



## Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

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APR  
2022

# THE HOMESTEAD

## What Does Easter Mean To You?

Easter eggs? Easter bunnies? Easter holidays? No, no.

On Easter, we celebrate the most important day in our life – the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. After He was crucified, He died on the cross and on the third day rose again. By this He conquered death and redeemed us from sin.

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”. (1 Peter 1:3)*

Here are some takeaways from Fr. Law's Easter Vigil homily.

- We are created in the image of God.
- Baptism is like a marriage vow. We must be devoted to Christ and forget the past.
- Baptism is also like a funeral rite because we die with Christ in order to rise again to new life in Him.
- As we renew our baptismal promises, it is like we are being baptized again today



Public Mass resumes on 24 April [Save the Date!]

## Happy Easter!

By: Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM

I am writing this message in the Fifth Week of Lent as we hasten to the Celebration of the Holy Week, which leads us to the most awaited Easter Season. Our fervent prayer is one: "Lord, grant that this COVID-19 pandemic may end soon! Lord, grant that the war in Ukraine and the different parts of the world may be over!"

We are all struggling to make sense of what our church is going through at the moment. I know it is not the same for everybody. In fact, in many parts of the world, the churches have re-opened. Many parishes are fortunate to be celebrating the mysteries of our faith with the presence of the faithful, albeit still with ongoing health protocols applied such as mask wearing and social distancing rules.

Sadly, we do not have the same situation here in Hong Kong. Because of the fifth wave of the pandemic, the Hong Kong government has promised the easing of the tough pandemic control measures only after 20 April. And so we pray hard that this will materialize and we can joyfully sing our Alleluias "live, not live-streamed!" We pray that we can meet each other again physically in the beautiful church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and not digitally, in the Zoom or Google chat-room. We are indeed grateful to the members of our broadcast team who generously share their time, talent and creativity to maintain our OLMC activities 'on-the-air' and even raising our programs to another level of 'presence' in the world-wide-web. For those of you have joined us on our Friday Lenten devotion of the Way of the Cross, you must have noticed how many groups have been actively involved in the weekly celebration, something which was impossible had we done it in our traditional way of simply waiting for the people to come. The same thing goes for our OLMC Sunday Best - Bible Study session which is now on Spotify!

Hence, we can say that the pandemic has truly opened up new paths for us, not only in the sense of responding creatively to the challenges it brought, but also in widening the outreach of our liturgical activities. But there is more. Through the online pleas for help that we voiced out, there were many of you who have responded to the appeal of our needy sisters and brothers both here in Hong Kong and elsewhere, including Ukraine. Thank you for the financial assistance and the goods sent 'in kind' to the domestic helpers housed in the Tsing Yi shelter for the recovered COVID patients who have nowhere to go to after days of isolation and cure. Our OLMC Parish and some generous parishioners have also sent financial aid to the war victims of Ukraine through our PDDM community in the country. We are immensely grateful to all of you! The essence of Easter is in God's intervention in the life of his Beloved Son Jesus who suffered, died and rose for us. When Jesus our Lord came out of the tomb on Easter morning, He introduced us to the beginning of a whole new world. This new world where God's children move and live seeks to be a world of healing and hope, through the action of God's Spirit in each of us.

As we sing our 'Alleluias' this Easter season, may we all be touched and be filled with new sense of hope and healing. May our hearts be open to the new things God is working in our lives and may we share this newness of life especially to those who are distressed and depressed because of the sufferings they are still facing in life. In behalf of Fr. Thomas Law, our Parish Priest, and the staff and volunteers of OLMC Parish, let me greet you a happy, blessed and meaningful Easter!

May Mary, Queen of Peace and Mother of the Church intercede for all your needs!





## Palm Sunday: Which King Are We Triumphally Welcoming?

By: Levinna Natalia (OLMC Sunday School Teacher)

When I was young, the Palm Sunday was my favorite day out of the Holy Week masses. The entrance procession always feels joyful, with everyone raising his or her palm leaves, and the whole church will sing together, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Lift up your gates and sing, Hosanna, in the highest. Hosanna to your King!" My short younger self will try to sneak as close as possible to the priest so that I can get some splash of Holy Water. I thought I would have more blessings for the rest of the year if I could get some

of the Holy Water. Which probably is silly if I think about it now. But, probably what is felt by the people in Jerusalem at that time. They want to be as close to Jesus as possible, giving their best self, waving the palm leaves, and putting their clothes on the ground to welcome Him as their king. Indeed, Palm Sunday also confuses me the most. How can their 'Hosanna' turn to 'crucify Him' so quickly? Not even in months, but within some days?

