

Catholic Women's League Hong Kong Newsletter

17 November 2017

80th Anniversary Special

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Congratulations to Fr Russell and all our CWL members on the occasion of our 80th anniversary!

We would also like to thank our sponsors, patrons and supporters over the years. Together, it has been an incredible journey!

From Fr Russell's Desk...

Saluting the valiant women of yesteryears



The CWL arrived in Hong Kong in 1937, eighty years ago. We know little about its activities prior to the Pacific War. With the Japanese occupation the League went into hibernation. In the early years of the peace, as Hong Kong struggled to its feet, the CWL also came back to life.

We know little of its detailed history in those days as life was slowly returning to normal: keeping records has not been the League's strong point. From the memories of survivors of those years we learn that in 1949 Mrs Lilian Perry was the first post-war president, and we can catch a glimpse of the extraordinary activity of the CWL in the 1950s and 1960s.

It was in 1951 that the League established small-scale clinics, the first of which served homeless people squatting at Belchers Fort on Mount Davis, occupying the old gun emplacements and munitions stores. Other free clinics were set up – at one time the ladies staffed no fewer than seven of them, the most memorable being that on a sampan from which rudimentary medical care was dispensed to boat dwellers in the now-filled-in Staunton Creek near Aberdeen. CWL members also fitted out two mobile canteens for times of emergency in the aftermath of natural disasters when fires – big and small – regularly broke out in the squatter areas where the tens of thousands of refugees, fleeing from the Mainland, eked out an uncertain living, clinging precariously to the hillsides in constant danger of being swept away by landslides caused by the wind and rain of summer typhoons. To us today who live in more settled and prosperous times, and have got used to government agencies being largely responsible for the health and welfare of the population – to us it seems incredible – perhaps those were more leisurely times – that that little band of CWL members could achieve so much. There were giants on the earth in those days!

As we celebrate eighty years of the League's existence, we remember them with pride and affection, those anonymous heroines of the CWL, those valiant women who responded so generously to the needs of their impoverished fellow-citizens who were then facing an unpredictable future. We salute them and return thanks for what they achieved and for the legacy of service they have bequeathed to us. They set the gold standard for our League in Hong Kong. May God be their reward.

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

Living the Legacy



From the 1960s



The Committee on Dec 9, 2014



October 19, 2017

CWL Presidents down the years...



Mrs J Martin



Patricia Voller (left) seen giving the keys to the winner of the first prize of the 1962 raffle.



Hilda Garcia



Sheila Marsh



Past Presidents: Sitting from L to R: Betty Nolan, Christine Rowlands, Barbara Wei; Vivian Rafeek (standing, extreme rt)

Mrs J Martin:1960-62

Mrs Patricia Voller:1962-64

Mrs Vivian Rafeek: 1964-65

Mrs Betty Nolan:

Mrs Barbara Wei: 1971-

Diana Bacon: 1975-76

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:

Pacita Roads: 1999-2009

Joan Ng: 2009-2012

Landy Ling: 2012-2015

Laura Ho: 2015-2016

Maria Chu: 2016 - to date



Cora da Silva



Pacita Roads



Mary Chow



Joan Ng



Laura Ho



Maria Chu

Memories from the past...



About 300 children from Ma On Shan were entertained at a party held by CWL in December 1960 at the Franciscan Sisters of Mary School there. Pic shows Mrs J Martin, Mrs A T Dow, Mr A V Dow and Mrs Dorothy Pickering.



Mrs Martin gives the first prize winner of the 1960 Raffle the keys of the Austin A7.



CWL members at a charity programme with children at the Little Sisters of the Poor home



CWL ran a boat clinic, the Madonna in the early 60s to provide medical care to fishermen families in Aberdeen. The boat was bought for 100 pounds through a donation from CWL UK.



A CWL sewing project of the 60s. In the 70s a group of ladies made padded jackets and blankets to be donated



Patricia Voller donates a van to the Little Sisters of the Poor in the 1960s



CWL donates cottages to the poor.

...of people, events and activities



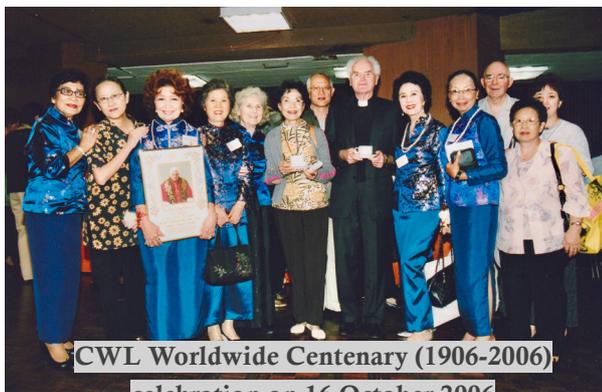
Cora da Silva (left) and Joyce Chang at a charity walk for the elderly in 1986



Members perform at the Christmas party in 2003.



Fr Russell's 80th birthday celebration in August 2006



CWL Worldwide Centenary (1906-2006) celebration on 16 October 2006



2007: Celebrating Fr Russell's 50th anniversary as a Jesuit priest



70th anniversary celebrations



Christmas 2014 lunch at the Jockey Club

Bella Sun, a leading light

I was introduced to CWL through my mother Bella Sun, around 1980. As a newer member then, she realised that most of the members attended the Thursday Mass, perhaps stayed for prayers and Benediction and then left. There was no sense of belonging to CWL. Mom decided to start a newsletter so that all members would know what was happening in the League. Since my mother was a very good writer, she also wrote many articles for the newsletter.

In those days, CWL only raised funds at a bazaar at St Joseph's Church. My mother decided to start a Raffle. This was when I was roped in to help.

