



## Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

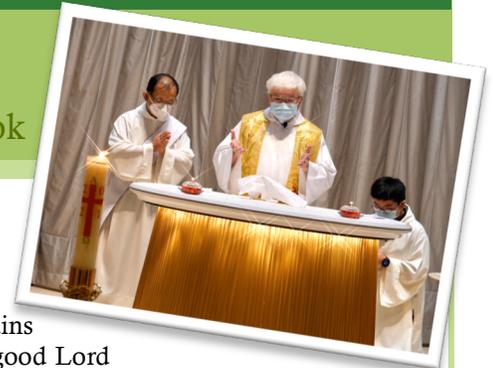
SEP  
2021

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# THE HOMESTEAD

## We Are All Connected In Our Lady

Deacon Alex Kwok



May the good Lord be praised, forever and ever. Amen.

My heart was in turmoil when I was informed in the first week of August of my new assignment here in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Wanchai where I began my life's journey six decades plus ago. Change is the only one certainty, which I know remains unchanged. Wan Chai has changed a lot and I too have grown old. Looking back, the good Lord has been moulding me and polishing me with various encounters so that I could be a handier instrument of His. Whenever I felt settled and retired, He would uproot me with new challenges, ridding me of my inadequacies. In the course of moving around and ahead, I have weaved a web of relationships and picked up many treasure stones. Life on earth is genuinely an adventure, a journey to find the way home to our Creator. But in reality, He is always around with us.

At first, I felt nervous about this new assignment because Fr. Thomas Law, our parish priest, taught me Liturgical & Sacramental Theology in the Holy Spirit Seminary College. Every Mass in which I assist would feel like a graduation examination! Such an anxiety proves to be groundless and very soon it evaporates. Now I am able to immerse myself in the Masses he celebrates and am animated by his homilies. I discover charity in his prophetic criticisms of the present situation of Hong Kong. Here is a big heart for the people of Hong Kong, in particular the disadvantaged, as well as for the officials who run the show. Fr. Law continues to be my mentor, opening up in me a new perspective to see God's relationships with the world.



As a deacon, I am supposed to be a symbol, a witness of the servant role of the Church in the world. The good Lord set an exemplar of this diaconate role when He washed the feet of His disciples in the Last Supper and told His disciples and therefore the Church to do the same (**John 13:13-17**). In my previous assignment, I visited together with the parishioners outsourced janitors as well as home alone elderly in the neighbourhood, and prison inmates in Tai Lam. However, I did not feel fulfilled. Something was missing. Thanks to my spiritual director, Fr. Francis Tam. He reminded me of the necessity to discern whether there was any improvement in my relationship with the Lord. Am I doing the Lord's work or my own work? To be candid, I have to admit that there was vainglory in those visits, those "achievements". I am supposed to be serving the Lord in them (**Matthew 25:40**) but I find no progress in my intimacy with the Lord. Here in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, I was overwhelmed by your services to the disadvantaged on Fridays. I see very many deacons and deaconesses in this parish. You have done even before His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence, Cardinal John Tong appeal you to do in "*Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the service of the Evangelizing mission of the Church*". I am humbled and I praise the good Lord. Alleluia!

The Blessed Virgin Mary is yet another beautiful exemplar. Just as Most Reverend Bishop Joseph Ha, OFM said on our Feast Day celebration, "*The Mother of Jesus is Here!*" (**John 2:1, Acts 1:14**) We are blessed to have Our Lady of Mount Carmel as our Patroness and thus our model. She is a caring, trusting and most important of all, guiding exemplar! Dear Brethren. October is the month of the Rosary. Let us meditate the twenty mysteries of the Rosary diligently and benefit from her intercession. In her, we are connected as siblings of Jesus. Through her, we gain easy access to our good Lord Jesus.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us. Amen.

THANK GOD FOR THE TEACHERS OF THE FAITH !