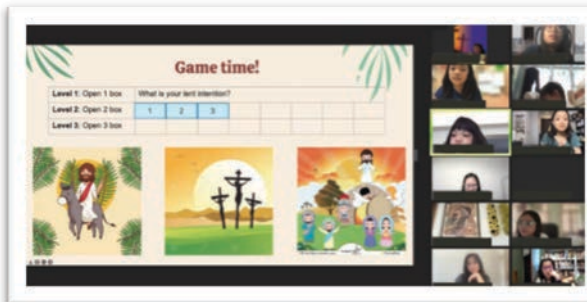
Israel has gone through a long history of oppression, exile, and victory. In the Old Testament, it was prophesied that a Messiah, a savior sent by God, would deliver His people from oppression. And at the time of Jesus, Israel suffers under the Roman occupation. Rome was a strong nation with a big army. Naturally, Israel was expecting a king with strong army to defeat them. In the Sunday school class, I asked the kids, "Imagine if you are the people in Avenger movies, the world almost ends because of a strong villain. What kind of hero are you expecting?" - It is probably the strongest superhero or a mighty powerful king with thousands of armies.

On the contrary, the bible gave us a son of a carpenter with disciples who were mostly fishermen. At that time, the people of Israel accepted that, as Jesus had done plenty of miracles. If He can do miracles, He must also have the power to summon Angels and armies of men to fight against Rome. But that was not God's plan. Jesus did nothing like what they expected from Him. And that is when 'Hosanna' – please save us in Hebrew – turned to 'crucify Him'. Because God failed to meet their expectation. God's plan has never been to save humans by giving them temporal peace. He wants to save us against sin. And His way has never been through force and violence or armies and splendor. But it is through love, grace, and mercy, through the sacrifice of Jesus, which we celebrate in Holy Week.

While the story of Israel seems silly to us, who knows that Jesus is the savior; it had me reflect. Had I done the same? Turning my 'Hosanna' into 'crucify Him' so easily? Raised as a Catholic, I learned to pray through the problems I faced. Especially under times of uncertainty like COVID, sometimes praying seems like giving God a to-do list, hoping for Him to provide more security, more protection, guarantee milestones over other milestones, and others. While, of course, it is not wrong to ask and speak up about our needs to God, it made me question, "Who is the king I am expecting?" – Did I create my own king and armies that I believe will save me? Probably through the sense of security, milestones, and achievements that I prayed for?

The game we played in Sunday school to celebrate Palm Sunday was a trivia on Holy Week. We wanted the Palm Sunday lesson also to be an introduction to the whole Holy Week celebration. And it made me realize that Palm Sunday has never been and should never be seen as a stand-alone celebration. It is a reminder that God is willing to give us more than a temporary peace; He wanted to provide us with more through His sacrifice. He wants to save us! Often His plan is much bigger and different than what we ask for. And sometimes, it takes a while for us to understand. Then, are we willing to trust Him? Or are we quick to shift to 'crucify Him'?

### Sunday School Activity: Introduction to Palm Sunday

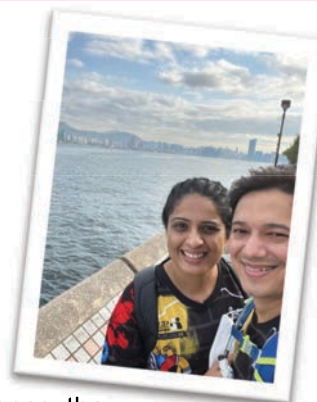


### Sunday School Activity: Which hero would you choose?

## Holy Thursday: The Lord's Last Supper – 14 April

By: Jovita & Enric Pereira (OLMC Sunday School Teachers)

Holy Thursday or Maundy Thursday is the fifth day of the Holy Week or the First Day of the Easter Triduum commemorating the Last Supper of Jesus Christ with the Apostles and the Washing of the Feet. It celebrates the institution of the Eucharist as the true body and blood of Christ and the institution of the sacrament of the priesthood. "Maundy" comes from the Latin word *mandatum*, or commandment, reflecting Jesus' words "I give you a new commandment."