Although other members helped solicit sponsors for prizes, mom single-handedly applied for the government licence and liaised with the printers. The two of us would pick up the tickets and distribute them to the members. And then we used to sell them. I used to dread April. I remember expressing my frustration and asking her why we had to do all that for CWL?



Bella Sun celebrating her 100th b'day with CWL members on April 14, 2013 at the Chariot Club



Bella Sun celebrating her 100th b'day at a CWL potluck in April 2013

Then Mom said that God gave her the ability to do things well, thus it was her duty to return the courtesy.

Mom was born in Vancouver, returning to Hong Kong in her early teens when her father had a stroke. She attended St Mary's where she found God. She was a fervent believer, evangelizing her family who were all baptized.

Mom lived through the horrors of the Wars. She believed that education would provide a better quality of life and an enhanced empathy towards our neighbours. She was a principal for several schools. **By Rosemary Ho**

(Bella Sun passed away in Hong Kong on August 28, 2013. Her daughter, Rosemary Ho has been a CWL member since 1983.)

Remembering Sheila Marsh

Sheila was the kindest soul, always sharing with people her time and resources. Her presidency was markedly efficient and productive, and members responded well to the warmth and grace with which she gave work assignments/instructions. She was most patient and understanding and working with her was always a joy. She introduced the hourly raffle at St. Joseph's Church which was a lot of fun. She retired from CWL when her husband, the then Stipendiary Steward of the Jockey Club was posted to Kuala Lumpur.

(As told by Cora da Silva)



Sheila Marsh (fourth from right) with Bella Sun, Joan, Hilda and other CWL members

CWL is like my second family: Joan Ng

Here's what I remember...

There were social gatherings of members, hosted in the homes of generous ladies. Lady Margaret Lobo in Stubbs Road, Cora da Silva up in the Peak, Debra Fung in Repulse Bay, Anna Leung in Blocks Link, Bella Sun in Fontana Gardens, Ruby Tang on Conduit Road, Lupe Lee and a Russian Lady on Conduit Road and Elaine Wu in Deep Water Bay.

There were many times when we went along with Mary Hardi, an Indonesian lady who brought food commodities like cooking oil and rice in her Mercedes car, for the Sisters of Charity, and spent time in their chapel.

As far as and as long as I can remember, I joined the CWL in the 70s. Fr. Fergus Cronin was the spiritual director and he was also taking care of visiting our military navy during their break from service in Wanchai, when they were resting and relaxing. There were only a handful of western English-speaking ladies and I was asked to help with some translation when we were assigned to visit the underprivileged in sub-divided apartments.



At the September
2017 potluck

CWL is like a second family for me where I could pray, meet new friends, share our thoughts and help the poor. We used to have our CWL meetings next to the chapel and the late secretary Nancy Lai would buy frozen Sara Lee cakes for our tea break. There were only about 15 members.

I am obliged forever and thank CWL for giving me the opportunity to work for the welfare of the community, praising the Lord for all His blessings.

When we started the fund-raising Raffle, I remember Arthur Garcia and his wife Hilda (past President) were very keen to help sell tickets at the MTR stations. Mr Garcia, a Judge then, was familiar with his legal associates and with his presence and perseverance, we always managed a very successful sale. Additionally, Mr Garcia helped in various churches and very generously encouraged and helped build our funds.

Hilda and I used to help buy and arrange flowers for the chapel at Wah Yan College in Hong Kong.

(Joan Ng has been a CWL member for about 40 years.)



Joan with famous movie/TV star
Law Lan and CWL members at the
Hardship fund meeting in Dec 2016

CWL members are inspiring: Agnes Chiu Lee

I am one of the new members at CWL, and I joined along with my mother Juliana who has moved back to Hong Kong after being away in Toronto for 35 years. It is indeed very comforting to see how caring the ladies are to Juliana and she has felt very welcome.

Although it has been just about 19 months since March 2016, I shamefully admit that I have been absent from many meetings because of my frequent travels.

I appreciate sharing time with my mother in such a unique spiritual way. I do treasure participating in all the Masses, activities, lunches, prayers and Holy Hours whenever I can. I hope to commit my continuous support to the underprivileged families programme, to help the music team if called for, and to sell raffle tickets with the lovely ladies again; *that was indeed fun and rewarding at St Anne's Church last Summer!*

I have been very inspired by the humility and obedience of members, the sharing of their talents and their contributions to the League. There is this sense of unity, warmth and peacefulness that brings me every Thursday for mass and Holy Hour, reminding me of the core pillars in attentiveness, hospitality, community and stability from the Benedictine characters and teachings that I have been following. I look forward to seek holiness with our members and many others who are involved in this path of life.

(Agnes Chiu Lee joined CWL in March 2016 along with her mother Juliana.)

Some recollections: Cora da Silva

When I joined the CWL in the early 1980's, the President was a lovely, Irish lady Sheila Marsh, who was hardworking and witty. At that time it was not a big group. Their meetings were held in the foyer of the chapel, seated in a circle with chairs from the church.

Sheila noticed me going into the chapel and asked if I would like to join and I had no hesitation. Besides she lived in my building and we could go together.

Our fundraising affairs -- Bring and Buy -- was held in our homes and if I remember it was also open to relatives and friends. We didn't make a lot of money but it was great fun. Johnny Cruz (Celia's husband) had a friend who had a handbag factory and Johnny would give us boxes of new handbags which sold quickly.

Our Christmas lunches were quite successful too as we had wealthy members who supported us. When I was President we had an auction of collectibles from our members, that generated some income as well. Our jewellery was bought by friends of donors.

Sheila got permission from St. Joseph's Church to set up an hourly raffle after the masses. We brought our merchandise to church and she rang 'the bell' after each mass for winners. Raffle tickets were sold before mass. Everything on sale was from our members and their friends, who had factories.

