



# Catholic Women's League Hong Kong Newsletter

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## Dates to Remember

**Sept 8:** Feast of the Nativity of Mary

**Oct 12:** CWL committee meeting

**Oct 19:** CWL annual general meeting

**Nov 17:** CWL's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration

## From Fr Russell's Desk...

### Fear not, it is I



*Let not your hearts be troubled* (John 14.1). These words of Jesus were spoken at the Last Supper, as the apostles gathered at table for the last time around their Lord.

At that moment the Twelve were filled with foreboding: Jesus had just told them plainly that he was about to go to his death, that he would be betrayed by one of their number, and that Peter, of all people, would have denied him three times before cockcrow the following morning. And in the longer term, they must have foreseen, in the impending death of their Master, an uncertain future for themselves, with no other prospect than a return to their former lives as fishermen in Galilee, away from the suspicion and hostility of the authorities who would have known their association with Jesus.

To these well-loved companions of his, Jesus addressed those words of comfort: *Do not let your hearts be troubled*, words that are addressed to us too. But how are we not to worry? Don't we all view the future with some degree of anxiety: there may be a medical appointment looming, or a job interview, or we may worry about how we are going to pay the mortgage. The level of apprehension will differ from person to person. There are some people for whom life without risk is dull, and change a welcome challenge. Others cannot understand why anyone would want to climb Mount Everest, when going up in a lift makes their own palms sweat. Most of us fall in between these two extremes. But to all the fearful Jesus says: *Have faith in God, have faith in me*. If we believe that the risen Christ walks beside us as our companion on our journey through life as he walked with the couple on their way to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection, then reality will not seem hostile, nor other people a threat. The thought that we do not walk alone should provide strength and comfort. Nowhere does the Lord guarantee that there will be no setbacks in life, no bereavements, or suffering: what he did promise is that we will be given the strength to cope, that we will have what it takes to make it through the day. Our confidence lies in the assurance that our loving Father has a gracious plan for each of us and he will give us all the help we need to realise it.

*(Fr John Russell has been spiritual director of the Catholic Women's League since 1991.)*



# Congrats on your 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary!



## Celebrations on July 20th





# Another Year, Another Milestone

*Fr Russell completed 60 years as an ordained Jesuit priest this year, of which he has dedicated 26 years to the CWL as spiritual director. In an exclusive interview with CWL, he recalls some very interesting aspects about being a priest.*

## **When and where were you ordained?**

I was ordained with ten others on the feast of St Ignatius, 31 July 1957, the traditional ordination day in those years. The ceremony took place in the chapel of the Jesuit theologate at Milltown Park, Dublin.

## **How did you decide to join the Jesuits? What were the influences?**

I had a maternal uncle who was a Jesuit. But I think what was more influential in my choice of the Jesuits was the fact that I went to a Jesuit school.

## **60 years as an ordained priest is a long time indeed.**

### **How different is saying mass in your 60th year as compared to when you were just ordained a priest?**

#### **Does it become a matter of routine?**

Sixty years ago the language of the Mass was Latin. The priest and people faced in the same direction. Mass began at the foot of the altar.

There was only one reading in addition to the gospel: these were read at the altar. The faithful knelt at the altar rails to receive Communion on the tongue, distributed only by priests.

The Mass ended with the 'last gospel', the opening verses of St John's gospel. This was followed by the Hail Mary (x3), the Hail Holy Queen and a prayer to the archangel Michael.

Since the time of Pius XI these prayers were said for the conversion of Russia (in answer to Our Lady of Fatima). They were discontinued after the Second Vatican Council.

There is a saying: familiarity breeds contempt – well, if not contempt there is at least the danger of routine and undervaluing. Celebrating Mass every day can unfortunately lead to an unmindful, automatic recitation of the words of the Mass and a fading of the wonder, the awe, the sheer marvel of the Eucharist.