Due to the ongoing pandemic and related restrictions, we have been unable to experience the washing of the feet during the Holy Thursday liturgies here in Hong Kong. However, as Fr. Law said in one of his recent homilies, even though the Church is physically closed, it is very much open in our hearts and in our daily lives. Jesus washing his disciples' feet is a very important and practical lesson of service and humility. We can very easily put this lesson into practice in our daily lives, by taking care of and serving the sick, elderly or someone in need. In these difficult times, we should at least try to pick up the phone and speak to our loved ones who may be living alone or far from family. Little acts of kindness can also be performed online.

By his acts of service, Jesus taught us that we first need to become servants in order to become true and meaningful masters/leaders. Only acts of kindness and humility can help us make and sustain true relationships within families and friends.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis has been setting a wonderful example of humility and service through a custom he started in 2013, shortly after becoming Pope, of celebrating the Holy Thursday liturgy in a prison or juvenile centre. The Pontiff resumed his Holy Thursday prison tradition for the first time in two years as the washing of the feet had to be suspended due to the fear of spread of the Coronavirus.

This year, Pope Francis celebrated the mass of the Lord's last supper at a new penitentiary complex in the port of Civitavecchia, north of Rome, where he washed the feet of 12 inmates, men and women, including people of various ages and nationalities.

"When Jesus washed his disciples' feet including the feet of Judas, who would betray him, it was sign that God will wait patiently for everyone and will forgive everything," the pope said in his homily at Civitavecchia. Pope Francis told the inmates he knows that washing someone else's feet can seem to be "a strange thing" today, but it is a reminder of Jesus, who "teaches us this, and it is simple: You have to wash each other's feet, each one serving the other, without self-interest."



### And in OLMC...

Online Mass Recording →

- Artworks by Fr. Sieger Koder
- ❖ Jesus washing Peter's feet →
- ❖ The Last Supper ↓





### Good Friday: Celebration of the Passion of Our Lord – 15 Apr

By: Paolo Raggi (OLMC Sunday School Teacher)



When Sr. Victoria asked me to be the narrator at the Friday of the Passion of the Lord, I was a bit surprised. I never read during liturgies up until then at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, and of course English is not even my mother language. And this time, due to the pandemic restrictions, it was even live streamed on YouTube, so yes, I felt a bit of pressure.

However, this has been a very good opportunity to become more familiar with the celebration of Good Friday that I have never been actively involved in the past, as where I am from (Italy) the focus is usually all on The Way of The Cross.

During my preparation I tried to be ready not just technically but also spiritually, by making sure that I would go to Confession in advance, in order to be at least worthy of reading such words in front of the Cross. In addition, such preparation time also gave me the opportunity to go deeper in the readings and get the most out of the words used to describe what was happening to Jesus. Some of the words were unknown to me, so I took the opportunity to learn more about such words and, also, listen to the correct pronunciation.

Finally, it was important for me to try to communicate each situation described by the readings according to what the events were picturing in order to make everybody aware of each specific moment. For me, it was important that the listeners would understand the drama of Jesus' being condemned to death.

When I arrived at the Church well ahead of time I found all the people very welcoming towards me and showing me all the tasks that I was supposed to perform and, also, the best way to manage such tasks. It felt a bit like being part of a team that tries to get the best results during a sport event. When the Celebration started, I felt immediately a bit of pressure, as I wanted to make sure I would not make any mistakes.

However just by listening to the first reading I realized how stupid I was acting, and that I was already in the hand of God as I was only asked by Sr. Victoria to serve HIM through a simple reading. I whispered to myself a little prayer and all of a sudden, I felt the pressure gone, instead it was replaced by a sense of belonging and quietness provided by the whole Celebration. Definitely, I think that this experience changed my perception on the people that help to serve at Mass, and I hope to become more and more aware of this important service.



### And in OLMC...

Recording of the Online Mass in-progress →



## Good Friday: Jesus Died For Us On The Cross

By: Mila Cano Quintino (OLMC Sunday School Teacher)

Christians observe Good Friday before Easter in commemoration of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. This day actually makes me feel sad. Jesus died on the Cross in atonement of our sins. However we will never be able to understand why Jesus had to die on the cross if we do not consider ourselves as sinners; and that we need a saviour. In fact the Bible says, because God so loved us that "He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16). It also says in the Bible that we have all sinned and the penalty for that is death.