Prior to the new building of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Aberdeen, a few of us brought canned goods, crackers, toilet paper etc. for the elderly and brought them around in a trolley. Three of us did this on a once-a-week basis.

On our visits to the home run by the Little Sisters of the Poor, we started a weekly (or monthly) "physiotherapy" session. An Argentinian lady volunteer suggested that those in wheelchairs be included in the activities as well, so we would have them lined up and they would pass the ball on to the next resident. This was done to the tune of rock-and-roll music and was a great success.

We had a monthly presence at Little Sisters of the Poor in Kowloon as well, the old charming building. Also monthly visits to China Coast Community.

Georgina Sumantri who now lives in Singapore had a prayer meeting in her house once a week, followed by dinner cooked by her helpers. She always had priests and members who were willing to join in. She suggested the prayer meeting for the CWL and so five of us started doing the Prayers of St. Bridget on a Thursday morning. The current form of Holy Hour was produced by our past president the late Pacita Roads. The weekly prayer meeting spread by word of mouth and became a weekly event. In the early days we only brought sandwiches to share at our potluck lunches.

In the early nineties a group of Chinese ladies (maybe 10-12) were introduced to us. They were Buddhists who made padded jackets/blankets in their workshop. They heard of our work with the elderly and donated many of their beautiful products to us. We gave the jackets to the eldercare homes and also to the Missionaries of Charity where we also had a presence. Once a month our member Mary Hardi (also in Indonesia now) and a few of us loaded the back of her car with tinned goods and toilet paper, (more like the Little Sisters of the Poor) for distribution. These were bought with donations from our CWL ladies.

(Cora da Silva joined CWL in 1984-85.)

Notes from Gloria Wu De Elias

These are the days that I wish I had kept a diary. Sometimes I think that I'm still young but my children bring me back to reality and I have to accept that time goes by and that we have to enjoy the present. That's life.

I joined the CWL in 1984, introduced by Lupe Lee and at that time the president was an Irish lady, Sheila Marsh. After she left, Cora became president and that's the period that we were most active. Then came Hilda, Evelyn and Pacita, then I left so now we are part of the CWL history.

(Gloria Wu De Elias joined CWL in 1984.)



Cora (left) and Hilda Garcia at a May sale in 1987 at St Joseph's



Cora (left) and Hilda on Nov 2, 2017 at Club Lusitano

I am blessed to be able to serve CWL: Debra

How young we are!

I first came to know of CWL, 50 years ago. I was filling medicine bottles at the CWL clinic in Aberdeen. A summer job for me during that school vacation. The time when my aunt, Vivian Rull Rafeek was president. My grand aunt was also a CWL member before her; and I would be a third generation member.

Besides helping at the clinic, CWL was also involved with collecting supplies from overseas donors at that time.

This took place before the establishment of the Hong Kong welfare department. In those days our members were mostly expatriates and well-connected, so there was a good supply of donations.



**Debra with a friend
at the Centenary
celebration in 2006**



In December 2015, Debra launched an initiative "Totes for Charity". She has created a range of products like tote bags, hand towels, wine cases and jewellery from scrap. To date it has raised \$10,500 which has been used for CWL projects.

There was a time when CWL operated a soup kitchen and supplied rice and oil.

After returning to Hong Kong in the 70's, I met Amalia Sales who introduced me to the League again. At that time she held the CWL retreat in Kowloon.

There are many activities we have today that are based on the current needs, and they may differ from the years gone by. And like all members we have our own story.

I am very blessed to be able to serve CWL with charity, work and loyalty.

I wish CWL continued success, the years may be many but the work remains as new as the day. Prayers and God's love be with all!

(Debra Rull joined CWL in 1979.)

Melin: Enjoys Thursday prayers and potlucks



I joined CWL about forty or more years ago. Unfortunately I can't remember anything about the early years. I can only recall from the year when Fr Cronin was our Spiritual Director and even then I wasn't able to fully participate in any of the activities as I was working.

To me the most important thing about our Thursday meetings is the opportunity to spend time worshipping and adoring Our Lord. The prayers and hymns are so beautiful and helps me spiritually.



**Melin with the residents of the
Missionaries of Charity home**

Also, the potluck lunches promote fellowship and camaraderie and I really appreciate Fr. Russell's Bible study with the question and answer session.

I am so glad that now in my retirement I am able to participate more actively in the activities of CWL. May God continue to bless us all.

(Melin Pereira has been a CWL member for about 40 years.)

Vickie: Wants CWL to grow and reach out to others

I have been a member of CWL for more than 30 years now and worked as a committee member for five years. Those were memorable times as well as challenging for us, who were trying to create a new vision for our group in the new Hong Kong of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Lady Margaret Lobo and Pacita Roads, our past Presidents were very enthusiastic in the projects and activities proposed by the members.

Pacita was a very aggressive president, who promoted the Hong Kong CWL onto the international field. She encouraged our participation in the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO) conferences, both at the regional and international levels. We had a delegation to the conferences in Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, Rome and Washington DC.

CWL, HK was the only Catholic women's group that was represented in the worldwide organization, therefore we were representing China in the international gathering of Catholic women. Somehow, China also had a presence.

My dream for HK CWL, is to grow and give light as well as to reach out to the rest of the Chinese women in China.

(Vickie Peard has been a member of CWL for over 30 years.)



Vickie Peard (first from right) at a lunch celebration on July 13, 2017

Linda Yim: Growing in faith over the years

I still fondly remember the day I finished attending mass at St. Margaret's Church and met Yvonne Tsui selling raffle tickets at the front door. I was impressed by her enthusiasm, kindness and sincerity. That was my first exposure to CWL. Because of her introduction, I decided to join CWL, paid my annual fees but was not an active member as I was quite busy helping my husband run his knitwear business.

