

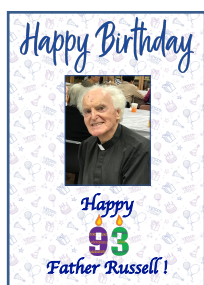


# Catholic Women's League Hong Kong Newsletter

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## Dates to Remember

**CWL Annual AGM:**  
17 October

**The Mother's Evening Prayer group meets every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month - 7 to 8 pm**

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

## From Fr Russell's Desk...

### The Divine Pity

If we think of God as moved with pity and compassion for us his children, must we not also wonder if he is moved by other emotions as well? The Old Testament speaks often of the wrath of God. The wicked were warned of the punishments God has in store for the unrepentant. The same divine lips uttered the invitation: *Come to me all who labour and are heavy burdened*, as well as the dread words: *Depart from me you workers of iniquity*. Can God look out of his heaven and see what is going on in today's world, and not be moved, on the one hand with immense pity for the victims of violence and injustice, and on the other with great rage at those responsible for so much cruelty and destruction?

If we cannot remain unmoved by the poverty and hunger we sometimes see portrayed so graphically on our television screens, the swollen bellies, matchstick-limbs and fly-filled eyes of children in some impoverished country, brought about not just by drought but also by civil war, corruption and unjust trading relations with richer nations - if we cannot remain unmoved whose sense of pity and compassion is only a dim reflection of the divine pity, can we believe that the Lord God remains unmoved?

If man's inhumanity to man makes thousands mourn in unnecessary conflicts, man's inhumanity to children must cry out to heaven for vengeance. The heart of Jesus is all gentleness towards those who repent of their sin, but it was that same heart that blazed with anger and with a whip drove the merchants out of the temple; the same heart that loved the rich young man, yet refused, by a lowering of demands, to keep him as his follower. The heart of Jesus is kind and compassionate, but also strong and challenging. It is a heart that abhors cruelty and injustice. It is a heart that loves us, and because he does, pays us the compliment of treating us as responsible adults: responsible for the good we do, but also answerable for the evil we do and the good we fail to do. May the Lord in his goodness, have mercy on us and on all mankind.

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

# Farewell Father MacGrath!

Father John MacGrath of the Society of St. Columbans came to Hong Kong in 1988 and served in various capacities until his return to Ireland in 2017 due to his failing health. He died on 14 June 2019 at the age of 88.

From 25 November 1999 to April 2008, Fr MacGrath served as Assistant Parish Priest for the English-speaking community at the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Hong Kong. Subsequently, he served as Rector of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel until March 2017. The Chapel is an extension of the Catholic Cathedral.

We share our remembrance of Fr MacGrath. We celebrate the life of our beloved pastor and friend. As a missionary, Father had sowed and tilled lifelong in God's vineyard on earth, producing much fruits. Through his faithfulness, loving kindness and wisdom, he

has touched many lives far and wide with God's enlightenment, healing and love.

As a priest, Father MacGrath inspired people to be authentic Christians and good human beings. As a spiritual director, Father first listened and then offered his prudent and wise counsel. As a trusted friend and an admired pastor, one could bare one's heart and mind and soul to him.

We miss you, Father MacGrath. Please pray for us and we pray for you, until we all meet happily again in heaven, to dwell in the House of God forevermore.

**Katherine Y. Wong**



**At a memorial mass on June 20  
at the Catholic Centre**

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## Reminiscing a man who was all heart

I had the privilege of meeting Fr MacGrath almost immediately after I moved to Hong Kong in August 2005. He was in charge of the English-speaking community at the Cathedral and I had gone to enrol my daughter at the Sunday School there. Little did I know that this would blossom into a special relationship that lasted until he left for Ireland in March 2017.

Fr MacGrath was every bit a people's person. He had come to the Cathedral after doing teaching and administrative assignments for almost 40 years. Twenty of those years were spent teaching philosophy in Boston and Sydney. He had never done pastoral work until his nine years at the Cathedral and he once mentioned to me how he loved those years the most. It gave him a sense of moving back to his roots. He was brought up in a small, rural community in Dublin where everyone knew each other well and he missed that in his earlier assignments.

He enjoyed his work at the Sunday School. "It was not only a pleasure, but a privilege to see the kids," he said. He came from a large family so he enjoyed interacting with the kids and their parents. He had them for First Communion and Confirmation. He gave parents talks before the kids received the Sacraments. Then there were the little ones who came up for blessing during the Sunday mass, which was an experience he loved too.

His work at the Cathedral was more missionary than pastoral. He said he did almost 3 to 5 baptisms a week and they would bring more people to witness the ceremony. And so there was an occasion for evangelisation. He mentioned how he even baptised a 95-year-old man. He said this was an experience he would not have had in Ireland or a traditionally Catholic country. He had an incredible heart-connect, and those who had the privilege of knowing him can vouch for that.

