

# NEWSLETTER

**GENDER CHOICE**

## EDITORIAL

**T**he opening of the first gender choice clinic in Hong Kong has aroused a lot of hot discussion both in the medical field and the public. Our Guild has been approached by various organisations including our Parish for opinion. We promptly took up the responsibility of safeguarding the Catholic ethical standpoints and responded to the issue. This forms the main theme of special issue. in our Newsletter this time. I hope that our readers will be interested in this and send us their opinion for further discussion.

The whole editorial board wishes our members a very happy Chinese New Year and the Peace of Christ be with us and our families.

We also hope that you will like the new appearance of our Newsletter.

C K MOK



**OUR SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR**

## MASTER'S MESSAGE

While the Guild celebrated her 40th birthday in 1993, the Council of the Guild had recently unraveled a mystery and coincidence, which should never be ignored. In 1953, when the Guild was founded in Hong Kong, our spiritual director, Fr. Russell had joined the family of

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Society of Jesus in other part of the world. In 1957, Father Russell was ordained as a Jesuit priest.

As a successor of the late Fr. Cronin, Fr. Russell became spiritual director of our Guild since 1979. During all these years, he had guided and taught us in our religious life especially in relation to our medical practice.

To express our deepest appreciation and thanks, the council and several senior members of the Guild had arranged a dinner on 7-1-94 at the Country Club, Deep Water Bay. Those present, including Fr. Russell, Dr. Emmanuel Chang, Dr. Raman Ruiz, Dr. Irene Osmund, Dr. Chan Wai Kai and several council members, had spent a wonderful evening. The old-timers shared with the youngsters some of the old stories of the Guild.

The memorable night finished after delicious dishes and with gift presentation, a document case, to Fr. Russell.

PAUL HO

## COUNCIL NEWS

### *Report on Medical Sunday Mass*

The Medical Sunday Mass of this year was held on 17th October 1993 at Christ the King chapel. It was a function jointly held by the Catholic Doctor's Association and Catholic Nurses' Guild. Other health related organisation were also invited. We were very honored to have Rev. Fr. John B. Tsang as our principal celebrant this year.

Throughout the mass, he has stressed the importance for all health-related professionals to pay attention to patients' psychological and spiritual needs. We should try to improve our communication with the patients and attend to their questions and queries patiently. Fr. Tsang also encouraged positively on the organ donation campaign. He invited the churchmates to abandon the traditional concept, so that one could live the Christian life more actively by joining the campaign.

PAUL HO

### *Report On Medical Student Function*

The weather on the 2nd day of 1994 was ideal for hiking. It was a sunny day with comfortable temperature and relative humidity. About 30 medical students from the medical schools of the 2 universities enjoyed an exciting trip in the country. The beautiful sun-lit landscape of Sai Kung was most attractive. The trip took us 5 hours to finish, of course, including frequent stops for rest and lunch.

The hike was organised by the student subcommittee of the Guild. This sort of annual function was arranged so as to facilitate intercourse between catholic medical undergraduates of the 2 universities as well as with members of council of the Guild. The council hopes that this sort of social functions or other religious or academic functions can be carried on in the coming years or even became a tradition. We believe that most of the unnecessary disharmony is a result of misunderstanding. The competitive atmosphere between the 2 universities on academic subjects has inherited to their students. However it seems naive or even childish when we look back as a graduate. Furthermore we are brothers and sisters in the family of the Church.

We are looking forward to seeing more students and Guild's members in the coming functions organised by the council.

PAUL HO

COMING SOON!!!

### • Chinese New Year Mass & Gathering

As in last year, there will be a Chinese New Year thanksgiving mass. It will be held on 20th Feb., 94 at the Hong Kong Wah Yan College. A lunch gathering will follow the mass. This is a

good chance to meet other Guild members and their families.

• **Annual Retreat**

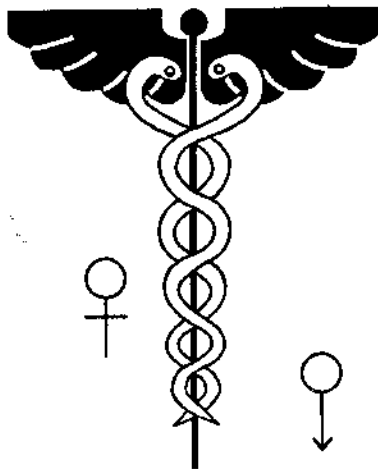
The Guild has been organising day retreats for quite a number of years. This year, the Council has decided for a change - *an overnight retreat*. We hope that this will provide a better opportunity for an in-depth prayer and meditation, as it is often the case, that a "warm up" may be required before we can really get in touch with God. We strongly encourage our Guild members to participate in this annual event.

The details are as follows:

Date : 12th & 13rd March 94  
Place : The Maryknoll House,  
44 Stanley Village Road,  
Stanley.