When Jesus died on the cross, his sacrifice paved the way for people like me, for the forgiveness of my sins. "No one can have greater life than to lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

What I find intriguing on the flipside is that certain people exert happiness (not sadness) during the Holy Week. Why? Simply because of the resurrection of Jesus. So why is resurrection so important to Christians? It is proof that Jesus has conquered death, and He is our Saviour, Messiah, and Redeemer! "And this is the testimony that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son." (John 5:11-12)

The Passion of our Lord is not just an impact but has eternal consequences and aims to remind us of the death of Jesus Christ. It is important to be reminded and understand why Jesus had to die, and sacrifice Himself on the cross for us. Sometimes life is really hard but then, there is hope, because God provides, and that whatever He promises He will fulfill. As we reach Friday of the Passion of Our Lord, I realized that it is not a time to be sad or gloomy, but actually it is a time for celebration, a time for meditation of the Lord's goodness and grace, His generosity and love as He fulfills His promises, that He is truly our Saviour and our Messiah.



## Good Friday: A Prayer

By: Aurora Cano Paringit (OLMC Sunday School Teacher)

From the early days of Christianity, Good Friday is observed as a day of sorrow, penance, and fasting. The Liturgy of Good Friday consists of the Gospel Passion narration, Adoration of the Cross and Communion. I invite you to join me in reciting the Good Friday prayer for the Holy Church:

❖ *Let us pray dearly beloved, for the church of God, that our God and Lord be pleased to give her peace, to guard her and to unite her throughout the whole world and grant, leading our life in tranquility in quiet we may glorify God almighty. Almighty ever living God, who in Christ revealed your glory to all the nations, watch over the works of your mercy, that your church, spread throughout the entire world, may persevere with steadfast faith in confessing your name. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.* ❖



## Good Friday: Online Way of the Cross



Lord Jesus, your whole life led up to the Way of the Cross. We desire to walk side by side with you on your way to the cross.

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*



## Holy Saturday: Easter Vigil – 16 April

By: Jo Basilio (OLMC Sunday School Teacher)

*"Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised" (Lk 24:5-6)*

The Easter Vigil, the "mother of all vigils" is the "greatest and most noble of all solemnities. On this holy night, the Church keeps watch, celebrating the resurrection of Christ in the sacraments and awaiting his return in glory. It is the turning point of the Triduum, the Passover of the new covenant, which marks Christ's passage from death to life.

Being a vigil – a time of anticipation and preparation- it takes place at night, starting after nightfall and finishing before daybreak on Easter, thus beginning and ending in darkness, the long wait from Lent is over. The Vigil begins with the church shrouded in darkness, a "blazing fire" is to be prepared so that the people may gather around it and experience the flames dispelling the darkness and lighting up the night, its warmth and light draw the liturgical assembly together. The fire is blessed and the Paschal Candle, the symbol of the "light of Christ rising in glory" dispelling the darkness of hearts and minds, is lit.

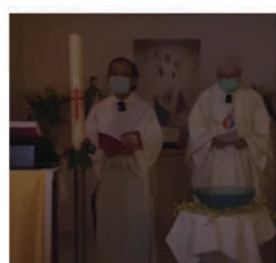
The assembly holding unlit candles, much like the children of Israel, guided at night by the pillar of fire, follows the risen Christ. Taking our light from the Easter Candle, all the candles are then lit filling the entire church with light as the priest announce the Easter proclamation or the Exultet. This triumphant and beautiful chant is the prelude to the celebration of Easter. It speaks of night and light, of the place and time of the moment, of the priest and congregation, and it anticipates the glorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A number of readings are read still in the darkness of the church. From Genesis through the New Testament, God's marvelous plan for our salvation is unfolded. The Gloria is sung and the Alleluia is proclaimed for the first time since before Lent. And all the lights of the church is lit proclaiming the glory of the risen Lord. The Baptismal water is blessed, and those who have been preparing to join the Church are welcomed through the Sacraments of Initiation. The entire congregation is then invited to renew their own baptismal promises, facing the door and turning towards the altar as a gesture of renouncing Satan and all his empty promises. The sprinkling of the newly blessed baptismal water follows to remind us of our own baptism.

The church may have been closed this year but it does not stop us from proclaiming, "the Lord is risen! Alleluia, Alleluia!" for we are Easter people and Halleluiah is our song!

