



Catholic Women's League Hong Kong Newsletter

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Dates to Remember

April 12: Easter Sunday

May 31: Pentecost Sunday

The Mother's Evening Prayer group has suspended its meetings until further notice, given the Covid-19 situation in Hong Kong.

From Fr Russell's Desk...

We call it Holy Week because these are the days in which we lovingly recall the holiest events in our faith-history. On Palm Sunday we recall Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem as the excited crowds acclaimed him as their long-awaited Messiah. Had the moment come at last when he would restore the kingdom to Israel?

Passover with its influx of thousands of pilgrims into the Holy City was always an anxious time for the Roman authorities. The slightest incident could spark a nationalistic uprising. So when the Pharisees warned Jesus to restrain his enthusiastic followers, he told them that if they kept silent the very stones would cry out. For the events which his coming was to set in train were to change the world utterly.

On Holy Thursday we remember that incredible outpouring of his love for us when he took bread and wine, said a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing and gave them to his apostles: receive my Body, drink my Blood. While he walked the earth Jesus was constrained to be only at one place at one time. Now through the sacrament of his love the Good Shepherd can be effectively, nourishingly present wherever his scattered followers are gathered: the Shepherd among his sheep, the new Moses leading his people to their promised Land.

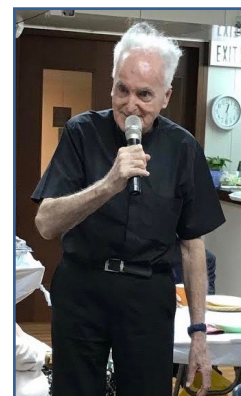
And on the Friday we call Good – from no other day since the beginning of creation has the human race so benefitted – we remember how on the Cross our ransom was paid and we were made co-heirs to eternal life.

On Holy Saturday Jesus descended into hell – not, of course, the hell of the damned, but Hades, the underworld, to announce liberation to the souls waiting there: an imaginative way of affirming our belief that Jesus died and rose for those also who lived before Calvary.

Then on Easter Sunday we celebrate the Resurrection, the foundational belief of our Christian faith. Mary Magdalene at first light goes to the tomb but finds it empty. She is disconsolate, but soon her sorrow turns to joy as she encounters her risen Lord. Christ is risen, alleluia! This is the Good News. Our Tremendous Lover wants to share with us his victory over sin and death. In his resurrection he is the source of our hope, the cause of our joy, the guarantee that our life on earth has meaning.

She is instructed to announce the good news to the apostles: Christ is risen, alleluia! He is victorious over death. He is the first fruits, for he, our Tremendous Lover, wants to share his victory with us.

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



Taking stock in a changed world

The Coronavirus outbreak has undoubtedly been on everyone's mind. Each day we learn something new. New information is revealed especially about how contagious it is, as there are other rather odd 'manifestations' such as carriers being asymptomatic. It instils fear and anxiety in our hearts, and social distancing has become a norm.

It has affected not only our personal life, but also our group activities at CWL. For two months, Alison has been working diligently, but alone in the office with some of us dropping in occasionally to keep her company. I have not seen most of you since the suspension of mass. Even our February committee meeting was conducted through mobile phones offsite. However we managed to invite Fr. Russell to join nine committee members for our March meeting and have lunch afterwards.

Everything has come to a halt now. No weekly prayer services and fellowship gatherings, no bi-weekly video showings, no monthly visits to the two elder care homes. Consequently, we were unable to distribute the *Lai See* packets to the residents at the homes which must have been a big disappointment for them. Even our Lenten Retreat scheduled for the first week of April with Fr. Russell may be cancelled.

What impacts us most is the planning for our Annual Grand Raffle. The common questions I have been asked are: "Will we generate enough funds this year to help the students and the hardship families given the circumstances?" "Will the churches allow us to sell, as all churches have lost a lot of their own weekly collections?" Yes, we anticipate some obstacles, given the present scenario. While some churches have given us approval to sell tickets, there are others who have not. The economic outlook is depressing, and we expect to see many people losing their jobs as businesses close. We also expect that more families may need financial help in the coming months as a result of the social unrest last year compounded by the Covid-19 outbreak. Therefore, we need to do whatever we can to raise funds, acknowledging that it will be a rough road ahead. I think we can still do it.

This brings me back to the situation 10 years ago when CWL was facing a difficult time financially and we were left with a paltry balance in our bank account. We were also uncertain whether we would be granted a licence. CWL would not have survived and would have been unable to cover operating costs without a licence to raise funds. But with prayers and our concerted efforts, not only did we receive the licence, but we also had one of the best raffle sales that year. As it stands, we have already been granted the licence by the government, so we are planning to start selling right after Easter. It is likely that there will be a delayed start. Regardless of how many weeks we can sell, we will give it our best. We need to put our faith and trust in the Lord for He is our God, and He Will Provide.

Happy Easter everyone!! **Irene Chen**



**Committee members at a post-meeting lunch
on March 5**

Celebrating the Year of the Rat



CWL members celebrated Chinese New Year at the January 16 potluck. Our organisers Lily and Mary Wa, planned a festive menu of traditional CNY delicacies that was prepared by our members. Angelina, Catherine Wong and Laura Ho organised the decorations that helped create the cheery ambience. The afternoon ended with a spirited sing-along session.



Birthday Cheer



Jan: Lola Young and
Katherine Wong

CWL has suspended its
Thursday mass and
Holy Hour in keeping
with the Hong Kong
govt directive to cancel
all public meetings
until such time the govt
deems it fit.

Pope gives *Urbi et Orbi* blessing



Pope Francis led this extraordinary moment of prayer amid the coronavirus pandemic. With the faithful participating online from the safety of their homes, the Vatican was empty like never before during his pontificate.

The reading from the Gospel of Mark, chosen specifically for the occasion, recounts the story of Jesus calming the seas. In his homily, the Pope compared the tempest from the Gospel to the current pandemic, which has uprooted the daily routines of people around the world.

Pope Francis said, “In this world, that you love more than we do, we have gone ahead at breakneck speed, feeling powerful and able to do anything.

“In this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our image, has fallen away, uncovering once more the (blessed) common belonging, of which we cannot be deprived: our belonging as brothers and sisters.”

He remembered the disciples' fear and lack of faith. He reminded Christians of the need to invite Jesus into their lives and trust in His infinite care for them.

While praying Pope Francis said, “Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith, which is not so much believing that you exist, but coming to you and trusting in you. Let us hand over our fears to Him so that He can conquer them.”

Following his reflection, Pope Francis spent a moment praying before this image of the patroness of Rome, known as the Salus Populi Romani. The moment was accompanied by the Marian hymn “*Sub tuum praesidium*,” in English, “Beneath thy protection.”

He also prayed before the crucifix of St. Marcellus. He then prayed in silence in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

Then Cardinal Angelo Comastri, archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica, announced the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing and the plenary indulgence to be granted. Pope Francis then imparted the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing, to the city of Rome and the world.

This extraordinary blessing, usually reserved for Christmas, Easter and the election of a new Pope, was a response to the suffering of so many people and those who care for the sick during this coronavirus pandemic.

(By Rome Reports. This is an independent international TV news agency based in Rome, specializing in covering the Pope and the Vatican.)