By: Sr. Victoria Victorino, PDDM

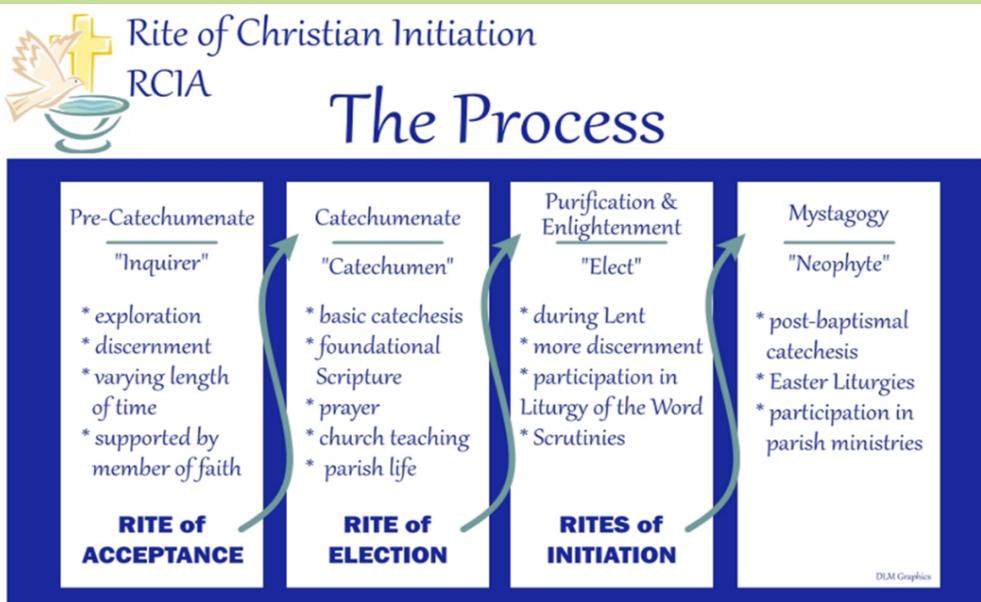
Among the colorful prism of ministries in the Church, the ministry of being catechists or teachers of the faith stands out. Catechism (derived from the Latinized form of original Greek 'katechein') refers to instruction on the faith by word of mouth, or briefly 'oral instruction.' This ministry falls under the various services outlined by St. Paul in 1 Cor 12:28. *"Some people God has designated in the Church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues."*

One of the things that amaze and console me as I do the pastoral work here in OLMC is the presence of so many catechists both in the Chinese and the English community. They are so dedicated to the work of evangelization, which takes various forms: teaching basic prayers to children, explanation of the basic tenets of the Church, the sacraments, prayer and other devotions. There is also the most important part of accompanying the children, parents and the catechumens in understanding and celebrating the liturgical life of the Church especially the Sunday Mass, as well as caring for the vulnerable members of our church and society.

Indeed the identity of Church as "mother" is clearly personified in the person of our teachers and catechists as they nourish the souls and spirits of their students. They witness to the beauty of the faith as they carry out their basic duties to the family and society and journey with their students in laying down a stronger faith foundation today and for the years to come. Through their prayer, constant deepening of the Word of God and direct participation in the life of the community they grow and stimulate others to grow in their Christian identity and commitment.



Sr. Victoria teaching Sunday Best, OLMC's weekly Bible Study Class every Saturday



Indeed, let us thank and bless the Lord for the presence of our dear catechists who instruct both children and adults about the beauty and nobility of the Christian faith. And let us entrust the faith journey of our Sunday School Students, our Catechumens and all our OLMC parishioners to the loving intercession of Mary, Our Lady of Mount Carmel

God Bless!

WELCOME BACK CHILDREN !

By: Jo Basilio

We are back! On 12 September 2021, we welcomed back over 90 students and resumed face-to-face classes. Return to classroom teaching is not without its challenges. When God closes a door He opens a window. We had to say good-bye to St. Francis Canossian School, our “school” for the past years. And began the new school year at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.



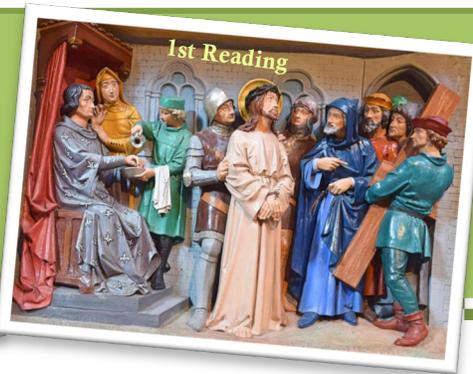
With the help of our parish priest, Fr. Thomas Law, his staff and Sr. Victoria, we were able to come up with a suitable arrangement. Classes were split to morning and afternoon sessions, with the younger children attending the morning classes from 10:30 am to 11:30 am and the much older students in the afternoon from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm.

Some of the children (and their parents) came as early as 10.00 am! I guess they were as excited to see their new school and we were there to welcome them! Deacon Alex Kwok came to each of the classrooms to bless and welcome the children.