### And in OLMC...

(1 baptism & 1 confirmation)



Online Mass Recording →

### Easter Sunday: The Lord Is Risen, Alleluia, Alleluia – 17 Apr

By: Jo Basilio (OLMC Sunday School Teacher)



This year our Easter celebration was different due to the restrictions due to COVID-19. But this did not stop us from celebrating this glorious resurrection day. As Fr. Jordan preached during his homily, it is only when we experience the darkest of time that the meaning of resurrection will enlighten us more. The darkness of Lent is dispelled by the resurrection and because Jesus is risen, we have hope. We continue to trust that one day we will join in His resurrection.

The message of Easter also reminds us of our life of mission. Jesus goes before us, ahead of us through his life through his death. He goes ahead of us to our “Galilee”, the place where we have been called and loved by God, where we encounter Jesus. With great joy in our hearts, and with the mission given to us, we go back to our “Galilee” and wait for the Lord. As part of the Easter mass celebration, we renewed our faith and were sprinkled with holy water reminding us of our baptismal promises. It felt like rain after a prolonged period of drought.

Our Easter Sunday celebration this year was different yet more profound. With hope, we look forward to returning to the Church, our home, our Galilee, for we are all Easter people!



### Special Music Ministry for Lent and Easter

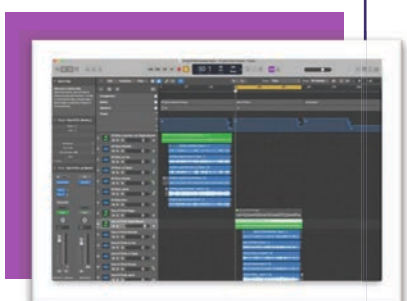


Hi everyone, my name is **Mishka Michelle Wu**. I am one of the organists and coordinators of the English Mass music here at OLMC. I have joined the parish in 2012, serving at the Bethany Choir at 11:45 am Sunday Mass in the past and now with Rabboni Choir at 6:00 pm Sunday Mass as organist. Allow me to share with you my reflections of Lent and Easter this year. Similar to last year 2021, the government had issued pandemic policies that prohibited the physical celebrations of the Holy Mass, including the Lenten season and Holy Week. Most of us, including myself, felt devastated that we were not able to

celebrate the climax of our Catholic faith in person once more. Upon the directives of Fr. Law and the guidance of Sr. Victoria, we ventured on a new way to provide good liturgical music to the faithful in the online setting. In the previous year, we had a small team of musicians to provide music live in online Mass streaming. This year, due to the severity of pandemic situation, we had switched to pre-recorded songs played during the liturgy.

Therefore, a team of 7 singers, including Jo Capal and Emmanuel Calinao from Bethany Choir, Vivien Lee and Josephine Yue from Holy Family Choir, Janric Rosales from Rabboni Choir, Korn Roongruangchai (our former organist from Thailand) and myself formed the online music ministry, together with the help of Sr. Victoria and Mike Chew, the live stream expert. The workflow was as such: each week we would record 4 songs. I would create the organ part and add my vocal, then gave the tracks to the group as their guide. Every Friday before 10:00 pm, the group would send me their recordings, usually captured by mobile phones. I would then mix the music and pass on to Mike. This was a new mode of singing for some of us, but the more we did it, the better the results. On Sundays, our music would be broadcasted in the 11:45 am online Mass. The workload was actually much heavier than preparing for a physical Mass, but to see that we could still serve the Mass together, it has been the most rewarding experience. For Holy Week, we were in charge of the music for Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. I was particularly touched that on Good Friday, we could sing “My People” (Popule Meus in English) for the Adoration of the Holy Cross with Korn as the soloist. The song really helped us to meditate upon Christ’s Passion better. Then came Easter Sunday, where we sang music of triumph with our Lord’s resurrection and concluded our online Music ministry’s special Lenten and Easter service.

By 21 April, finally we were able to return to OLMC for physical Mass. On Divine Mercy Sunday, we were back to our live music service. How I missed the organ and the beautiful singing of the choir! Let us not take physical Mass for granted and let us return to our Church to give praise to our God, and receive Him in the Holy Eucharist sacramentally!