Fast forward two years to the summer of 2014, my husband's chronic lung condition (pulmonary fibrosis) deteriorated rapidly with the doctors giving him just six months to live. On the doctor's advice we had no choice but to travel to Stanford Medical Centre, California for a possible double lung transplant operation. Miraculously, we had to wait only six weeks for a suitable donor and my husband underwent a successful transplant operation on October 21, 2014. During that difficult period, I prayed fervently every day for God's blessings and mercy and for my husband's full recovery.

We returned to Hong Kong in June 2015 and Grantham Hospital took over his medical care smoothly with scheduled clinic visits and life-long anti-rejection medications. This October it will be three years since he had the lung transplant.

Looking back, I am so grateful to God and am blessed with his grace and mercy. He was with me at every step of this difficult journey. I had cried so many times pleading for his help when I was so overwhelmed, exhausted and stressed out. My cross was getting heavier each day. Somehow, with my total trust and hope in God and with continued prayers from family and friends, I managed to pull through the darkest night.

By early 2016, my husband's condition stabilized and he slowly returned to work. I was able to spend more time at CWL functions, attending mass and Holy Hour and sometimes lunch too. CWL members are all very friendly and supportive. Father Russell is inspiring and remarkable. I am so glad to be part of the spiritual community. I helped sell raffle tickets and contributed to the special hardship fund this year (2017) and hope to be engaged in more meaningful activities in the future.

My faith in God has grown so much in the past few years. "The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27). I realized that the more we closely unite ourselves with God's will, the more we find fulfilment and the purpose of our lives.

(Linda Yim joined CWL in October 2012.)



Linda Yim (2nd from right) selling raffle tickets at St Anne's Church on May 7, 2017

I have learnt so much from CWL: Sylvia

There are memories that time does not erase...so are my memories of my days at CWL as a member and Honorary Secretary for many years.

Shopping around the Central area was one of my favourite pastimes while I lived in Hong Kong in early 1995. But being able to attend Holy Mass on a Thursday morning where the CWL office/chapel was located, made it more attractive and worthwhile for me to be in Connaught Road Central at this particular time (10:30am and day (Thursday). So that's where it all began.

My admiration for this "senior" group of ladies that were all so well-dressed and looked all so happy and close-knit, that gathered in the chapel first to attend Mass and stay for Holy Hour, Meditation Prayers, and to say the Rosary each and every week, made me sign up to be a member! It also helped that the former Pastor of St. Anne's church in Stanley, Fr. Elmer P. Wurth, was a great supporter of CWL. I was a parishioner at St Anne's.

It did not take me long to become totally committed to all the activities. I won't bother you with all the details but rather, it would be best to summarize them this way:

... I've learned humility and perseverance from selling those raffle tickets at churches, various MTR stations and other venues that we could think of. Every year, CWL had this tremendous undertaking of raising money in support of our charities. I saw first-hand how these hardworking women convincingly sold these tickets to strangers with smiling faces, and did not mind the heat and humidity that often led to exhaustion. Indeed, it was also time-consuming, as each member had to be in their designated stations/areas for hours. Fortunately, it was a success each and every time! How could it not be?

... I've learned that monthly birthday celebrations at the roof-top brought so much joy and camaraderie among our members. The diverse make-up of the members, coming from Asia, US, UK, Canada, etc. made us realize that there's more commonality among us than divisiveness. Each one would bring her own special cooked food from her own country. That was my favourite! The weekly lunches after attending Mass and Holy Hour were just added bonus.

...I've learnt to appreciate and at the same time feel grateful to have been able to send our children to school, knowing that many parents/students whom we had the privilege of interviewing during those years, could not easily do so. Thus, we provided "tuition assistance" to those deserving, young students. Meeting parents/students from various schools who had completed their much-needed application, became part of our monthly routine as a member and officer of CWL.

...I've learned that it took little effort to bring joy and love to the elderly in our community. Every month we organized Bingo games, brought snacks and small presents to these old folks. The volunteers performed to "show-off" some talents and much to our surprise, there were plenty of those. When you're in love with these old folks, it would show!

... I've learned that being part of publishing the very first Newsletter of CWL proved that disseminating information to all members was crucial in maintaining interest and enthusiasm.

...I've learned so much about our Catholic faith and teachings by attending our monthly Bible Study conducted by none other than our Spiritual Director, Fr. Russell. Those were times that I could not afford to miss. Everyone found wisdom and strength in the word of God.

...I've learned that Christmas was the best time of the year where we all gathered to celebrate this wonderful season. We assembled a cast of performers who created a program that delivered our theme for each year. The essence was that if people learned to understand, respect and appreciate the diversity of nations, cultures and of thoughts, then we would be contributing peace in this world. What better way to have started it in our own backyard! Indeed, CWL, a religious organization for women of many nationalities, working for the common good: that of charity, work and loyalty... serving the Lord through our less fortunate brothers and sisters, has been fulfilling this mission in HK, even now as we celebrate its 80th Anniversary!

My name is Sylvia V. Arellano, a Filipino born immigrant to the US, who had this great opportunity to be in HK from 1995 to 2005 because of an expatriate job assignment given to my husband. Those were the golden days of my life. CWL certainly empowered me as a member of the body of Christ, to be equipped and engaged in Christian Action in my everyday life! I still receive copies of your newsletter and I find great joy in reading it.

(Sylvia Arellano joined CWL in 1996.)



Sylvia (standing 3rd from left) with CWL members at a Christmas celebration

My encounter with CWL: Joyce Chang

Getting to Know 'You'

My first encounter with CWL was in the 1980's when I was head of Social Work Services in Caritas. It came to the attention of the agency that CWL intended to hand over their last clinic on Shanghai Street. The clinic was charging a reasonably low fee and functioning well. It was well patronised by the neighbourhood residents. CWL had to raise funds annually to keep the clinic going and to maintain qualified medical personnel.

