



Catholic Women's League Hong Kong Newsletter

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Dates to Remember

January 12: Hardship Fund Forum at CCC from 3 to 5pm

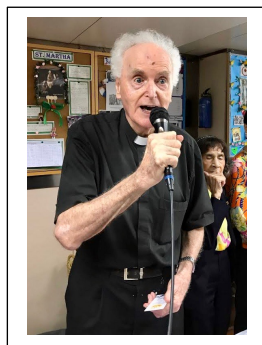
February 25: CNY potluck

The Mother's Evening Prayer group meets every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month - 7 to 8 pm.

Venue: 7th floor, Rm 708, Catholic Diocese Centre

From Fr Russell's Desk...

The Sign to the Shepherds



On the first Christmas night, the angels gave the shepherds a sign to enable them to recognize the child who is the good news of great joy: he will be found wrapped in swaddling clothes, they announced, and lying in a manger. Three times in his brief account of Christ's birth, St Luke mentions the manger in which Mary laid her child. In doing so, was he looking to the past, reminding us of Jahve's complaint voiced long before by the prophet Isaiah: *the ox knows its*

owner and the donkey knows the manger of its lord, but Israel has not known me and my people have not understood me. Is Luke telling us here that when the shepherds go to Bethlehem and, finding the child in the manger, start to praise God, Jahve's complaint no longer holds? Or was he perhaps looking to the future and hinting that this child lying where the animals find their food will be the nourishment of God's people, nourishment for their minds through his teaching, nourishment for their souls through his Eucharist? Bethlehem is where God, in the person of Christ, broke into our world. We should aim to make of ourselves a Bethlehem, so that Christ is born within us, transforming us, in such a way that those who encounter us, encounter not us, but the loving, serving, humble Christ.

God is love, and because he is a lover he is a giver and a sharer: he has given us human life and wants us to share his divine life. And since we are made in his image we are called to be lovers, givers, sharers.

May his love be yours abundantly this Christmas, and may the peace the angels sang of dwell in your hearts and in the hearts of your loved ones throughout the coming year.

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

Remembering Celia da Cruz

Our dear member Celia Maria da Cruz passed away on October 6. She had been a member of CWL for about 40 years. She and her husband Johnny are fondly remembered for their kindness and generosity.

A gentle heart

Celia Cruz was a name often mentioned by Cora. She had stopped coming to our Thursday Mass for a while because of chronic illnesses. I never met her until the day when we celebrated the 60th anniversary of Fr Russell's Ordination. It was one of the happiest events, and Celia came for Mass and the celebration lunch. She was one of the most gentle women I knew. She was quiet and spoke politely with a soft voice. At Christmastime last year, I received a Christmas card from her with her beautiful handwriting. I thought of visiting her, but the long drive to Taipo where she lived was always a deterrent. I finally visited her. She was hospitalized and was in a critical condition. Cora and I went together with heavy hearts thinking it would be our last visit. As we stepped into her room we were surprised to see Celia sitting up against her bed. She greeted us; her eyes sharp and focused. She chatted with Cora and asked for a snack. They even talked about going out for lunch together, and Celia would order her favourite Chinese dish – beef hofan. What a blessing to witness two great friends sharing moments of peace and joy!

The next time I saw Celia was in her house after she was discharged from the hospital. Cora, Noreen and I visited her on a Friday morning in September. Noreen and Cora brought homemade foods, but Celia was not excited. She looked paler and even thinner than the last time I had seen her. Her eyes had lost their lustre, and she seemed to be very tired. Cora and Noreen tried to talk to her, but she didn't respond much. Before we said goodbye, Celia asked Noreen to come to her and handed her a card. It was a birthday card. She remembered it was Noreen's birthday the next day. Then she asked for Cora and also gave her a card. She did not forget it was Cora's birthday the day before. I stood there, struggling to control my emotions as I witnessed such deep friendship and love. It was the last time that these three great friends were together. Noreen called me on the morning of October 6 and said, "I'm so glad we went to see Celia that day. She passed away this morning."