## Divine Mercy Sunday - 24 April

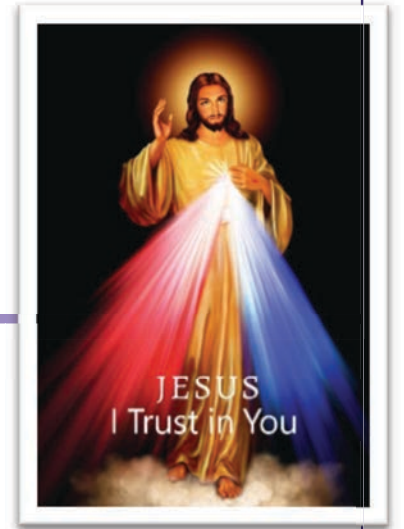
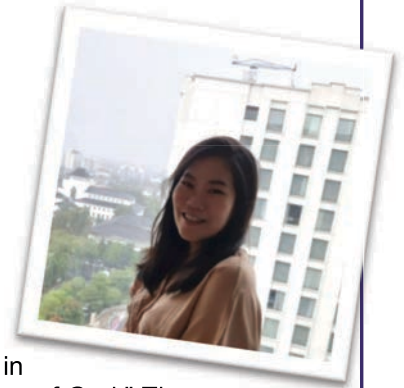
By: Cynthia Caroline (OLMC Sunday School Teacher)

When talking about Feast of the Divine Mercy, many of us will associate it with St. Faustina Kowalska. Jesus appeared personally to this humble Polish nun, as she detailed in her Diary, so that Sr. Faustina could help Jesus make His mercy known to the whole world.

There are two main things that we celebrate on Divine Mercy Sunday: First, how great is God's Mercy that He will forgive us no matter how great are our sins as long as we sincerely repent. The message that St. Faustina received could be summarized thus: "Jesus died on the Cross. We need to repent of our sins, proclaim the mercy of God and die in a state of grace. We need to persevere, and when we fall, get up, repent, and turn to the mercy of God." There is no peace without God's mercy. Hence, as Catholic people, we are very fortunate to have the Sacrament of Reconciliation that enables us to sincerely repent and ask God's forgiveness.

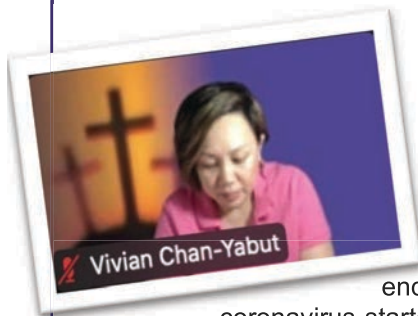
The second message for this special feast is: "blessed those people who believe without seeing." As narrated in the Gospel for this Sunday, Thomas – one of Jesus disciples – was not present when Jesus revealed himself in front of the rest of the disciples. Thomas refused to believe that Jesus who died has risen and was alive again. He wanted proofs and wanted to see the nail marks on Jesus hands. While John, another disciple of Jesus believes immediately only by seeing an empty tomb. John was happy and believed that Jesus has risen without seeing Jesus himself.

It hits close to my heart and I am sure to many people as well. Full faith and reliance to God's plan is not an easy journey, even for Jesus' disciples who followed him and witnessed all the miracles that he performed. Nothing comes overnight. Hence if we are in the middle of the journey, let's not give up. Happiness in our Faith in God comes from living together with Jesus throughout our life.



## Divine Mercy Sunday

By: Vivian Chan Yabut  
(OLMC Sunday School Teacher)



As we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, we are reminded of how the Lord's mercy endures forever. And it still remains so. Even today, even now. The fifth wave of the coronavirus started with irresponsible members of society that caused the loss of so many lives. Then there are the long lasting effects of COVID to those who have it; this is on top of the loss on income, which is hurting our economy that is struggling to recover since 2019. One could not help but feel a sense of helplessness and despair, some 'doomsday feeling' as if there truly is no end in sight for this pandemic experience.

But the Lord says, "Blessed are those who have not seen yet believed." We heeded the government's calls to battle this terrible fifth wave. We stayed home and tried to be as safe as we could. We cared for each other - for those who caught it, for close contacts, for carers and front-liners; all these as we fervently prayed for the Lord's mercy and deliverance.

"Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last. The one who lives". Oh yes indeed. How wonderful it is to trust in the Lord. 4.30 pm had been my make or break part of the day when the COVID updates were given. Those feelings of despair turned into hope and then turned to joy. Especially when some restrictions have finally eased, including the opening up of our OLMC Church. What a fitting way to celebrate the Lord's mercy indeed. Hallelujah!"