Retreat Master : Fr. Thomas Kwan  
Theme and Program : to be decided soon

For those who cannot stay overnight, they are equally welcomed to join the day program on the second day.



**GENDER CHOICE  
CLINIC**

**Ethics Subcommittee Discussion  
Report On Gender Choice Centre**

Date : 11 - 12 - 93  
Time : 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.  
Venue : Fr. Russell's Office, Wah Yan  
College, H.K.  
Attendants : Fr. Russell, Fr. Brady,  
Sr. T. Howard, Dr. F. Mok,  
Dr. Conrad Lam, Dr. R. Yeung,  
Dr. B. Chung, Dr. P. Ho.

The establishment of a sex selection clinic on 8th November 1993 has caused a storm of protest among different walks of life in Hong Kong. For a minimum of \$28,000, couples can choose the sex of their baby through the latest technological means. Being able to do that raises not only ethical questions but also social and moral ones.

Apart from the controversy surrounding the ethical aspect of the involved techniques (like masturbation and A.I.H.), the issue of sex selection, per se, needs due consideration.

It should not be difficult to understand the underlying motives of the parents in the matter of sex selection. In many parts of the world there is a strong cultural desire for a son to carry on the family name. This is particularly strong throughout the countries of Asia and Africa. Furthermore, the prevalence of small size family in Hong Kong has urged more parents to find a more precise mean of family planning.

Although individual desire for a particular sex of one's offspring is strictly personal, gender selection in general is undesirable. Sex bias and inequality shouldn't be promoted.

There is no guarantee that parents will be accepting of a child over the long term who is not of the desired gender. There are enough instances of perceived distaste for one or another child in a family because of gender bias now and the effect this has on the child's self-image.

In the natural setting slightly more boys than girls are born. The number of males and females should therefore remain roughly equal in the coming generation, not the least of which is the availability of suitable partners for marriage and the consequent pressure on sexual and social behaviour if this is not so.

There is misconception among many that 'Parents own their children'. Actually we do believe that newborn baby or living foetus has their own right. There is no guarantee that the living foetus or newborn baby whose gender did not conform to desire will not be eliminated by **abortion or infanticide** even if a contract is signed beforehand. After all who will carry out the supervision? (It is later confirmed that the contract is not a legal document.) Furthermore you didn't need a reason in order to carry out abortion in the neighbour clinics in Sheng Zhen.

If the society nowadays accepts personal preference a reason for gender selection, the opening of some sort of **Genetic Choice Centre** should not be too remote. One could possibly choose not only the sex of one's offspring but also, for example, their skin color, height, intelligence etc. The degree of deviation from nature will be tremendous.

In spite of all of the above reasoning, gender selection can be recommended in the case of **hereditary sex-linked diseases** such as haemophilia and Duchenne's muscular dystrophy.

Concerning the technical methods that the clinic used to achieve gender selection, the subcommittee members found the methods immoral and unethical, especially in the content of Catholic belief.

It is highly likely that sperms are obtained by **masturbation**. The act is morally objectionable.

Since the service is provided only for married couples, then it is similar to artificial insemination by husband (A.I.H.). According to Church's teaching, A.I.H. is not acceptable unless the couples use the technique not to replace the act of marriage but to assist the act of marriage to achieve its natural outcome. However it seems that this gender selection procedure will be objectionable on the ground that it is an unnecessary interference with normal marital intercourse which is capable of resulting in conception since in most cases both partners are normally fertile.

PAUL HO

## **REPORT ON GENDER CHOICE CENTRE SEMINAR**

The establishment of the Genetic Choice Centre in Hong Kong in November 1993 has aroused heated debates. The Justice & Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, in corporation with 3 Christian associations had organised a seminar on the issue. The seminar was held on 17-12-93 at 7 - 9 p.m. at the hall of the Breakthrough Centre, Woosung Street, Jordan Kowloon. It was well attended by over 200 audiences. Dr. Peter Liu and Dr. Alan Rose of the clinic were present to clarify and defend the accusations and comments.

The organiser had also invited other speakers so as to help the audience in analysing the issue from different aspects. The Guild was invited and I had represented the Guild to attend the seminar. The standpoint of the Guild was voiced out. Other speakers, including Mr. Yip (Lecturer of Department of Religion Philosophy, Baptist College), Dr. Man (Lecturer of Department of Education CUHK) and Miss Wu (Women Christian Association) had made their viewpoints known to the audience. In general, they had an uneasy feeling and a negative view on the service provided by the clinic. Mr. Michael Ho, Legislative Councilor, cast his gloomy feeling on the lack of monitoring mechanism.

