

NEWSLETTER

香港天主教醫生協會

THE GUILD OF ST. LUKE, ST. COSMAS & ST. DAMIAN HONG KONG

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EDITORIAL

We are in a special moment in the history of health care in Hong Kong. SARS is consuming Hong Kong. In this issue, Francis Mok and Caroline Tsang share their experience and thoughts along the SARS journey. Fr Russell, our spiritual adviser, enlightens us with interesting stories from the old days of the church. We hope more guild members can share their thoughts on this very unique journey, so that this consuming process can become an enriching experience.

The Diocese of Hong Kong has established a pilot programme of "Diocesan Health Care and Retirement services for the Clergy and Religious". Our guild is contributing in providing the core service of the programme. At the moment, we are recruiting volunteer doctors. Please read the brief summary of the programme and participate in this meaningful service.

"Cure the sick" is the theme of the Medical Sunday last year. Prof Rosie Young gave a good sharing on this theme. Those who missed the event can read the article by Prof Young in this issue - a very good personal narrative of her experience on the caring of patients.

SARS is here to stay, as is predicted by most experts. What is more true is, "Peace is here to stay", as is promised by our Lord, over and over again.

May Peace be with us all.

May God keep all those who have lost their lives in SARS in His eternal peace and love.

O merciful Father, who have wonderfully fashioned man in your own image, and have made his body to be a temple of the Holy Spirit, sanctify, we pray you, our doctors and nurses and all those whom you have called to study and practice the arts of healing the sick and the prevention of disease and pain. Strengthen them in body and soul, and bless their work, that they may give comfort to those for whose salvation your Son became Man, lived on this earth, healed the sick, and suffered and died on the Cross. Amen.



Message from the Master

The outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) has hit Hong Kong very hard. It has been the biggest challenge for medical and health care workers not only because of increasing workload, but seeing their colleagues falling sick one after the other. Our colleagues are fighting a very difficult battle with the enemy being invisible and very aggressive from all directions. No matter how well you defend yourself, one cannot guarantee 100% protection. The strong determination and high spirit of our medical staff, and high degree of professionalism are the best equipments to help Hong Kong fighting this battle.

Recently I read my son's homework, "A letter to health care workers". He mentioned that many health care workers have isolated themselves from their families, and they must also feel very lonely and sad. Even when they return home, they try to minimize contact with their families. It must be a difficult moment for them to strike the balance between work and family. He also

mentioned that he feels very sad that I always remind him not to be too close to me. The family members of our health care workers need to be praised for the support they offer and they also need to be supported emotionally.

It is encouraging to see that the disease is beginning to be under control. Throughout this month, have we given ourselves a second thought on the value of life? In the past people are too obsessed with money, position, power and assets. Are these that important? We should take the opportunity to explore more about the value of life, family and friends. I still remember the Scout Promise, "...To do my duty to God and to the Land that I live...." God has given us wisdom to serve our society. The health care workers have fulfilled their duty to God.

God Bless!

Albert Lee



Message from Spiritual Adviser

A Few wordsA few thoughts

Fr John Russell

When I received the instructions from the diocese about precautions to be taken in these perilous times when saying Mass and distributing Holy Communion, I was reminded of something I had read long ago in the English Catholic periodical *The Tablet*. It was at the time when receiving the Eucharist under both species was still a novelty and the danger of infection arising from many people drinking from the same chalice was a live issue. In a letter to the editor a correspondent described an experience he had had. Having brought Holy Communion to a housebound parishioner in east London, on his way out he happened to come across a Sikh who lived in the same building. They chatted for a moment, the eucharistic minister explaining what he had just been doing. He went on to say how the practice of receiving Holy Communion under the species of wine had ceased for hygienic reasons in the Church at the time of the 14th century Black Death pandemic. On hearing this the Sikh

got quite vehement. "No, no, no," he said. "Nothing so holy could ever be the cause of something as evil as the plague". On the other hand, I heard about a discussion recently in a Singapore newspaper. It seems a Christian minister went to a hospital to bring the comforts of religion to a SARS patient. The sick person eventually recovered, whereas the minister, though presumably masked, contracted the disease and subsequently died. Some correspondents found this outcome hard to accept. They felt that God should have provided special protection for the minister who, after all, was acting as His agent in bringing comfort to a sick person. But aren't medical personnel also acting as His agents in caring for the sick and yet so many have fallen sick? Perhaps, like the Sikh, we should trust in God as if all depended on Him, but also take sensible precautions, as if all depended on ourselves to keep the virus at bay.