Seeing the children again (and most of them have grown since the last time we saw them) was just so heart-warming. I did not realize how much I missed them. Our gratitude to the teachers and assistant teachers for continuing to volunteer, may the Lord reward you greatly. And to our dear parents, thank you for your patience and understanding



“Bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord.” Eph 6:4



## Clarifications

Reference liturgical readings for the Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year 2021)  
 Gospel **Mark 9:30-37**; 1st reading **Wisdom 2:12, 17-20**; 2nd reading **James 3:16 – 4:3**

The gospel reading describes the occasion where Jesus speaks again about His death, where while *Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it. He was teaching his disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise.” But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him (Mk 9:30-32).* Mark tells us that they do not understand Him, but none of them stepped forward and dared to ask a question or sought clarification about what He meant, whether it is for their information only or it a truth is being manifested by Jesus upon them about His death and resurrection. Nowadays, in this age of social media, we are exposed and being kept busy by the so many information that calls our attention and the noises that occupy our minds that represents our capability to multi-task. If we could find the time to settle down to understand and have the patience to really pay attention in listening, in clarifying and reflecting on the information and the value of message we are getting through our constant prayers, then we could say that we are already developing a habit of growing in wisdom and understanding of God’s presence within and around us.

While Jesus teaches the disciples of His and their mission as they journey through Galilee on their way to Jerusalem, He observed that the disciples are arguing with one another about something. Then, when *they came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest (Mk 9:33-34).* The disciples do not understand what Jesus was telling them as they remained silent when asked on what they are arguing about. We are like the disciples in this gospel - where we are the students and Jesus as the teacher. We fail to understand things being taught to us as we fear in asking or clarifying questions and failure to pay attention to the lessons being taught to us by our teachers.

Our hesitation to ask questions hinders our understanding of the lesson for fear of embarrassment from the teacher or being laughed at by other classmates. We heard oftentimes that understanding requires honesty and humility to admit ignorance in asking questions in order to grow in our understanding and wisdom. The other reason why we fail to understand the teaching is because we do not pay attention. Like the disciples they are pre-occupied with something else, something was running through their minds at that moment when Jesus explaining something to them. What stuck in their mind is that Jesus will die, and they quickly pre-occupied with the thought of who is the greatest amongst themselves and perhaps arguing who is the most deserving to lead. But, *then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.” (Mk 9:35).* In this age of digital technology, too many things pre-occupy our minds and that unnecessary noises take out our sensitivity to paying attention to the manifestations of God’s presence and the blessings He surrounded us and wanted us to receive and learn from through other people. We ask in prayer that we be reminded to act like a child – so naïve and always willing to absorb and learn God’s teachings and desires to grow in understanding and wisdom, and in doing so Jesus demonstrated and said in **Mk 9:36-37**... *Taking a child, he placed it in the 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.”*

Our LBS’ connection for the 25th Sunday is that *“Purity of intention bears good fruits and brings peace,”* and with a collective call to action to *“be on the look out of the various manifestations around us that may represent as God’s blessings or messages for us”*.

Please note that amidst the COVID-19 situation, though improving, we still elect to continue doing our LBS online through Zoom Video Conferencing [ID:320027131; PW:7NQKV6]. We welcome you to join us online!

## Jealousy & Power Struggles

By: Raymond Tam  
(now residing in UK)



The first reading on the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time this year reminded us of one of our human natures - jealousy. It was recorded in the Book of Numbers that when Moses was with the seventy elders, the Lord appeared, took some spirits from Moses, blew on the elders and they then prophesied, including the two, named Eldad and Medad, who were still in the camps when the Lord appeared. Joshua then asked Moses to stop them because of jealousy. History repeats itself, according to the Gospel written St. Mark, the disciples tried to prevent others from driving out demons in Jesus' name.

Reading these two pieces of scriptures made me think how the evil spirits made us walk away from Jesus' teachings and how we can drive away those evil spirits.

Jealousy is embedded in everyone's personality and is often derived from power struggle. No one would like to be looked down on and thus we struggle to be on top of someone or even everyone else. As a human being, living in big metropolitans like Hong Kong, we fight for everything since childhood. When we were young, we (via our parents) fight for places in schools, we struggle to do the best and to compete with others in various areas. When we grew up, we fight for a decent job, promotions and pay rise

with no regard to whether we enjoy the work itself. In the late hours of our lives, we fight for graveyard plots. Are all these fighting necessary?

