancers in their pink and blue Chinese style long dresses as they fanned and danced their way up the aisle, accompanied by a beautiful Offertory Hymn rendered by the Indonesian community. For Communion, a beautiful Hymn was rendered by the Vietnamese. The Mass concluded on a high note. There was a photoshoot ceremony with the Bishop.

After a short pause, the celebration continued with a Variety Presentation of songs and dances from the different groups present in the assembly. It started off with everyone enthused, dancing, swaying, clapping, singing along with the entertainers. All the groups concerned rendered songs in their traditional language; Germans, French, Vietnamese, Indonesians. For the African presentation, Fr. Franco Mella, PIME priest and Founder of the Right of Abode movement, led the group as they swayed to their songs accompanied by their traditional drums. The last number was a Song performed by the Malayalees /Sri Lankans.

The day came to a close with everyone chewing on the pineapple bun given at the start of the program, to infuse some strength into the Migrants. There were actually some more food and drink outside the church premises near the area where the children of the migrants also had their activities. All in all it was truly a joyful and well-organized event. Thanks be to God and to all the organizers and participants.

THE HOMESTEAD – AUTUMN

Legion of Mary

Santa Cruzan: A Walk To Remember

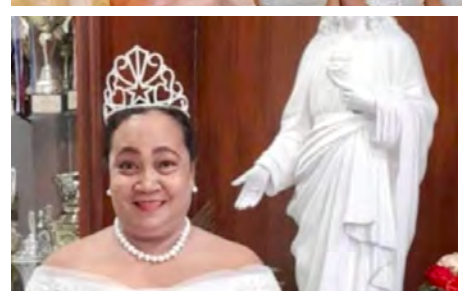
By: Lea Gustilo

In my younger years, way back in the Philippines, Flores de Mayo (Flowers of May) and Santa Cruzan (Holy Cross Procession) were the events I had always looked forward to. It was a festive celebration during the month of May where young and beautiful maidens were chosen to be the Reyna Elenas and sagalas or maids of honor. They were elegantly dressed and dolled up with Filipina dresses together with their young consorts wearing Barongs walking in a procession with their arcs and titles. As a teenager, I never had a reason to search for the deeper meaning to why it is celebrated. My only concern during those times was to see who among the maidens were the prettiest, whose consorts were the most attractive and to have fun during the event. Not until I had the chance to be one of the Reyna Elenas. A sister in Christ told me to make research on the life of Reyna Helena and what is the origin of this Catholic tradition. I was amazed. It was far from what I had imagined.



Last month in September we, the OLMC Legionaries, received an invitation from Our Lady of Fatima Church in Cheung Chau to participate in the Santa Cruzan Procession. We were asked to dress formally as Reyna Elena and other attendees to wear the traditional Filipino costume to promote Filipino culture. It took place on Sunday, 13 October. The event began with the recitation of all the mysteries of the Rosary. Procession started at three o'clock in the afternoon. I tell you; it was not a walk in the park. It was hard! With the scorching heat of the sun, the thirst, the long walk and wearing the high heeled shoes added to my misery. While walking in the procession I was contemplating on how hard it must have been for Reyna Helena to do what she did. Her journey in finding the true cross where Jesus Christ was crucified was truly remarkable, her perseverance and hardship was a testament of her true devotion.

I thank God that I was given this opportunity and privilege to experience in my life the beauty of this Catholic tradition.



THE HOMESTEAD – AUTUMN

Pastoral – My Vocation

Who A Deacon Is

Some of the last words I heard before I became a deacon of the Church were those of Archbishop Alexander Sample, who ordained me and my fourteen classmates at St. Peter's Basilica on October 3. The most important question, he emphasized in his homily, was not "what a deacon does," but rather "who a deacon is." His words struck me as both fulfillment and promise.

How are they a fulfillment? In the last six years, God has shown me that the most important part of my life is not what I have done—there has been plenty of both good or bad, harmful and helpful—but what God has done to me and for me. Who I am, then, is a man who has been claimed and saved through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Nowhere was His saving hand more evident to me than my year in Hong Kong at OLMC. I had so much I wanted to *do* that year: succeed as a journalist, impress the important people I met, and burnish my resume. Some of that happened, but much of it did not; far more important was the invitation I got to go on the OLMC retreat, where I first felt a call to the priesthood.

Far more important still was OLMC adoration, the LBS Bible Study, spiritual direction with Fr. Law, and wise counsel from Sr. Victoria. Through these joyful experiences with all of you, God revealed that I was someone whom He chased after, someone He wanted to save. I learned that He did not love me because I was good, but rather because He was. Archbishop Sample's words on my ordination day fulfilled a seven-year journey of God saving my life.

How are these words a promise? My three weeks of diaconal ministry have been filled with joy: I have a particular love for serving at the altar and preaching. And yet what I *do* is not what October 3 was primarily about. As I promised to the Lord my celibacy for His sake, obedience to His bishop over me, and a life of prayer to Him, He promised to me that He would not fail me. Even when I make mistakes, He will not forget who I am nor who He has destined me to be. Even my sins will become occasions of grace through which He will work for the salvation of souls: my own and those to whom I minister.

My dear brothers and sisters of OLMC, those whom I know and those I do not: Please know that God is real. His plan for you and for me is far greater than we can imagine. It is no small thing to entrust Another with your happiness, but He takes it very seriously. Let Him show you what He can do with your desires! God Bless you and know of my prayers for you.

Deacon Gerard Gayou