Then I came to know some members who were the wives of several renowned community leaders, holding leading positions. They mobilized fundraising annually, the sale of charity tickets at Star Ferry and they requested Caritas to locate

volunteers to take turns to sell tickets at different spots. We found dozens of elderly volunteers from the nine Caritas Elderly Centres. Through this exchange and interaction of fundraising, we had become closer friends.

As Fr Cronin was spiritual director of CWL, and my family became part of the church through his influence, I sometimes chatted with him. I discovered in CWL, there was a Chinese speaking group of talented women, many were Shanghainese who made padded coats and "min toi" all year round to send them through the parishes to help the needy families during winter months. They sent some to the Aged Homes.

Their Past History

My curiosity in CWL led me to discover that in 1951 CWL managed a boat clinic (named Monis Stella, dedicated to Our Lady) in Aberdeen, to provide medical care to the fishermen families, dealing with 3,900 cases in 1963. They also co-operated with three Catholic Hospitals, set up clinics in 12 districts to take care of the health of poor families. Services in those days included prevention of cholera and tuberculosis, care of newborn babies and refugee mothers, providing maternity and pre-natal care. CWL raised funds to help the needy through care of their health and well-being. I felt it was meaningful for these Catholic ladies to share their resources with the needy in a very practical and meaningful way. In 1952, they also sent a large lumpsum to build a stonehouse for a small group home of eight persons, to support Precious Blood Children's Village when they moved from Sham Shui Po to Fanling.

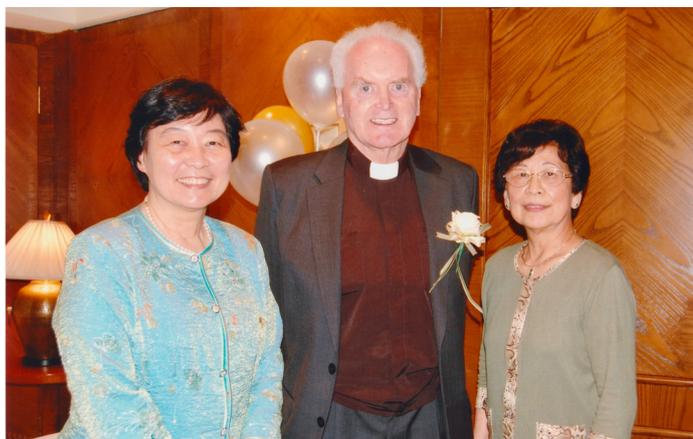
I developed an admiration for all the work CWL members did during the difficult times that Hong Kong had undergone. The ladies contributed their resources, mobilized their friends and supported a good cause.

On Becoming Partners

In 1985, CWL members participated in the International Conference and Lady Margaret Lobo discussed with me about preparing a Hong Kong report. It was the year I attended a Beijing Conference on Women and my colleagues had prepared a research report on Hong Kong women, so we shared our reports and put together what the church in Hong Kong did to improve the lives of women and families.

In the 1990's, Caritas Elderly Service had to raise funds to supplement their deficits as the government subsidized just 80 to 90 per cent of their total expenditure at 11 of their centres. About 10 per cent of the funds would have to come from the agency's own fundraising. CWL donated \$20,000 annually to this service for more than 10 years as they realized the need for growth of services for the elderly. When I left Caritas in 2006, I decided to join CWL to participate in its charity works with the needy. I thought I could use my experience and knowledge to serve the needy through CWL.

(Continued on page 13...)



Joyce (left) and Yvonne with Father Russell at his Golden Jubilee celebration in October 2007

(...Continued from page 12)

Becoming a Member - Formalize Students' Sponsoring Program

I remember I was nominated into the committee in November. I realized that we did not have a formal system and the manpower to render assistance to the underprivileged. With the members' consent, we found a way to ally with the school social workers who selected the desperate cases for us.

We could provide substantial educational sponsorship for about 40-50 students. CWL would only interview them during the summer months. The students would be screened by school social workers, who confirmed their needs and followed up with the cases. This seemed to work out well. The number of students increased annually and the monthly subsidy also shot up from \$500 to \$1,200 for primary students and \$600 to \$1,500 for secondary school students.

It was a positive initiative as students seemed to benefit from the subsidy. About 25 per cent succeeded in entering tertiary education and pursued a career in nursing, paramedics, social services, commercial, IT and servicing fields. We were encouraged by one incident when a successful businessman came to donate a cheque of \$100,000 to support other students, as he identified himself as a beneficiary of our program for several years.

Develop Hardship Families Assistance

As there are increasing numbers, we decided to limit assistance for each student to two years. We would extend the subsidy for a longer period in some exceptional cases with serious family problems. This has led us in recent years to extend our assistance to some hardship cases. The idea being to help families with parents struck by chronic disease and disability, who are unable to earn a living, and care for the children encountering difficulties in studies. At the moment CWL supports about 15 such cases.

The Mission of Personal and Spiritual Growth

I was deeply impressed by a Sunday sermon, where the Young Man came to Jesus to enquire about what he must do to gain eternal life. Jesus confirmed the commandment – to love God and neighbour. I realize that CWL helps members to fulfil this twofold purpose. We do all kinds of charitable works: we sell raffle tickets, raise funds, visit the sick, Elder care homes, the homeless and support the needy; we have a weekly Thursday mass and Holy Hour. We pray together and receive the sacraments. There are many occasions for us to grow in love of God and neighbor with our members.

(Joyce Chang joined CWL in 1998.)



Linda Eggers at a CWL celebration on July 13, '17

Linda Eggers: Enjoys CWL fellowship

I was invited to join CWL by Evelyn Peplow, a long-time member with CWL and a friend of Cora and Margaret Lobo. Pacita Roads was the President at that time.