OLMC Main Page  
on Facebook



OLMC Page for English Speaking  
Parishioners on Facebook



OLMC Website  
<http://www.olmcchurch.org.hk>



### LBS Corner: Unlock Again

Reference liturgical readings for the 2nd Sunday of Easter Year 2022: Gospel (**John 20:19-31**); 1st reading (**Acts 5:12-16**); 2nd reading (**Rev 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19**)

Same month last year, the title of our LBS Corner article was 'Unlock.' With the same gospel reading reference as last year on Jesus' appearance to His disciples and the encounter between Jesus and Thomas, our LBS Corner issue for this month is 'Unlock Again,' as we are now allowed to celebrate the Easter with the return of the congregation to the church and celebrate the Holy Mass with our Risen Lord.

On the evening of Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors of the upper room, as they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Then came Jesus and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Their fear and sadness were wiped away and their hearts filled with joy at seeing the Lord. Then Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me so I send you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit". (**Jn 20:19-22**)

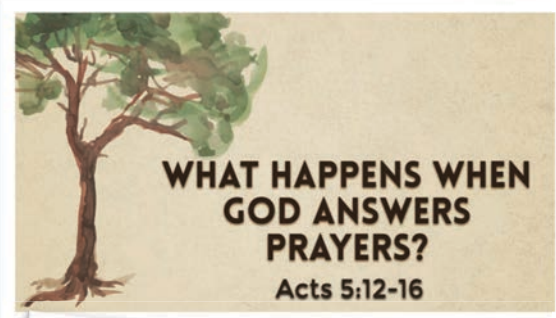
The opening of the church to welcome us back is timely, as the Hong Kong Government has relaxed its 'group gathering' measures. From 14 April the religious premises (i.e., churches, chapels and Mass centers) were unlocked again and reopened after a long closure right after this year's celebration of the Chinese New Year. There is still, however, the restriction to limit the congregation or churchgoers to 50% of the normal capacity of the church. The peace of God unlocks our hearts again for us not to fear the virus; the necessary precaution and guidelines are being put into action and being observed by our church administrators to ensure our safety and wellness.

The liturgical readings challenge each one of us not to fear, not be afraid as the Holy Spirit is with us in re-starting and in allowing our hearts to 'be unlocked again' and to do what ought to be done in expressing and extending the love of God to others and using us as instruments of His blessing, grace and mercy. This year, we were not able to observe and share the Lenten practices and participate well in the Holy Week liturgies; however, there is always time to catch up and do charity work even as we adhere to prevailing health protocols and guidelines.

We have to remember that whatever challenges the pandemic are presenting us, we need to remain strong and trust God's assurance of His presence. The Second reading reinforces us: He said, "Do not be afraid! I am the first and the last (**Rev 1:17**) – telling us that He will be with us always and His presence will give peace and comfort in our hearts, assuring us that we are not alone in facing the hardships and challenges in life. If we really believe in the presence of our Risen Lord all the time, this is what is being shown to us in the First reading: the apostles put all their trust unto the resurrection of our Lord that is why they were able to have the strength and courage that many miracles and wonders were being performed among the people (**Acts 5:12**) to fulfill the mission entrusted on them.

Now, as we unlock our hearts again and allow the peace of God to reign in our hearts, it is time for us to re-start our apostolate and undertake the mission entrusted to us by our dear Lord.

Please note that we are still having our LBS online through Zoom Video Conferencing on Thursdays at 9:30 pm (ID: 320027131; PW: 7NQKV6).





## Prayer To Take Authority from Our Lord Jesus's Death and Resurrection

In the name of Jesus, I take authority and I bind all the powers and forces in the air, in the ground, in the water, in the underground, in the netherworld, in nature and in fire. You are the Lord over the entire universe and I give you glory for your creation. In your name, I bind all demonic forces that have come against us and our families and I seal all of us in the protection of your precious blood that was shed for us on the Cross.

Mary, Our Mother, we seek your protection and intercession, with the Sacred heart of Jesus, for us and our families and surround us with your mantle of love to discourage the enemy.

St. Michael and our Guardian Angels, come and defend us and our families in battle against all the evil ones that roam the earth.

In the name of Jesus, I bind and command all powers and forces of evil to depart right now away from us, our families, our homes, and our lands and I cast you at the foot of the Cross to remain there forever. And I thank you, Lord Jesus, for you are a faithful and compassionate God. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed are thou among women, and blessed be the fruit of thy womb. Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen



**Journey into my Heart** is a mini autobiography book written by Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM.

Sr. Victoria shares her story as compass to pilgrim searchers of God. There are a total of 11 chapters (1 introduction and 10 chapters) in the book, and one chapter will be featured in Homestead every month.