## **The church today faces a big challenge as vocations are falling. What do you think is the reason?**

As I see it, the calamitous drop in vocations in erstwhile Catholic countries can be traced to the general decline of religion worldwide, to the sex scandals which have led to a lowering of respect for the priesthood, to priests feeling marginalized, isolated and depressed, traits that are not appealing.

Moreover families are smaller: parents no longer feel pride in having a priest in the family. Some see a remedy for the shortage of vocations in the ordination of women: but this seems a non-starter; or the suspension of the law of celibacy and the ordination of older married men; or of not-so-old working men, part-timers, who would exercise the priesthood mainly on Sundays.

## **Are you happy you came to Hong Kong to serve as a Jesuit priest?**

I was very happy to have been assigned to Hong Kong and the longer I stay here the more fortunate I feel.

## **What are some of the assignments that you cherish?**

The two assignments I have most enjoyed have been my time as warden of Ricci Hall - dealing with young people, though at times it can be exasperating, tends to keep you young - and the years I was at the Catholic Centre: this was the first and only occasion I was involved full-time in pastoral ministry: I was sad on leaving it.

## **Do you have any message for us on the occasion of your 60th anniversary?**

My message to you is one of immense gratitude for all your kindnesses to me. You have been the instruments of God's boundless love and care for me. Please continue to pray for your priest- and for vocations too.

# Words of gratitude from our students

5 June 2017

Dear Mrs Wong,

How are you doing? I write to inform you of the current happenings in my life, as well as to express my sincere gratitude for your unwavering support throughout these years.

As you may already know, I've completed my DSEs in early May. If you ask me, I'm quite satisfied with how I performed as far as the exams go. Certainly, there are parts of the exams in which I probably could have done better, but overall, given that I do feel pleased with my performance at this moment, I don't think I could ask for more. The results will be released in mid-July, so my fingers are crossed that my efforts in the past 3 years translate into grades that grant me entry to a local university.

Since the start of May, I've taken up summer work as an administrative staff in a testing and certification company located in Lai Chi Kok. It's a 9-to-5 job that I do from Monday to Saturday which mostly involves scanning tasks. While I hope the salary earned in my three months in this job will supplement my savings for my future studies, I'm sure that the working experience gained will also aid me in my pursuit of a career later on.

On a final note, I'd like to take this opportunity to earnestly express my thanks to the help and support you and your organization has granted me. While the financial assistance has certainly helped me get through rough patches in my life, it is the unfaltering concern and confidence you've placed in me that has truly warmed me to the bone and kept me going. I will undoubtedly try my best to honor what you've done for me and pay it forward, devoting my life to helping others who are in need and less privileged than I am.

Best regards,

Justin

*(Justin has got admission into Hong Kong university. He studied at the Carmel Secondary School and was introduced to us by the social worker of his school.)*

22 June 2017

Dear CWL,

First of all, I would like to thank you for your financial support over the last few years. My life would have been a mess without your support. I am aware that you normally help students who study and live in Hong Kong. Even though I did not qualify to be subsidized, you still supported my financial needs over the last year. When I become a doctor in traditional Chinese Medicine, I must give back the financial support to help the needy.

I am studying in one of the best universities in China. It is very difficult as I need to study both traditional Chinese medicine and clinical medicine. But when I return to Hong Kong, I only need to pass the exam for traditional Chinese Medicine to become a doctor. However, students must pass all the exams to get a bachelor's degree in our school in China.

All the textbooks are written in Chinese. Since I studied all subjects in English during my secondary school life, you can understand how difficult it is for me to study the subjects. Apart from that, it is insane to have 12-15 subjects in one semester, and we need to pass in all of them. Because of the heavy workload, I barely do any sports and have no leisure time. From 8 am to 6:30pm, I need to attend different classes. After having dinner, I go to do my revision in the library from 7:30 pm to 11:00 pm. I go to sleep around 12:30 am and get up at 7:20am.

Next year will be my third year in Xiamen University. I do not have time to earn money during college term due to the heavy study pressure. I can only earn a little money during the summer holidays. However, I cannot work in Hong Kong because I do not have a home to live there. My plan is to become a tutorial teacher in Guangzhou where my grandparents live. But the salary is not enough to support my daily expenses. That is the reason why I really need your financial support even though I do not qualify your criteria.