Every Thursday I looked forward to the CWL mass, Holy Hour and the lunch together with Fr Russell. The monthly potluck where we enjoyed the various foods cooked by members and the fellowship was simply enjoyable.

The ladies were so friendly, kind and caring; it was just like a big family. CWL was great and I miss all the activities and Bible sharing by dear Fr Russell. A lot of fun and laughter. Now some have returned to the Lord and I'm back in Malaysia. But I'm a life member and receive the quarterly newsletter which is great.

Before we left for Kuala Lumpur, my husband Rolf who was a Lutheran became a Catholic. He was confirmed by Fr Russell. He was inspired by Father and liked him a lot. We do miss Fr Russell and all you lovely ladies at CWL.

(Linda Eggers has been a CWL member for over 10 years and lives in Kuala Lumpur now.)

Our pilgrimage with CWL: Katherine Wong

My association with CWL forms part of my pilgrimage on earth.

I knew about CWL in the early 1980s when I took part in a prayer group led by Rev Fergus Cronin SJ, who had been serving as Spiritual Director of the CWL since its establishment in 1937. After my retirement from work, I regularly attended CWL's weekly Adoration Hour, but did not become its member.

One day, Lady Margaret Lobo graciously invited me to CWL's fellowship lunch at Club Lusitano. This personal touch won me over and I joined CWL as a member in April 2001. Since then, I have shared its activities – adoration, Bible-sharing, visiting the Elderly Homes and raising funds for the support of some needy students and other charitable services.



Katherine Wong (centre) with Fr Hanley and Sr McKinley

Two events particularly highlighted CWL's experiences – the celebration of its Worldwide Centenary (1906-2006) on 16 October 2006, and the 70th anniversary celebration (1937-2007) of the establishment of the CWL Hong Kong chapter as an affiliate to the United Kingdom in 1937. This was held on 25 October 2007. Both events were celebrated with a Thanksgiving Mass at the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of Hong Kong.

To celebrate both occasions, CWL members dressed up in specially designed outfits. Before the Mass began, Diva Lola Young led the singing, praising God and thanking our Blessed Immaculate Mother Mary. After the Eucharistic celebration, a reception was held at the Caritas Community Hall with members and guests.

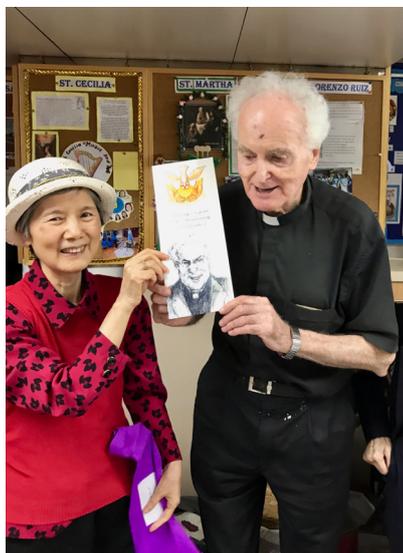
The celebrations brought back inspiring remembrances of CWL's history of the dedicated, generous commitments of the founding Spiritual Director and members. With valiant efforts, they provided care for the vulnerable, such as attending to abandoned babies, running mobile and stationary clinics for the poor, bringing necessities –oil, rice, food products and clothing to the marginalized families.

The joy of celebrations reflected CWL's underlying mission of living the spirit of unity – uniting us with God, with our blessed Mother and the saints, within ourselves, with one another and with the wider community. The prime importance of CWL rests with nurturing the social and spiritual development of its own members, so as to build themselves up as true Christians --- to be "salt of the earth, and light of the world," in order to be a witness of the joy of the gospel to the world.

To this end, CWL is well-blessed. We have our faithful and wise spiritual director, Fr John Russell SJ, a dedicated committee and an active and increasing membership. Father Russell and the committee members have adapted and broadened CWL's services to meet the changing needs of our time. Together, they lead CWL to fulfil its mission. With God's grace and our blessed Mother Mary's intercessions, let all CWL members do their part of sharing our mission of living the spirit of unity in a joyful effort to further our pilgrimage of faith, hope and love on

earth towards the heavenly Home. Let us pray for one another.

(Katherine Y. Wong has been a CWL member since April 2001.)



Katherine (left) with Fr Russell at the celebration of his Diamond Jubilee as a Jesuit priest on 20 July 2017

Salween Lee: CWL makes my life more meaningful

“Where do I begin....”

My memory goes back to the time before I became a life member of CWL. As a church organist, I was recommended by friends and church members to play on different occasions: funerals, requiems and weddings. Years later I met a lady, by the name of Pacita Roads. She asked me to play for a few religious occasions and weddings.

At that time, I was still actively employed. I was looking for a place where I could pray in peace and quiet and to ‘relieve the tension of my workload’. I was taken by my friend to the CWL chapel where the serenity of the environment impressed me so much that I made up my mind to attend Mass on Thursdays and to sit for meditation whenever time allowed.

It was there that I met my Filipino friend, who was the organist for the CWL masses. He was thrilled to see me and he offered me his post as CWL organist.

I told him, “I have come here to pray, and not to play the organ. However, the following week when I went to the chapel my Filipino friend had disappeared from the service. That day, the congregation sang without any music accompaniment. After the service, I met Mrs Pacita Roads, who was President of CWL at that time. She invited me right away to be the organist for the service the following week. I did. But I thought the Filipino organist would come back. He never did. So here I am, playing for CWL for almost 9 years now.

During these years, I have come to understand the mission and work of CWL. I am amazed and impressed at the extent of the work being undertaken by members as well as the level of involvement and dedication -- taking care of students, the elderly, the handicapped and the marginalized.