Prayer for Healing

Lord, look upon me with eyes of mercy, may your healing hand rest upon me, may your life-giving powers flow into every cell of my body and into the depths of my soul, cleansing, purifying, restoring me to wholeness and strength for service in your Kingdom. Amen.

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REFLECTION ON SARS

Sleeplessness in Hong Kong SARS

Francis Mok (working in Tuen Mun Hospital)

A night of misery
 Our male nurse died today
 Nursing colleagues mourning outside the ICU
 He is the first HA on-duty staff sacrificed in the battle
 What a sad and unwanted "first!"
 My heart is also with my young respiratory physician, already in coma and dependent on ventilator for weeks
 Still remember her pretty and smiling face
 I was told that her lung fields were white
 To die or to live on – with lung fibrosis, respiratory handicapped, long term O2 supplement
 Difficult to choose ... Hell or the deep blue sea
 Can't sleep ...

I saw God talking to Moses
 I asked God to send Moses to us, with his serpent on the pole, to cast away this fever and protect me
 God said, "I have sent –

The microbiology professor decades ago (but you slept through most of his lectures)
Your mother, who constantly reminds you to sleep early, eat well and don't overwork (too "long-winded" ?!)
The Tai Chi master, taught you the best exercise to keep you healthy (difficult to squeeze time for practice – too busy!)
The ward manager who criticized your hand washing technique (remember those MRSA days in your ward?)
Your brother who told you about the crazy things happening in Guangdong before Chinese New Year (and you commented that those people were just ignorant and crazy!)
The insurance agent, who reminded you to increase your protection for your family
The Retreat master in the Easter Retreat, who helped you to reflect on "Death" – the ultimate reality
Your dear wife, who welcome you home, despite your seeing possible SARS patients
Your colleagues & friends of the Guild, who are collecting donations, in case you need it also ...

"I have answered your prayers – long before you say it," said God.

...unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. (John 12:24)

Diary along the SARS journey

Caroline Tsang

18 march 2003

I believe this is a difficult moment for each of us, and also one of the greatest crisis/ disaster in the history of health care in HK. Personally I am also in crisis since my husband is exactly working in 8A of PWH since 1/3/2003 and I am pregnant for 38 completed weeks by today and my daughter is having her second birthday today. Thank God that he is still working, which means that he has not caught the disease till today, but tomorrow is an unknown. I have been staying in my mother's home with my daughter and maids since last Wednesday, and as we are still well today, we are probably not catching the disease through him as well (I haven't seen him since I left my house). I don't want to elaborate further about my feeling, since I believe you can imagine.

I wish we (I mean the whole world and esp. HK) could overcome this episode without losing any more lives. I also hope that my baby will be born "uneventfully" and able to see his father soon. With best wishes to all of you.

Caroline

13 April 2003

My baby boy was born on 31/3. My husband is now on "paternal leave" and he will return to work after Easter. While I am sometimes being anxious on what will happen after he returns to work, such as whether we shall separate again....I found that I might have wasted too much time on things that are in the future and unknown, instead, I think I should enjoy and live this moment when we are together. In my reflections, I think life have been very stable for me for quite a long time, and now being faced with these uncertainties, I feel very uncomfortable and reluctant to accept. However, the truth is that life is ever changing, and God has never promised a sky that is blue always. I think this is good time to see through my weakness and recollect myself, and I hope that I will become a stronger person as time goes by.

Wish you peace in this special part of history. With love.

Caroline



COUNCIL NEWS

Chinese New Year Gathering



The New Year's Gathering of the year 2003 was held with great success on 16th February, in the Kowloon Cricket Club. Many thanks to Peter Au-Yeung for arranging the splendid venue for this special occasion. It was our greatest honour to have Professor and Lady Harry Fang, Dr. Helen Tinsley (Hospital Chief Executive, Caritas Medical Centre), Mr. and Mrs. Leopard Yeung (Administrative Manger, St. Paul's Hospital) and Sister Jacqueline Ho (Superintendent, St. Paul Hospital) as our guests of honour. The celebration began with a Thanksgiving Mass. Our Spiritual Director, Father Russell celebrated the mass for us as we gave thanks and praise to our heavenly Father for all His abundant blessings in the past year and prepared ourselves for a new beginning. It was also our greatest pleasure to have the opportunity to share with our members and guests our aspirations and special events we are planning to launch throughout the year 2003, a milestone which marks the 50th anniversary for the Guild of St Luke, St Cosmas and St Damian. We are looking forward to another prosperous and fruitful year with great enthusiasm and hope. As we continue to pray for God's guidance and blessings in the coming year, we hope that everyone will give full support to all the special events as we celebrate our 50th anniversary. We hope to see you there next year.