## JOURNEY INTO MY HEART (CHAPTER 6) - *Journey from faith to faith*



I made my first profession of vows on February 10, 1983. Among the three vows we profess as consecrated persons – poverty, chastity and obedience - the most challenging one for me is the vow of obedience. I have perceived this early in the journey because I know myself to be a very rational person. I find it difficult to obey when I can't understand the motive behind the words or desires of my superiors.

After I finished my Master's Degree in Theology in 1988, my superiors asked me to do the work of the porter in our Mother House in Antipolo. At first, I told myself perhaps it was just to make me rest after years of intense mental work. This was also the period of preparation for my perpetual vows so I accepted everything as reasonable designation from my superiors.

After my perpetual vows on February 11, 1989, however, I somehow expected a change in assignment. But it didn't happen. I forced myself to accept everything in peace but I noticed that as I continued doing my service as portress – opening / closing the convent gate and answering phone calls - something in me seemed to shut down. My creative intellectual energies languished, my enthusiasm waned. Some involuntary reactions followed: low blood pressure, fatigue and the like. I even found community life burdensome. How ironic that immediately after my perpetual vows I would be feeling all these.

In a matter of nine months or so, I felt there was no way out of this, and I contemplated asking for a leave of absence. It was then that I had a vivid dream, which I believe was some kind of divine intervention. I was in the rooftop of the convent. On the other side of the place, I could see and hear my sisters laughing as they were having recreation. I asked myself sadly, *'How can I move from here to join them?'* Then I noticed a child beside me. He said, *'Come, I will show you.'* I followed him as he reached out for an opening on the floor and slowly entered it. He moved down slowly into what I imagined to be a spiral staircase. Curiously, I peeped into the opening and what did I see? It wasn't a spiral staircase but a grinding machine! Overcome with fear, I shouted, *'Oh no, I can't follow you there!'* I heard him shout back, *'Sure, you can!'*

Looking back, I realize how my unconscious has helped me resolve my dilemma by suggesting a Biblical image: the child. The child is one of the images in the Gospel of Mark used by Jesus to explain the path to greatness passing through the way of littleness. In Mk 9:36-37 Jesus confronts his disciples, *"What were you arguing about on the way?"* But they remained silent since they had been discussing among themselves who was the greatest. This was when Jesus called them and taught them the paradoxical lesson: *"If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."* Then taking a child he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them, *"Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."*

The trigger to my vocation crisis, if I have to say it frankly, was the 'humiliation' I felt in doing what I considered as menial tasks in the community. At that time, our congregation did not allow us to engage in outside works where our mental capacities could be developed and used to the utmost. But as I reflected deeper, I realized that this was part of the call God addressed to me and the response I gave to him: **focus not on 'doing, but on being.'** Concentrate not on the way of success but on the 'way of descent' into whatever service the community asked of me, in this case, being the community portress. At that time, that was my 'door' to understand and to practice the important values taught by Jesus, my Teacher.

In the process, the suffering I experienced in doing that apostolate awakened the child within me, to remind me of the authentic way of following the Teacher. The passage from 'isolation' to 're-creation' was a journey of descent into the death of the ego in order to rise again to the joy of being with others, of serving others. It clearly pointed to the Paschal mystery – the life-death-life experience of Jesus. But first, my reaction of fear had to be overcome. And thank God, my fidelity to prayer life and the help of some spiritual friends helped me pass through this difficult period.

In the end, I guess I should be thankful to my superiors for giving me such challenging experiences as training ground for my following of Christ. And even up to this point, I can honestly say I am not yet converted enough to let go of my ego, my fear of losing my degrees, my intellectual abilities, achievements, titles and the like. Hence the Lord seems to 'delight' in repeatedly challenging me to undergo similar experiences.

Even now, after over forty years of following him, there is still so much fear of **"being ground like wheat"** to be offered as bread and nourishment for others. The only difference I think is that I have somehow grown in the awareness of my weakness.

I continue to beg my Teacher Jesus to take my hand, help me overcome the fear of following him. May he increase my faith and my love and teach me to completely trust that he truly knows what is best for me. He will always bring me to the right place at the right time wherever and whenever that may be.

To be continued....