Salween: Our very willing organist

Above all, CWL has the encouragement and spiritual support of Father Russell, our spiritual director. I enjoy listening to Father Russell’s weekly sermons which, though brief, helps us understand the message the readings convey. His analysis of biblical events and characters are terse and clear.

Though my post at CWL is that of an organist, I find that attending the weekly services has made my religious life more meaningful and has enhanced my social life too. CWL has helped enrich my religious and social perspectives. I have to thank God for guiding me and leading me to a place where I can strengthen my life as a devoted and dedicated daughter of the Almighty. *(Salween Lee has been a member of CWL for almost 9 years.)*



Mary Tsoi: Taking spiritual life to a new level

A few years ago I was introduced and invited by Yvonne Tsui, currently a CWL committee member to join the organisation. At that time I was enjoying my first few months of retirement and working on a list of things to do, namely travelling, going on a pilgrimage and engaging in volunteer services. When I received her invitation, it was truly a blessing for me as it set off my journey with CWL.

I now participate in various volunteer activities organised by CWL that include

- monthly visits to the elderly homes at Sheung Shui and Aberdeen
- Holy Hour of Prayer and monthly potluck lunches followed by Bible Study
- Annual Raffle.

These CWL community services provide me with the opportunity to serve others and extend a helping hand to the needy. This valuable and meaningful experience has strengthened my faith and taken my spiritual life to a new level. I really treasure every moment of worship and fellowship with other members. The Holy Hour of prayer and potluck lunch not only unite us as one big family, but help consolidate our faith and friendship.

On this memorable occasion, may I wish the Catholic Women's League all the best in its future endeavours. I look forward to working with CWL to serve the community, especially the needy and the less privileged for many more years.

(Mary Tsoi joined CWL in July 2013.)



Mary Tsoi (centre) selling raffle tickets at St Antony’s

Hats off to our senior CWL members: Fernanda

Blessings, and more blessings to you, just as I have been blessed by CWL! What is a decade to you? To all of you who have joined before me, faithful and true to your call, serving spiritually and supporting our charity projects for decades --- I salute you all!

I took voluntary retirement from my job in the airlines 10 years ago and have been part of CWL since then. I used to be a team executive for inflight service managers before I retired. Joining CWL was a big relief as at work I was part of a small team who monitored and guided the most senior cabin attendants on the plane, the inflight service manager. It was a high standard company and we needed to be role models. There were about four thousand young attendants who came to us! However, even though I had reached retirement, at CWL I was considered the baby in the team!

It was Lady Margaret Lobo who brought me to CWL through Club Lusitano. I was attracted instantly by the charm of our late President Pacita Roads. I loved her and still miss her dearly. No one is perfect and I prefer to see her in her strength. I admire all the energy of the women in the League. Pacita was around 80 years old then and not too many people knew how to use the computer at that age -- she was one! Probably in the same category as Pacita, was our nightingale, Madame Lola Young. She has always been so graceful and elegant, and welcoming to newcomers. They both were in the movie business and carried their gracious celebrity presence with them always, and both never had any problem with stage fright when addressing the League.

The week before I joined CWL, it was my mom's 81st birthday. Sitting at the same table was this lady who stood out from the rest. She was my mom's good friend. My first impression was that she had good spirit, was fun to be with, well-educated, intelligent and came across as well-travelled. A week later I discovered she was our Vice-President Joan Ng and even my children fell in love with her! I loved to be with the senior ladies. Here I could enjoy being young whereas at my work place, I had to be the senior. It was such a privilege for me to have a date with our late Kitty when she was already a 100 years old. She was absolutely a joy to go out with. I still remember she was enjoying the scenery as we drove to Stanley for some German food. I had a marvellous time listening to her stories of the past.

The beauty of CWL is that we are really the body of Christ, offering our different skills to carry out the mission of charity together. Without financial backing, we would not be able to help the poor and needy. There are those who have been generous, helping with big donations, yet my admiration goes out to Olivia and Yvonne. They are not considered as young, but their energy is amazing and they do so much physically to raise funds with big donations for CWL. There is so much dedication in the way members sell raffle tickets every year over a period of about 8 weeks. Tickets are sold on Saturdays and Sundays across churches on the islands before and after all masses. I would encourage everyone to contribute and share the sense of belonging and togetherness.

I have observed many changes over the last ten years! We have even changed our president a number of times. It was good when I joined and I can see that it is getting even better. Like Pacita who said before, we've got to keep ourselves up with technology and events.

In the past, a printed newsletter would be sufficient. The new generation reads news from the smart phone and computer. One of the changes is that we have a website for our organisation now. Last year we replaced the annual fund-raising Christmas Lunch, with a hard core, straight to the point, clean-cut fund raising event for more needy individuals and families in Hong Kong. No doubt, we have had great success in the past relying on the same group of performers and donors, raising funds through performances during the lunch. It was more cost effective to let potential donors know how they could help the needy with presentations by members and social workers. The event was a big success! To be able to raise more funds, we need more helping hands. To have more helping hands, we need to look at new ways. I hope that some day the Catholic Women's League can represent a tiny fraction of women practicing the Catholic faith in Hong Kong. **(Continued on Page 17...)**



Fernanda (right) had a date with Kitty when she was already a 100 years old!



With the turkey she baked for the Christmas potluck on 16 December 2016

(...Continued from Page 16)

There are other wonderful people who make CWL a special place with their handicrafts. When Debra Rull and Cora da Silva team up, they can transform any room into a beautiful theme party. It is sad that God has called back our master chef and singer - Mary Chow. Our Thursday potlucks are a huge draw where members bring in home-cooked food. After we have nourished our body, Fr Russell feeds our soul with his Bible Study. It is great to listen to others who share their thoughts and Fr Russell gives us time to clarify on issues we don't understand.