By Maria Chu



20 July 2017: Celia (extreme right) at a celebration for Fr Russell to mark his 60 years as an ordained Jesuit priest.



Celia (centre) flanked by her husband Johnny (left) and her sister Gloria (right)



Seen with the June and July b'day girls at her last CWL birthday celebration in July 2017

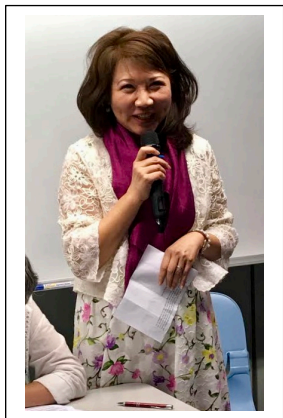
Celia was a quiet, reserved lady very devoted to her family and to the rosary. She leaves behind four children, two of whom live in Hong Kong, one in New Zealand and another in California. We joined CWL about the same time and almost right away she knew what she wanted to do -- help the Sisters of the Poor. At that time a kindly tiny nun called Sr Adelina took us under her wing, calling us whenever there were special occasions. The set-up at St. Joseph's Church in Kowloon was a delightful oasis and the residents seemed quite happy. We did physiotherapy on the residents -- a gentle massage on the arm or shoulder and played games with them.

Celia collected rosaries, beautiful ones mainly to give away to her friends. She did not talk much of her hobbies, and delighted in going with the flow.

By Cora da Silva

CWL AGM 2018

Our new President Irene Chen: It's payback time



It is with great pleasure that I accept the honor of being the President of CWL for the coming year.

I'd like to first of all thank our President for the past two years, Maria Chu, for her dedication and contributions to the League. She has worked tirelessly with such zeal and energy that truly it's a tough act to follow. Thank you, Maria.

When Maria decided to step down, CWL again faced the dilemma of who will step up to be its next leader. Few candidates had been approached, consulted; but all seemed to have their own personal concerns and commitments, including myself.

As I look back at what happened early in the year in that horrific car accident, when I was saved from falling over the steep hill by a single tree, and survived with no broken bones nor damaged nerve, it was a miracle. The fact that after exactly 8 months to the day, I can be standing here with my back straight almost 100% recovered, is another miracle. God worked in a very gentle way through whispers and scriptures to let me know that it is now the time to give back my life

to serve Him through CWL, thus I say "Yes." "Yes" to Him, my Savior, and "Yes" to our dear Spiritual Director, Fr. Russell.

I call on every one of you to join our new Committee Members and myself to serve actively. Each one of us is gifted with special talents. CWL can only succeed if all of us are willing to play an active role. Please continue to be generous with your time so that together we can make a difference in the lives of people who are struggling in our society.

Thank you and God bless you all.



The Committee: 2018-2019



Stepping down:
Maria Chu



Vote of Thanks by
Katherine Wong





B-I-N-G-O afternoons bring cheer



Wai Yin Elderly Volunteer Group perform at St Mary's

CWL's Bingo sessions have an interesting history, dating back to St Mary's Home in 1988. They were started with the intention of getting residents out of the comfort of their rooms. Thirty years on, the sessions still form an intrinsic part of our monthly activities.

In the late 80s, CWL also organised a trolley store with everyday necessities like washing detergents, toothpastes and toiletries at St Mary's Home. This was done once a week and the trolley was stored under a staircase. It was interesting to watch the folks pick and choose and see what was most popular. And this helped us in deciding the Bingo prizes.

CWL member Mary Wa says she has been helping with these sessions for about 20 years. They are held at St Mary's Home in Aberdeen on the fourth Wednesday of the month and at St Joseph's Home in Sheung Shuei on the second Tuesday of the month.

Yvonne Tsui and Olivia Mak have ensured the efficient running of the Bingo afternoons over the years. Olivia joined CWL in 1997 and has been the MC of these sessions since 1998.

The Bingo afternoons begin at 2 pm. The elderly sit around tables and are assisted by volunteers as some of them are not able to hear and identify the numbers properly.

It is heartening to see their enthusiasm. We have about 60 to 80 residents participating in these sessions. Many of them come down to play even though they are wheelchair-bound. Winners are still given prizes of tissue packets and toilet paper rolls.