PAUL HO

## **RESPONSE FROM OUR MEMBERS**

### **SOME THOUGHTS**

1. Although morally unacceptable to the Catholic Faith, gender assignment is, to a certain extent welcomed by the community because it supports the desire of modern human being to be "independent" of rules and God.
2. Abortion - termination of life of unborn foetus. Euthanasia - active termination of life should be denounced all the time.
3. Would it be possible for the Catholic Church to set up its Ethic Committee to solicit our views and to coordinate a concerted effort to voice our opinion to the public sector?

Robert Yuen

### Gender Selection - A Boy or a Girl

The establishment of a sex selection clinic in Hong Kong on 8th November, 1993 has caused much debate among different walks of life. For a minimum of \$28,000, couples can choose the sex of their baby through a process which separates "male" and "female" sperms by filtering the semen through eggwhite. The woman is then artificially inseminated with the sperm of the chosen sex. The possibility of gender selection has in fact raised not only ethical questions but also social and moral ones.

The Church is always concerned with promoting responsible parenthood which carried in the womb, brought to the world and brought up in the marriage. So it is unethical to use procedures which will predetermine the gender in planning to have a child.

There are also a lot of social implications. It is not difficult to understand the underlying motives of the parents in the matter of gender selection. In many parts of the world there is a strong cultural desire for a son to carry on the family name. This is particularly strong throughout the countries of Asia and Africa. Furthermore, the prevalence of small size family in Hong Kong has compelled more parents to find a more precise mean of family planning.

Though individual desire for a particular sex of one's offspring is strictly personal, gender selection in general is undesirable for as this will promote sex bias and inequality. In the natural setting slightly more boys than girls are born. Therefore it will be desirable for the number of males and females to remain roughly equal in the coming generation. The upset of sex ratio in society has strong implications on its people, including the lack of suitable partners for marriage and the consequent pressure on sexual and social behaviour.

The Gender Selection Clinic states that it is serving couples who have already had one child and are seeking to have a child of the opposite gender. As most of the couples are normally fertile and could have a child even without the help of medical technology, the medical necessity for the intervention is under question.

A lot of parents are having a wrong concept that they own their children. In fact, from the moment the ovum is fertilized by a sperm, a new life has begun. The life does not belong to either the father or the mother but is a new and an evolving human life. So every newborn baby or living foetus has its own right. There is no guarantee that the living foetus or the newborn baby whose gender does not conform to desire will not be eliminated by abortion or infanticide even if a contract is signed before hand (N.B. the contract is confirmed not to be a legal document at the present moment). Further more it is far too easy to carry out an abortion in clinic outside Hong Kong such as ShengZhen.

If for the process, sperm is obtained by masturbation it is morally objectionable. If the service is provided only for married couples (in fact, it is the case), then it is similar to artificial insemination by husband (AIH), a procedure which the Catholic Church has not objected on moral or ethical grounds. The Church's teaching accepts AIH when the sperm is obtained by legitimate means and is assisted to enter the uterus and tubes. However this procedure would be objectionable on the ground that it is an unnecessary interference with normal marital intercourse which is capable of resulting in conception since in most cases both partners are normally fertile.

In conclusion, gender selection is considered as undesirable procedure which will create a lot of ethical, social and moral problems.

Simon Lo





## SPIRITUAL REFRESHMENT

I will make my people and their homes  
around my hill a blessing. And there shall be  
showers, showers of blessing, for I will shut off  
the rains but send them in their seasons.

Ezekile 34:26 TLB

*God, give us wider vision  
to see and understand  
That both sun and showers  
are gifts from Thy great hand,  
And teach us that it takes the showers  
to make the flowers grow  
And only in the storms of life  
when the winds of trouble blow  
Can man, too, reach maturity  
and grow in faith and grace  
And gain the strength and courage  
to enable him to face  
Sunny days as well as rain,  
high peaks as well as low,  
Knowing that the "April Showers  
will make the May Flowers Grow"  
And then at least may we accept  
"the Sunshine and the Showers,"  
Confident it takes them both  
to make Salvation ours!*

*Cultivate within me all those qualities You  
want to see there, God. Let me grow in  
understanding and may kindness flourish  
within me.*

\*\* from the "Daily Steppingstones", Helen Steiner  
Rice, Prayers by Virginia J. Ruehlmann \*\*

## FROM THE STUDENT

### WHERE ARE THE CATHOLICS?

A: "How do you do?"

B: "How do you do?"

A: "Are you the Christian?"

B: "Yep!"

A: "And you?"

C: "Me also."

A: "And ..."

D: "Of course I am!"

A: "I see that there are many Christians  
around here. I guess about one third of medical  
students are Christians, may be more. I wonder  
where the Catholics are, where have they gone?"

W: "Here!"

A: "You... you are Ca-tho-lic? I didn't know  
you are. Why didn't you tell me? I thought the  
believers of Jesus Christ should preach the Good  
News or Gospels until everybody here in the world  
knows about the good new. How can you preach  
the Good News without telling people that you are  
Catholic?"

