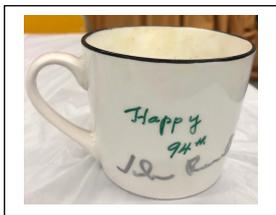




# Catholic Women's League Hong Kong Newsletter

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Volume 30 Issue 3



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## Dates to Remember

**Oct 15:** CWL AGM

**Nov 1:** All Saints' Day

**Nov 2:** All Soul's Day

## From Fr Russell's Desk...

### Love Comes First

Which is the first of all commandments? Apparently this was a matter much discussed among the learned *rabbis* of Jesus' time. We can imagine that the Scribe who put the question to Jesus expected him to name one of the 10 commandments, to keep the Sabbath, for example, or one of the other prescriptions of the Mosaic law, to pay tithes or not eat unclean food or not to eat without first washing. The Lord's answer: LOVE surprised and delighted his questioner. Love, not obedience. Here the New Testament differs from the Old. Of course obedience is important, but we obey because we love. Love comes first.



Jesus' answer is not surprising, for love is what we most seek after in life: it is the human emotion most talked about, most written about, most sung about, most desired. What is more important in life than to love and be loved. Love is the source of our happiness, the motive for heroism and self-sacrifice. The first part of Jesus' reply is a quotation from the Book of Deuteronomy. It has been recited daily as a prayer by pious Jews all down the centuries right to the present day. The second part of the Lord's reply, love your neighbour as yourself comes from the Book of Leviticus. There was nothing startlingly new in Jesus' statement. Its originality lay in the combining of two precepts.

It is very important that love of neighbour be combined with – and never separated from – love of God. To separate them can easily lead to intolerance and fanaticism, and to the brutalities of religious wars. We are only too familiar in our day with the fanaticism that believes killing those who do not share our beliefs is to do God a service.

Now the love for God that Jesus speaks of is a demanding love, a total love. We are to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This of course describes the love God has for us; he does not ask us to do towards him what he is not prepared to do towards us.

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Jesus is also telling us that nothing must ever come between us and God: no other person, no other relationship, and especially no material thing, no matter how precious or attractive. And when we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourself, are we not thereby commanded to love ourself as we love our neighbour, to treat ourself with the same gentleness, the same patience, the same forgiveness. People too often dislike themselves, lose patience with themselves, berate and scold themselves. Surely this is not what God wants us to do.

Now someone may object: how can we be commanded to love? Is not love a spontaneous emotion: I either feel love for a particular person or I do not and cannot do so. Of course it is natural and easy to love those we find attractive, to love those who love us. But Jesus is asking us to go a lot further. He is calling us to love the unfriendly, the ungrateful, the spiteful, those who have done us harm, even our enemies.

And so Jesus is not referring here to a spontaneous emotion, but to a firm determination always to wish our neighbour well, to treat him well when occasion offers, to do towards him what we would want him to do towards us. And for this we need the encouragement of a command, the assurance that this is what God asks of us. Moreover if God asks us to love in this way, it means that such love is possible, for God will not ask us to do the impossible, to do what he does intend to give the grace to accomplish.

Jesus's words tell us that our religion is a love affair. Should we not ask ourselves whether those who have come in contact with us would go away with that perception? Is it likely that non-believers observing the way we interact with family members and with people outside the family circle would be likely to say: *Ah now I know what religion is about, it is all about love.*

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

## God calls everyone, always: Pope Francis

### Vatican News :

At the Angelus on Sunday (Sept 20), Pope Francis reflected on Sunday's Gospel and highlighted two attitudes of the landowner in Jesus's parable about the workers in the vineyard: the "call" and the "recompense."

Jesus tells of a landowner who "goes out and calls" people to work in his vineyard. "That owner," said Pope Francis, "represents God, who calls *everyone* and calls *always*." This is how God acts even today, and we, in turn, are called to imitate this attitude by going out to seek people wherever they may be.