With the rising divorce rates, less marriages recorded, increasing teenager suicide rate, more demand for same sex marriage and real human interactions taken over by modern technology, each of us has a role to play. I hope that in the next decade CWL can expand its role and reach out to young Catholic women and help them see what God has planned for them and help make the home a place of love, care and support. Meanwhile, I am grateful to our present president - Maria, vice president - Nirmala, Hon. Secretary- Paulette and Hon. Treasurer - Irene, and fellow committee members who work so hard on our various projects. With your leadership, CWL has only one way to grow. "For I know that plans I have for you says the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to hurt you, plans to give you a hope and a future." *Jeremiah 29:11*

Happy 80th Anniversary to our CWL!

(Fernanda Da Rosa joined CWL in 2007.)

My soul-nourishing spiritual journey: Pauline

I vividly remember, it was dawn of the early millennium. My husband Peter had a business conference at the Mandarin Oriental, Central, Hong Kong and I had an opportunity to accompany him on that short business trip. My husband and I live in Sydney.

It was Thursday, the 29th of March, and my husband left for work in the morning. It was my mother's birthday on that day. It has been a long time sacred ritual for me to offer a mass on her birthday.

I went to the hotel concierge and asked them to help me find a church so that I could offer a Mass for my mother on her birthday. He gave me a map to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception but said after checking the internet that there were no English Mass at that time.

I walked out of the hotel fairly disappointed not knowing which direction to go.

Somehow my intuition (my internal GPS) guided me in the right direction.

While walking aimlessly, I stumbled across the Catholic Centre building in Connaught Road Central. I was drawn to the building thinking it was a Catholic book store. As I walked in I noticed groups of people coming out of the lifts. I smiled at them and asked if they knew of any church that offered English Mass. Lovely, cheerful eager ladies directed me upstairs.

Lord behold, as I went in, the Blessed Eucharist was exposed for adoration. I fell down on my knees with tears of joy and awe in my heart. Every cell in my body rejoiced and praised God's miraculous guidance. I ceremoniously joined the Holy hour and came back for the 5.30pm mass. My mission was accomplished with divine intervention and my heart was filled with gratitude.

Divine intervention and synchronicity continued... Now my husband works in Central, Hong Kong as an expatriate and I feel so blessed to be able to attend the mass and Holy Hour on Thursdays. I'm so grateful to Maria Chu for her warm welcome and for introducing me to other CWL members.

Father Russell, our spiritual director, is an amazing human spirit. His presence and guidance takes us on a spiritual and mystical journey to a soul nourishing sanctuary. The spirit of God within him, feeds us with nourishment for our soul.

It was one of the best decisions I made to join CWL to be among like-minded people. I have met some incredibly inspiring, warm-hearted generous ladies and am amazed at their tireless, awesome work and how they contribute to the community.

Here is the message to anyone who has been sitting on the fence, wondering whether to join CWL or not...

I strongly recommend you to join the CWL, Central, Hong Kong. This is a soul nourishing sanctuary of beauty and love. It is an opportunity to reflect on ourselves and immerse in the power of being with our souls. To become whole and complete with the blessings of our Mother Mary and her son Jesus Christ is an incredible soul nourishing spiritual journey you would not want to miss. **By Pauline Corea** (Pauline joined CWL in December 2016.)



Pauline (extreme left) selling Raffle tickets at Ricci Hall on May 28, 2017

In memory of Mary Chow

Mary Isabel Chow was a thoughtful and generous lady. I joined CWL in 1994 when Mary was the President. We attended all the activities together. She would give us a ride in her car to the different churches when it was time to sell our annual fund-raising raffle tickets. I remember how she would bring drinks and refreshments for all the volunteers selling tickets. She had this special warm and caring motherly quality that touched our hearts.

Mary had the countenance of God's peace and grace on her face. I also joined her Cenacle Prayer group at the Dominican Father's House which was almost like her second home where she offered her dedicated service to the priests and church. We always said the Cenacle Prayer with the Rosary and Divine Mercy together. After attending Mass, Mary would invite us for afternoon tea to her lovely home where she would serve us her delicious home-baked cakes. Spending time with her was always such a wonderful and memorable experience.

One of the Dominican priests gifted her the statue of our Lady of Fatima. I really felt the presence of our blessed Mother's love for her.

Mary taught us the meaning of suffering. She bore her suffering during her sickness with faith and courage. God's grace touched her husband's heart and he became a Catholic a day before she passed away.

Mary was compassionate and always came to the aid of those experiencing hardships. She brought her culinary skills to potlucks and different festivals like Dragon Boat and Christmas when she made and sold dumplings and Christmas cakes in order to help with our Charity Funds. She was blessed with a lovely voice and sang at our Christmas parties. Mary you are sadly missed.

I don't know when I will see Mary again, but we are surely united in prayers and we would feel her presence during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, as well as when we serve the needy. It is truly a special grace from our Blessed Mother Mary. It is some coincidence that she passed away at 4 pm on Saturday, 13 May 2017, the Centennial anniversary of the first apparition of our Lady of Fatima.

It was also meaningful to celebrate a memorial mass for Mary on the first Friday of June, a month dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Mary lived a wonderfully good life and was blessed by God's love and grace. **By Mary Wa**

(Mary Wa has been a member of CWL since 1994.)



**Mary Chow (extreme right) with
Mary Wa and Nene**



**Remembering
CWL members
(from L to R)
Mary Chow,
Teresa Souza
and Sophia
Abdullah who
passed away in
2017.**

CWL members Past and Present...



Special thanks to Fr Russell and all the members who took time out to pen their deep thoughts and rich experiences at CWL down the years. We would not have been able to put this special-edition newsletter together without your invaluable contributions. We look forward to many more years of working together for the glory of God and the betterment of society.