Life is hard but love still exists. Hopefully all the needy can be helped and all mercy can be rewarded. I sincerely thank you for your love and kindness.

Yours sincerely,

Kim Kiu Bryant

*(Kim Kiu studied at Carmel Secondary School and is now studying Chinese Medicine. He is also learning acupuncture. While he was at school CWL provided funds for his daily expenses as well as food allowances.)*

# Mary brings new joy and meaning: Pope



Vatican City, Aug 15, 2017: On the Feast of the Assumption, Pope Francis said that in bringing Christ to the world, Mary also provides the joy and grace of her Son, which not only sustain us in difficulty, but are primarily intended for the weak and humble.

“Carrying Jesus, the Madonna also brings us a new joy, full of meaning; she brings us a new ability to pass with faith through the most painful and difficult moments; she brings us the capacity for mercy, forgiveness, understanding and supporting one another,” the Pope said on August 15.

Mary, he said, “is the model of faith and virtue,” and in contemplating her Assumption into Heaven, we give her thanks “because she always precedes us on the pilgrimage of life and of faith.”

We are also able to ask that she “guard us and sustain us, that we may have a strong faith, joyful and merciful; that she help us to be holy, to meet her, one day, in paradise,” he said.

Pope Francis spoke to pilgrims present for a special Angelus address given for the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven, which is celebrated annually on August 15.

The dogma of the Assumption of Mary – also called the “Dormition of Mary” in the Eastern Churches – teaches that when Mary’s earthly life ended, God assumed her body and soul into heaven.

The Assumption of Mary was a widely-held tradition even in the early centuries of the Church, and was a frequent meditation in the writings of saints throughout the centuries. However, it wasn’t until 1950 that it was dogmatically defined by Pope Pius XII in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*.

In his Angelus speech honoring the feast, Pope Francis turned to the day’s Gospel reading from Luke, in which Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, who is miraculously pregnant with John the Baptist, despite her advanced age. He noted how when Mary arrived to her cousin, having gone “in haste,” Elizabeth immediately proclaims, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”

In this moment, the greatest gift that Mary brought not just to Elizabeth, but to the whole world, “is Jesus, who already lives in her,” the Pope said.

“And he lives not only by faith and waiting, as in many other women in the Old Testament: from the Virgin Mary, Jesus took on human flesh, for his mission of salvation.”

The Pope then noted how preceding the encounter, Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah were filled with sadness by the fact that they couldn’t have children. However, in place of this, “now there is the joy of a child on the way: a child who will become the great John the Baptist, precursor of the Messiah.”

And when Mary arrives, this joy “overflows and bursts from their hearts,” he said, “because the invisible but real presence of Jesus fills all meaning: life, family, the salvation of the people...everything!”

*(Courtesy of Catholic News Agency)*



## Spreading the birthday cheer!



June and July: Melin Pereira, Paulette Santos, Denise De Sousa, Esther Ma, Celia Cruz, Patricia Kwok, Hilda Garcia and a guest.



August: Cathy Lam and Olivia Mak



## The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Catholic Church celebrates the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary on its traditional fixed date of September 8, nine months after the December 8 celebration of her Immaculate Conception as the child of Saints Joachim and Anne. The circumstances of the Virgin Mary's infancy and early life are not directly recorded in the Bible, but other documents and traditions describing the circumstances of her birth are cited by some of the earliest Christian writers from the first centuries of the Church.

Mary's parents Joachim and Anne had begun to devote themselves extensively and rigorously to prayer and fasting, initially wondering whether their inability to conceive a child might signify God's displeasure with them.

As it turned out, however, the couple were to be blessed even more abundantly than Abraham and Sarah, as an angel revealed to Anne when he appeared to her and prophesied that all generations would honor their future child: "The Lord has heard your prayer, and you shall conceive, and shall bring forth, and your seed shall be spoken of in all the world."