"This means being open to horizons that offer hope to those stationed on the existential peripheries," the Pope said, people "who have not yet experienced, or who have lost, the strength and light that comes with meeting Christ."

He added, "The Church must always be like God, always going out. And when the Church is not going out, she gets sick." Pope Francis said it is better for the Church to be "going out" announcing the Gospel, despite the dangers, than to grow sick by remaining closed in on herself. "God always goes out, because He's a Father Who loves – and the Church always needs to do the same thing, always going out."

### Going beyond justice

The second attitude of the landowner also mirrors the action of God. When he pays the workers their wages, the owner gives all of them the same pay, no matter how long they worked. From this we understand "that Jesus is not speaking about work and just wages, but about the Kingdom of God and the goodness of the heavenly Father," said Pope Francis.

God "does not look at the time and the results," the Pope continued. Instead, He considers "the availability and the generosity with which we put ourselves at His service." This way of acting, said Pope Francis, "is *more than just*, in the sense that it goes beyond justice and is manifested in *Grace*."

Pope Francis concluded his Angelus address with the prayer that "Mary Most Holy might help us to feel every day the joy and wonder of being called by God to work for Him, in His field which is the world, and His vineyard which is the Church."

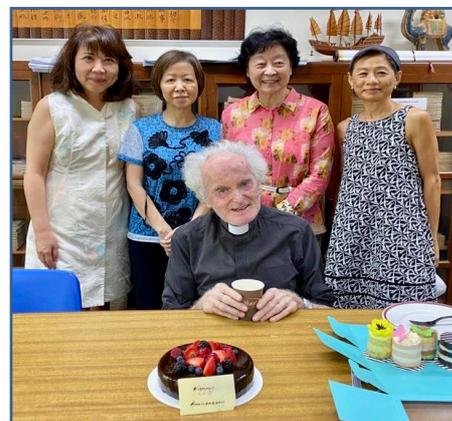
And he prayed that we might "have as our only recompense [God's] love, Jesus's friendship, which is *everything* for us."

# Standing up to the challenges of the times

Summer is coming to an end and fall is just around the corner. Very soon we will be celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival.

We had our last CWL Thursday mass on July 9th and less than a week later the Covid-19 cases suddenly surged in numbers, and all activities that we planned for had to be either postponed or scaled down.

On July 30<sup>th</sup>, the four executive officers brought lunch to Wah Yan to celebrate Father Russell's 63<sup>rd</sup> priestly ordination. After the lunch, a zoom meeting was arranged for members so that they could offer their congratulations to Father. He was pleasantly surprised to see some of you on screen. This was his first experience talking to you through a tablet. Afterwards we took him for a drive and a short walk in the Cyberport mall. Father also connected with his younger brother in Dublin with whom he had a jovial chat. This was made possible, thanks to Joyce who prearranged the meeting. Not long after we took him back to Wah Yan, it began to rain. The Hong Kong observatory had forecast a stormy day. We were hoping it would not happen until after 4 pm. God Almighty knew what we wished and blessed us with an enjoyable afternoon.



In Mid-August, we began an hour of prayer through Zoom. Following a suggestion made by Anita Stevenson, our Treasurer Maria Chu took the initiative and volunteered to prepare the prayers. Instead of our Thursday morning Holy Hour, we now have an hour of prayer every Thursday night from 9 -10 pm. It has been our tradition to thank the Lord as the day begins and now we thank the Lord as the day draws to a close before we retire for the night. It follows the same format as our Holy Hour with a Prayer Leader, but all participants take part. We have about 12 members participating in the prayers each week. Occasionally, we have a short video clip about a saint if it is close to their feast day. We are grateful to have Fernanda as our Tech Host. She prepares the background music, posts all prayers/holy pictures/videos, and monitors it to make sure it runs smoothly. We welcome any input and encourage more of you to attend and pray

with us.