W: "Should I? I mean if I want to preach, I  
may use another approach, I shall tell people that  
I'm a Catholic without introducing myself but by  
doing something that makes people believe that  
I'm a Catholic."

A: "Why don't you use a direct way like the  
Christians do?"

W: I don't know, may be our numbers are small. We can't do as effective as they do. So we use a rather indirect approach, of course, that's my point of view only."

A: OK. But even if you are right, I can't see any 'big things' that you have done to make me believe you are a Catholic."

W: Not those 'big things', but from the small things like helping others... I mean people around you ... whenever they are in need. This is the virtue of being a believer of God."

A: That means only a Christian or a Catholic helps people. That's nonsense. I've seen million times that a person with no religious belief helps others a lot."

W: I'm not saying that others don't help. But a Catholic should help more. That's also the reason why I didn't tell people directly that I'm a Catholic as I feel sorry for myself for not doing good enough to let people know that I'm a Catholic."

A: Apart from that, are there any other activities that you do among yourselves?"

W: Yes, we gather around regularly and share our live and joy with others. We call that a 'Cell', just like the Christians do. Recently during Christmas holiday, we organised a joint universities picnic in Sai Kong with some HKU Catholics. Some non-Catholic members also took part in this tour. Also, we sometimes go camping during summer holidays."

A: Well, how can you let people believe in God and do what the Lord says? People around the world are getting selfish. They will do anything without caring others to satisfy their needs. See from the medical students, when they are in the first year, they make friends all around, they share their happiness with others. But when they get into higher years, they become more selfish. When some of them get some teaching materials, they try to keep those materials away from others. They complete their assignments without sharing their experience with others. They are getting cool and cruel and they're going to become doctors..."

W: That's a good point but I think you've exaggerated a bit. First of all, I believe that many people more or less has some religious belief but they don't like to follow the rules. They want to enjoy their lives, they say 'We want everything in the world. That's the way you do it or else your lives will become dull.' I can't blame on them. Even I myself have something to look forward to. But the situation will get worse when somebody

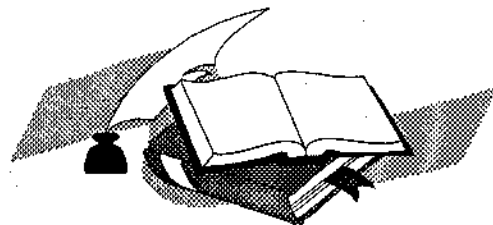
will do all means to fulfill their wills even harming others.

In our medical lives, student will say 'I want high marks!' 'I want better results than others!' I must become a doctor!'. When they come out work and become doctors, they will say 'I want more money!'

'I want to be famous!' The desire will never stop until the last days of their life. I'm not sure if we're influencing each other. Somebody blames on the exam system that trains a doctor to become a cold-blood animal. But it is also difficult to decide whether to let all students to be graduated or to maintain the standard of this profession. Anyway, I believe that greed and pride are the problems here.

'I don't know how to solve this problem. That makes me remember the words from a rich man in his last days, 'I've got everything in the world but I still feel empty in my heart... oh yea... I miss one thing... I need LOVE.' People nowadays still remember this word... and the other word... sex... though they also apply this on a pair of couples, within a family. As for the others, those strangers around them, they don't care. If that goes on and on, I'm afraid the world doesn't last long. I would like people to think more on this word: L O V E... get love from others and love others... when they do something. What will the world look like in the future? This depends on us."

W & A



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# AN APPEAL

## SOWERS ACTION

**WALK TO GUANGZHOU 94**

Sowers action is a registered charity association founded in September 92. It is run by a group of volunteers. Their aim is to improve the current *basic education* situation in Mainland China, especially those provinces in poverty. They have already subsidised 72 schools and more than 2100 primary school students in China. They are different from other similar charity associations in that :

1. They insist local field exploration and observation, direct subsidy and continued audit to ensure appropriate use of donation;
2. They promise that all donations are delivered to the hands of the local authorities. All expenditure of the daily running of the association and the explored trips will be paid by their own members.

In order to extend their subsidy to more children in need, they are organising a money-raising program - namely "WALK TO GUANGZHOU 94". Their aim is to raise HK\$1,500,000. The walk will begin at the KCR station at Hunghom and end at the railway station at Guangzhou. It will last 5 days for the whole trip, i.e. from 13-2-94 (Sunday) to 17-2-94 (Thursday).

A supporting team will accompany the participants during the whole trip so as to provide necessary medical attention. The Guild was approached for volunteers in the supporting team. Interested members please call *Miss Micon Chan* by 117278807.

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	Lo S M Simon
	Yuen K N Robert

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**SEE YOU IN SPRING!!!**