After the Bingo session, residents take part in some form of light exercise. Mary Wa says, "The elderly are really like our old friends. They are always smiling and have accepted their physical weaknesses. If required we hold their hands and help them to do their exercise."

This is followed by a little treat of tea and cake which they thoroughly enjoy.

Mary Wa adds, "Volunteering for Bingo sessions is a very good opportunity to help us grow in love, patience and become more sensitive to the needs of the elderly".

With inputs from Debra Rull, Mary Wa, Olivia Mak

Up close with Fr Russell



The Mum's Evening prayer group was honoured to have our spiritual director, **Fr John Russell**, address them on December 4, on parents' roles in family and faith.

Here are a few nuggets of wisdom from a very enriching session:

*A mother's influence on her children is always far greater than her husband's. If there is desire to create a better, more peaceful world, the responsibility lies on mothers to prepare the next generation to be more peaceful, gentle and loving.

*There is nothing greater that a mother can do for her children than to love their father, and there is nothing greater that a father can do for his children than to love their mother.

*God in his indescribable providence matches parents with their children and you are the best parents for your children. If your children give you a heartbreak, or go astray or are rebellious, it is okay. It will pass, it is not a life statement. God has matched you

providentially. No other couple can be better parents for your children and that should put confidence in your ability to bring up these children as your sunlight and your joy.

*It is important that children know that their father and mother love one another and respect one another. That is the greatest thing that parents can give for their children and it is not difficult, because if we believe in the providence of God then we must believe that he has matched the parents.

*When I preside over a marriage, I always tell them your courtship does not end on your Wedding Day. Your courtship should last a lifetime.

*Never have a row in front of your children, if you can avoid that. Always show them that you love one another. A mature person knows there will be rows and disagreements, children don't realise that. When they see parents in an unloving incident they get frightened. They are not mature enough to realise that when you put fallible human beings together there would be sparks sooner or later.

*There are heartbreaks when children say they do not want to go for mass. It may not be their fault. The liturgy, singing, preaching may be boring. Perhaps it's time to shop around for another parish.

Don't panic. You could read the Bible or say the Rosary instead of forcing them into mass.

Don't get into the nagging mode because it will alienate the heart and it won't change the mind.

*It is important that children are aware that their parents are happy in their Faith and that their Faith is not a burden. Parents must try to show that they are happy about their Faith and religion and are happy to go to mass on Sunday. And if they cannot convey that happiness that is something to be resolved. If not there is little hope.

*The saying "The family that prays together, stays together" was a motto by a patron in a more different age. It may be difficult to find a time when the whole family is together. But we must do some activity together. I think it is terribly important that you eat together -- The family that eats together, stays together.

*Rituals are very important. They say something and show unambiguously that the love is still there. I noticed on one occasion in the family where a mother had scolded her child. After she had finished scolding him she put her arms around him. I'm sure that assured the son that the love was still strong and the warmth was still there.

*St John in one of his letters says if God has so loved us we must love one another. That's our way of saying Thank You to God for his love and we love those he loves.

*God is a lover and because he is a lover, he is a giver and a sharer. He has given us human life and he wants us to share his divine life through his sacraments so that we may be prepared to share his divine life finally in heaven.

We are made in God's image so we are called to be lovers, givers and sharers.



BIRTHDAY CHEER



Sept: Joyce Chang, Judy Pang, Nene Riveira, Mary Wa, Angelina, Catherine, Cathy Lam



Oct: Rosemary Sun, Anita Stevenson, Agnes Lao



Nov: Teresa Lopus and Maria Katemopoulos

CWL Diary...



Paulette Santos (left) and Catherine Wong (right) at Sing Yin School



Anita Stevenson presents the awards to students at Sing Yin School prize-giving ceremony on Nov 23. Fifteen students received Progress Grants from CWL on that day. CWL has allocated HK\$37,500 in 2018 to be given out as awards to students of this school.



A plaque of appreciation for CWL presented by Rev Johnson Dhos, SVD, Supervisor at Sing Yin School



13 Dec: Clicked after a CWL fellowship lunch at the Chariot Club