Recently, there is a very popular TV series called "The Squid Game" on Netflix. In the series, participants, from the bottom of the bottom in the society, were recruited and invited to join the game. The one who made to the last game and won will receive a huge amount of money whereas those who cannot make it will be killed. The scene which impressed me the most was the one where one participant tried every way to win but to no avail, he then chose to turn a blind eye on his ethical calling and told a lie to one of his good friends in order to win. His trick worked and his partner was eliminated.

In the real world, if we look back on our lives, there are times we tried to win over one another with different tricks mainly because of jealousy. A famous psychologist, Maslow, once drew up a hierarchy discussing how people fight for their needs and to climb up the ladder. Other psychologists also refer human wants to be unlimited, when one is fulfilled, we will move to look for other fulfillment. Is this due to just human nature? Is it inevitable?

All these made me wonder, as a Catholic, when we are doing all these acts to fight for our personal benefits in response to our human nature of

jealousy, are we doing something according to Jesus' teaching? It seems to me that whenever we are fighting for our power and position in the society, we have totally forgotten one of the most important aspects of Catholic faith – love your neighbour as yourself.

Brothers and sisters, let us not forget the teaching in today's scriptures. Be happy with the talents Jesus has given us, make good use of it, share our talents with our fellow brothers and sisters, just like the Lord taking some with the others. Whenever evil spirits come and tempt us to do something unethical for our own good, say the Lord's prayer and seek his guidance. By doing so, we can help build a heavenly world for everyone.



## Sorrowful Mother Mary (15 September)

### What is the 7 Sorrows Rosary?

The Rosary of the Seven Sorrows dates back to the fourteenth century. It is believed that Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, appeared to St. Bridget of Sweden and revealed this Rosary devotion to her. St. Bridget devoted her life to following in the footsteps of Christ — truly caring for people in need.

In the modern times, this devotion became popular again following the Marian apparitions in Kibeho, Rwanda in the 1980s. During Mary's apparitions to Marie-Claire Mukangango, she assigned the young woman the mission to reintroduce this special Rosary to the world. Marie-Claire was later killed in the genocide of over a million people in Rwanda.



### Why do we pray the 7 Sorrows Rosary?

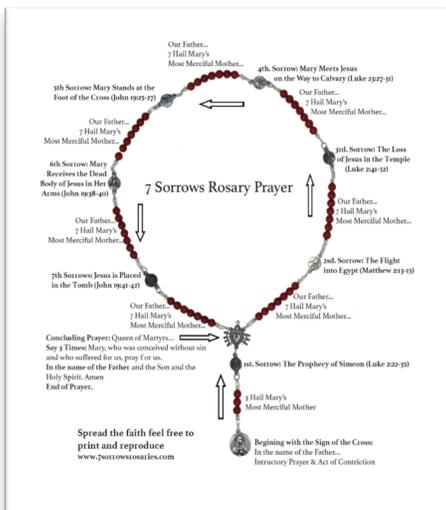
We pray this Rosary to learn to suffer with love, as Mary, the mother of Jesus, did. The 7 Sorrows Rosary leads us to understand our suffering, sins, and sorrows. Doing so helps us to better live a life of joy in the Lord, so that we can serve others like St. Bridget and Marie-Claire did. As we pray with Mary through her 7 sorrows, we begin to feel empathy for her suffering, the suffering of her son Jesus, our Savior, the suffering of our neighbors, and that of our own.

### When do we pray the 7 Sorrows Rosary?

We pray this devotion when we need the guidance of the Blessed Virgin and when we need to remind ourselves of the joy that comes when we become capable of accepting suffering in this life and making it bear fruit of compassion, love and peace. This Rosary can be prayed at any time, anywhere, in any season of life. If we take the courage to embrace our sorrows, then we will realize all our pains and sorrows are just means of strengthening our faith and purifying our souls. In addition to our Daily Rosary, this Chaplet of Seven Sorrows is a comfort over our pains and tears, severe trials and tests. We can even dedicate our prayer to a certain suffering of a friend, family member, ourselves, or the world in this particular time of global pandemic.

### How do we pray the 7 Sorrows Rosary?

Pray unceasingly our Daily Rosary and Chaplet of 7 Sorrows, Mother Mary will help us to present our sufferings as our offerings to Almighty Father through Jesus Christ who eventually turn them into blessings of Faith, Hope, Love, Joy and Fun.



Speaking of the blessings of September, we have four birthday stars in our group: Mary, Raissa, Teresa and Anna ==>>>>

And thanks be to God that we could enjoy our times and gather together in person once a month for prayers and celebration. Alleluia!