Another major annual event in August is the celebration of Father Russell's birthday. This year he turned 94 on August 24<sup>th</sup>. We are grateful for having him as our Shepherd since January 3, 1991, and this year marks his 30th year with CWL. We thank him for his words of Wisdom through his homilies, Bible studies and retreats over the years, his kindness, patience and his sense of humour. He has imbued us with the teachings of Christ stressing always on love and forgiveness. One of St. Bernard's quotes reminds me of what Fr Russell is a true exemplar of, "What we love, we shall grow to resemble". Due to the strictures on social distancing, we could only have a small gathering for his birthday celebration. But it was made beautiful with a Zoom party. You can see pictures of the birthday celebration on **Page 4**.

With the start of the academic year, our Fund Committee has been diligently working on interviewing and approving student tuition assistance and hardship cases. With the social unrest last year and the pandemic this year, Hong Kong families have taken a big hit. This year we have approved 52 cases which include all categories. For an update on our plans for 2020-21, please read the report on **Page 6**.

Let's continue to pray to our Heavenly Father to protect us from the virus, healing the sick and the broken hearted, and patiently waiting with confidence for a better tomorrow. May God bless you all. **By Irene Chen**



On a call with his brother

# Zooming into Fr Russell's Zoom Party!

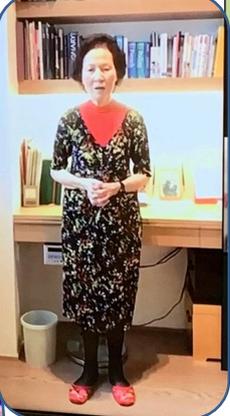


The coffee mug keepsake

Yes a zoom party to celebrate Father's 94<sup>th</sup>! While nine members met at Wah Yan School on Aug 20 for the big day, others Zoomed in from here and overseas to make it extra special. Members sang, spoke to Father and partook of the cake-cutting. And all this was made possible thanks to our tech expert Fernanda.



Lily



ancy  
composer who  
many songs  
at 123 45  
time song for  
Fr Russell



Mary,  
Thank you for  
your lovely singing, &  
making the beautiful  
video with Mama Mary



# Walking by Faith, Inspiring Others

A friend of mine has three different images of Fr Russell. When he sported short hair, he was more like an admiral – displaying good leadership skills and authority. When his hair grew to medium length, he looked like a musician or a conductor of an orchestra: through his spiritual guidance, he reached the depth of our hearts by being in harmony with our underlying feelings. When his hair grew long, he looked like Einstein - full of wisdom. Fr Russell has the ability to get the best out of people. (*Experiences of married couples in 'Diamond Jubilee celebration of Fr Russell', 2017, Jesuit Magazine, Taiwan*)

To many friends, Fr. Russell is a wise and intelligent man, but his heart's desire was to respond to God's call to be a priest. As the Ricci Hall warden in the 70s, he led a group of residents who took Vietnamese children for outing and recreation. He taught them life lessons of caring for disadvantaged groups in the community. He himself has been a weekly English tutor to the boys at the detention centre for more than 40 years.

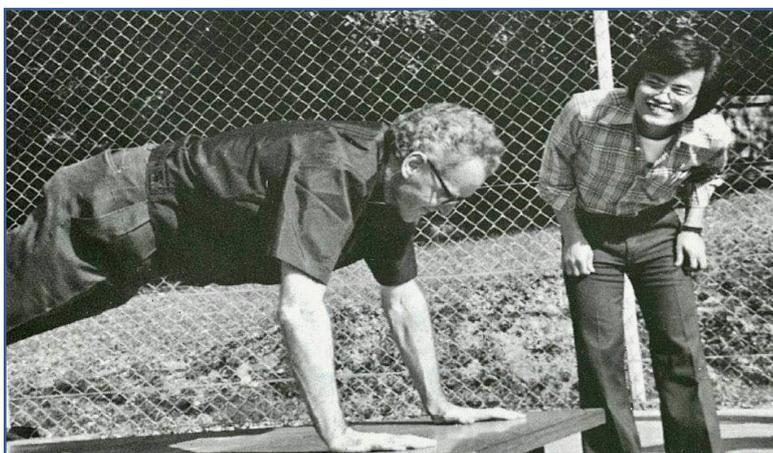
While he was a warden he took a blind student to swim occasionally. As Ricci Hall chaplain he was attentive and helped a lady afflicted with polio who struggled her way down the steps to Ricci Chapel, while her husband parked his car. He went to the airport to receive a young man extradited from an overseas prison, got him a job and kept in touch until he got married. On another occasion he received an emergency call and rushed to a hotel to talk to an Alcoholic Anonymous member from Australia and ended chatting with him for hours. He saved him from suffering a relapse.