**Nirmala Thomas**



# Happy 93<sup>rd</sup> Father Russell!

*About 50 CWL members gathered on 22 August to celebrate yet another milestone birthday. And this time it had a special Irish theme. There were Irish buntings and table decorations, a delectable Irish menu and good olde Irish songs! Here are some pics that capture the joie da vivre of the afternoon.*

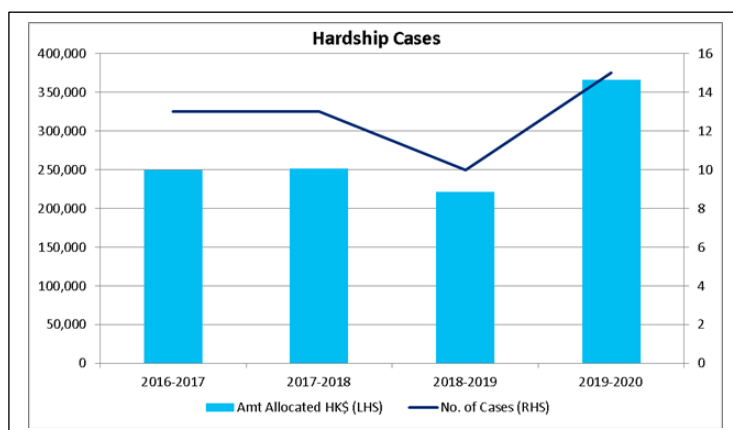




# Fund Facts: Making a difference

Every year, CWL provides tuition support to a number of needy and less-privileged students. The funds raised from our Annual Grand Raffle and other generous donations are used towards this end.

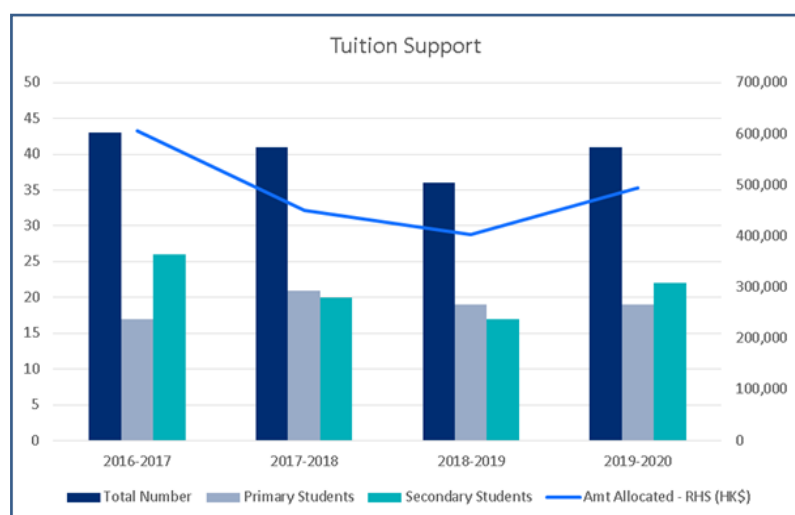
In July this year, we interviewed 52 applicants. Of those interviewed, 40 students have been recommended for tuition support, 15 cases will receive our monthly hardship grant and one person will receive both tuition support as well as the hardship grant. This year CWL will give out \$495,130 in tuition support and \$366,000 to Hardship cases.



This is the first time I have been involved in the interviewing process. I have been deeply touched by the humble backgrounds of the interviewees. Not only do they come from low or even no income families, but many of them have learning disabilities like dyslexia, autism and ADHD, to name but a few. Some parents are divorced or suffer from chronic illnesses, which further inhibits the children's normal growth and development. Here I would like to share two impressive cases with you.

The first case involves a 14-year-old girl whose 66-year-old father has retired but prefers to support the family with his own minimal savings, instead of applying for CSSA. She has three siblings, the youngest of whom is one year old, and her mother has depressive symptoms. She and her 11-year-old brother are both autistic. Despite her poor family circumstances, she strives for academic success and is ranked first in the form. She told us that she craved to be part of social activities and attend music classes which she believes may alleviate her autistic problem. To help her achieve this, CWL recommended that hardship funds be granted to her. This mature and sensible girl is indeed a role model for youngsters of her age. She works conscientiously on her own accord and seeks measures to remedy her deficiency.

Another case that touched me was about six-year-old twin sisters who are under the care of a foster mother. As their biological mother had a drug abuse problem and was mentally unstable, the twin sisters had been receiving residential childcare services since their birth. Their mother passed away in 2016, and their father relinquished his paternal rights. They have been living in a foster home for about four years and are waiting for adoption.



In June this year, one of the girls was diagnosed with early symptoms of dyslexia and attentive problem. She probably needs extra assistance in order to cope with her learning needs. Their foster mother was also worried about the fact that she may not be able to supervise their schoolwork once they begin with their primary education in September. Their application for tutorial sponsorship is undoubtedly justified. Though the foster mother is not a blood relation, she is genuinely concerned about their well-being. She also makes every effort to ensure that they can participate in extra-curricular activities.

**Judy Pang**

## Birthday Cheer



June: Hilda Garcia



July: Paulette Santos,  
Melin Pereira



August: Irene  
Chen, Olivia Mak  
with Fr Russell

We would like to hear from you too! If you would like to give us your feedback or have some information to share please email it to [office@cwlnhk.org](mailto:office@cwlnhk.org)

## Event Collage



20 June: Members pose for a click with visiting CWL member Pauline Corea who is now based in Sydney.

1 Aug: Fr Russell is seen cutting the cake to celebrate 62 years of his ordination, at the Thursday fellowship lunch



5 Sept: At Sing Yin Sec School's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. (left and below)

Seen in the pic with Paulette and Catherine are the school's vice principal Mr Poon (extreme left) and the principal Mr Wong.