## FOUR HUNDRED BILLION

By: Andrea Wu

I have faith that the sun will rise - today, tomorrow, and the days after that.

Everyone's journey to faith starts differently. Some may be introduced to it by their friends, family, or they might be called, personally, to the faith.

Even before getting baptised and attending church regularly, I have always believed in something bigger than myself, than all of us scattered around the Earth. Something with a capital "S", a presence weaved within the clouds and the sky and the multitude of stars above us. I was baptised when I was thirteen. The me before that had little experience in religion - but I distinctly remember praying when the time arose.

It was raining.

The sky was gray, fat droplets of rain splattering on the slick asphalt of the road. Having no umbrella, my mother and I had to take shelter under a metal store awning, hoping fruitlessly that a taxi would come. We waited, and the strip of visible street that was not clouded by gray rain and mist stayed empty. With no other ideas, I prayed.

A blurry outline materialised on the street, pattering closer until we could see it was a taxi. At the time, I gleefully pointed out to my mom that I had prayed, and that was why an unlikely taxi had come in the storm.

To others, this may be an insignificant event; something passable and hardly a sign of a higher power. However, this scene stayed clear and fresh in my young, impressionable mind - up until today, years after. I believe this was my true introduction to faith. Subsequently, I was introduced to Sunday school, started attending masses regularly, and found some reassurance every Sunday that no matter how bad things got, it would all be fine in the end.

During my religious education in Sunday school, it became even more obvious to me. Faith was not something massive or huge that I needed to mull over every day, but rather the small things, scattered across our lives like pinpricks of light in the night sky. A search for stars is impossible under the effects of light pollution - but in reality, constantly present. It is only when one travels out, to a place empty of any nuisances and distractions, that they become clearly visible.

These stars do not have to be bright, flashy, and sparkling. The Milky Way is not just full of the brightest stars in the sky, but also woven with the tiny, blink-and-you-will-miss-it stars, the ones that you do not notice until they are absent.

I have faith that the sun will rise tomorrow, and the days after that.

Do you?



Hello!

By: Mike Chew

### How did the Broadcast Team begin in OLMC?

Thanks to COVID, the broadcast team began to emerge in early 2020. I joined the team around September 2020. Then, we started the English broadcast in early 2021 working together with Sr. Victoria. It was a very new team in the parish community during that time. Honestly speaking, I did not have any broadcasting experience but I was very excited to contribute to this team. During the initial COVID time, churches were “closed”. The only way to listen to the Gospel and attend Mass is through YouTube. I know then that the broadcast task is meaningful to many. If I could use technology to help the church spread the words of God, then why not? I am very blessed that God has given me the mind and talent to learn something new.

### The "Parable of the Talents", in Matthew 25:14–30

I have a professional working background in Information Technology. I probably have an idea of all things related to “digital”. To be honest, the church community is usually “aged” and not up to-date with all the new techy stuff. I could definitely make use of my talents in this area to help the Parish. Else, what is the point of God giving me these talents if I do not double or triple it like what was mentioned in Matthew 25:14-30?

### For those who "wish" to help the community:

"Wish to"? Nothing will happen if you continue to "wish to". You and I are no different. We have our own life that we are busy with. Most people are afraid of taking the first step because they believe they are too busy, and they are afraid of commitments.

My view is - do not be afraid of taking the first step. We all should learn how to manage our time and priorities. I do not mean you need to always commit to serving in the church every day. You do not have to. Take turns with your team. If you are unable to attend occasionally, do not worry about it. God will. The bottom line is - never give yourself excuses not to serve. Get started today. Join any ministry that you like. Let us serve and grow with the community together.

### For those who are already serving in the parish:

Depending on how long you have started working in the community, do not get too comfortable with what you are doing today. The reason is that God gave us talent and gives us opportunities all the time. It is a matter of whether you have “grown” it, double or triple it. I suggest continuing to explore within the community. Allow new joiners to take over from what you are doing now so that you can move on to something else you probably want to explore. There are always benefits and surprising opportunities when you are willing to explore different areas. Be flexible.



If you wish to continue working on what you have been doing so far, that is fine. There is no compulsory need to change. Just keep going and be innovative. We are serving the community, so we need to make sure we address the needs accurately. Do not be fooled by your ego or pride. Be observant, be objective, and be sympathetic.

At the end of the day, we are all serving God and serving the community. We learn together throughout the services. God bless.



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