He has visited friends when they were hospitalized and kept vigil in their last hours. I have known at least 50 such people and there are many more unknown to me. He is one of the founding members of hospice care in Hong Kong.

As chaplain of the Catholic Centre (2003-2012), he spent most of his weekday lunch hours listening to confession. His daily walk from and back to Wah Yan has been good for his health. When asked about it he replied in jest, "If I do not walk, I will probably die of heart attack. If I walk, I shall die of lung cancer."

His sermon at the Feast of the Transfiguration two years ago struck me. He said that we as Christians should be moulded in Christ so that others attracted by our Christian way of life would be inspired to search and find Jesus. It took me two years to understand his preaching. There is this story of a young man who used to see Fr Russell walk past Hopewell Centre to Wah Yan daily. (This was prior to 2012). He enquired about Father and was very impressed to learn that he (Father) had been a missionary in Hong Kong for 60 years. This inspired him to learn about Catholicism and later he was baptized into the Catholic faith.

I understand that God is at work daily, continually creating us. Sometimes Jesus is transfigured and manifested through our Christian way of life. **By Joyce Chang**



From Ricci Hall days!



Our very own Einstein

# Our outreach: Making a difference

One of our League's major fund-raising events is the Annual Grand Raffle, the main purpose being to raise funds to help needy families through our tuition support for students and our financial aid for hardship cases.

Despite not being able to sell tickets at the churches this year as we normally did for 40 years, we were still able to raise the targeted amount of funds thanks to the perseverance and generosity of our members, friends, benefactors and well-wishers.

In July, we invited applications from supervisors, social workers and parents. About 63 local students applied for our tuition assistance. Our CWL members Maria Chu, Catherine Wong, Joyce Chang, Judy Pang, Laura Ho and Paulette Santos interviewed the students and helped assess them. Due to the government requirement on social distancing, the interviews were conducted on Zoom in the second half of August. It was a totally new experience for me and I could observe the applicants up-close, and was surprised at how adept youngsters were with technology.

We evaluated applicants on their learning abilities, family and financial backgrounds, academics, achievements, aspirations and talents. It was sad to note that in many families the breadwinners had lost their jobs in recent months.

This year we have approved 47 cases. Our emphasis was mainly secondary students, particularly Secondary 6, as their performance in the final school year determines whether they can continue with further education. It is encouraging to note that four of the Secondary 6 students whom we supported last year (2019-20), were able to enter university. One of them is Chan Li, a student of Ma On Shan Secondary School who sent us a thank you note. (See picture)

This year we decided to extend our tuition support to ethnic minority students as well. These non Chinese students face many challenges as they study in the local school system. Social workers from Unison and the Diocesan Pastoral Centre in Kowloon helped us identify needy students and we are now extending our tuition assistance to three Pakistani and two Nepali students this academic year.

## Hardship cases

We have approved 21 cases this year. Four of the applications for tuition assistance were so tragic in nature that we decided to extend our hardship assistance to them. Appended below are the profiles of two new cases that we have endorsed.

The applicant is an 8-year-old girl. She migrated from China to Hong Kong in 2015 alongwith her mother to join her father. The family is on CSSA. In 2013 the applicant's father suffered from cancer and stroke and is partially paralyzed and wheelchair-bound. Hence the applicant's mother is the main caretaker of the family. Regrettably in June this year, the applicant's mother was diagnosed with lung cancer and underwent an operation. The family is under very high stress particularly as the mother still has to take care of her husband. The applicant studies in Primary 2 and her grades are fair. Her parents' education level is low. A monthly hardship grant of \$1,500 has been approved to help the young applicant with her tutorial subsidy and other needs.

The applicant is a 11-year-old boy, studying in Primary 6. He used to live with his parents, paternal grandmother and uncle. His parents divorced in 2015 but they still stayed in the same house for financial reasons. Needless to say the family conflict has persisted. The applicant's mother is the breadwinner and continues to buy food for the whole family. The boy's father did not offer care or support to the applicant. He is a gambler and apparently on drugs. The applicant's mother, who could not tolerate the controlling behaviour of her ex-husband any more rented a subdivided room and moved there with the applicant. This young boy attends Primary 6. He has aspirations to study and would like to attend tutorial classes. He hopes to attain a better secondary placement. A hardship grant of \$2,000 per month has been approved. **By Paulette Santos**



# Remembering Fatima da Rosa



My mother, Fatima da Rosa, worked for most of her adult life. But after she retired at 60 in September 1993, she became more active with CWL and was a Life Member. She even encouraged me to become a Life Member!

My mother would extol the good and selfless work of the CWL. Mom was particularly active during the time of Mary Chow's Presidency and when Mary's term ended, my mother became the President.

The major activity then was still the selling of CWL raffle tickets at the churches and inside the MTR. The funds raised would go towards supporting under-privileged students (about

30 - 40 students back then) and to conduct bingo sessions for the elderly at St Joseph's and St Mary's Home.

One evening when I called mom at the end of her "day" ...she recounted that she and a few ladies had been selling raffle tickets inside the MTR from 9 am until early evening. I could just imagine her the whole day in her heels (she would never wear flat pumps) and with no place to sit inside the MTR to take a short rest.

But to my surprise she still sounded sprightly and would only remark that those who were well-dressed rarely stopped to buy a ticket; she was miffed with them. However, those not so well-dressed would stop to purchase a ticket or two and with little coercion.

Through her association with Mary Chow and other ladies from CWL, mom attended Cenacle meetings in Kowloon Tong once a week. She enjoyed the camaraderie so much, a few of them made a trip to the Holy Land in early 2000.

Perhaps my mother will be best remembered by fellow CWL Ladies such as Auntie Melin (Pereira), Martha Dinga, Betty Olaes, Rita Sousa, Linda Senna, Hilda Garcia, Pat Reyes Tsang, Doris Marques and Lola Young for praying the Rosary daily.....not just one Mystery but all four Mysteries in a day. She was the one who taught me the Luminous Mystery, thank you mom!

By Daphne da Rosa

## CWL Presidents

**Mrs J Martin:1960-62**

**Mrs Patricia Voller:1962-64**

**Mrs Vivian Rafeek: 1964-65**

**Mrs Betty Nolan:**

**Mrs Barbara Wei: 1971-**

**Diana Bacon: 1975-6**

**Christine Rowlands: 1976-78**

**Betty Wong: 1978-79**

**Hilda Garcia: 1979-81**

**Elizabeth Sullivan: 1981-82**

**Sheila Marsh: 1982-1987**

**Cora da Silva: 1987-1988**

**Gloria Wu De Elias: 1988-**

**Mary Isabel Chow:1992-94**

**Fatima da Rosa: 1994-99**

**Pacita Roads: 1999-2009**

**Joan Ng: 2009-2012**

**Landy Ling: 2012-2015**

**Laura Ho: 2015-2016**

**Maria Chu: 2016 – 2018**

**Irene Chen: 2018 to date.**

## Memories from yesteryears