Report on SARS Mass

Mass for Health Care Workers on SARS has been held on 22nd March, 4th April and 10th May at St. Alfred's Church, the Cathedral and the chapel of Kowloon Wah Yan College respectively. The principal celebrant was Fr Dominic Chan. There were around 100 participants attended the mass on 10th May and Deacon Karl Tsang shared with participants the experience of God's love on his family during the SARS crisis. Let us continue to pray for our health care workers, their family members, the sick and the deceased.

Caroline

Cancellation of Palm Sunday Mass

We decided to cancel the annual retreat after discussion with Fr. Russell, our Spiritual Adviser, since we did not want to endanger our retreat master. A calendar of Novena was posted to members instead. We hope that a one-day retreat can be organized later this year.

Michael

COMING EVENTS COMING EVENTS COMING EVENTS

Graduation Mass 22-6-2003 (Sun.)

50th AGM

Date: 28-6-2003 (Sat.)

Venue: Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (Mid-levels)

Guest of Honour: Bishop Joseph Zen Ze Kium

Appeal for volunteers

Diocesan Health Care and Retirement services for the Clergy and Religious

Medical Enquiry Telephone Service

The priests of the Hong Kong diocese are in the process of aging. Now the average age is about 65. Health care problem has become an important issue.

In view of this, with joint effort from our guild and the Catholic Nurses' Guild, the Diocese of Hong Kong has established a pilot programme of "Diocesan Health Care and Retirement services for the Clergy and Religious". This project is supervised by Fr Dominic Chan (Vicar General), and coordinated by Mr Nicholas Ng.

Medical Enquiry Telephone Service

This telephone enquiry service is the first task of the above programme. It aims to provide an enquiry network for priests on health care problems. There are 8 doctor coordinators, taking care of priests from the 8 deaneries.

The scheme eventually aims to provide service for all the priests (about 300) and other religious personnel (about 580) working in Hong Kong. However as a start, we are concentrating on those who are working in the parishes, which number about 150.

Appeal for volunteer doctors

A small network of volunteer doctors has been established. They will provide specialist advice to the priests. At present, about 30 doctors have joined the network.

We are trying to recruit more volunteers so that the service can run effectively.

We sincerely hope that you can participate in this meaningful service.

----- Reply slip -----

Please fax to 23403762, or send an email to guildstluke@hkbn.net.

I am glad to participate in the scheme.

- Free medical phone service
- Free medical consultation service

Name : _____ Specialty : _____

Phone / Pager / Mobile : _____

Fax : _____ Email : _____

Thank you very much for your kind support !

Updating of Email addresses

In order to facilitate our communication with guild members, we are now using the Emails frequently for sending information, especially timely news and notices.

If you are not receiving emails from us, please supply us with your email address, so that we can add to our electronic mailing list.

Please send an email to guildstluke@hbn.net and provide the following details for updating.

- Name
- Email Address

Thank you very much.

"Cure the Sick" (Matthew 10:8a)

The interpretation of 'curing the sick' today is not limited to healing illnesses but includes the maintenance and promotion of health I wish to use a few examples to bring out some important messages

1) In the early 1960s a lady was admitted into hospital with severe rheumatic heart disease and congestive heart failure. She was about 5 months pregnant with her first child. Both the medical and obstetrics consultants advised her to have the pregnancy terminated because there was a high chance that she might die during pregnancy or delivery. However, the mother insisted on keeping the baby even at the risk of her own life. She was hospitalised throughout her pregnancy and delivered a healthy baby by **Caesarean** section.

2) In the late 1950s a middle aged labourer was admitted into hospital with rapidly progressive paralysis of all limbs and respiratory failure. As a young doctor looking after him, I put him into the iron lung which was an old fashioned respirator and at that time, the only respirator available in the whole hospital. The expert opinion then was that this man's illness was incurable and his paralysis was irreversible. Should another patient with respiratory failure, e.g. due to anterior poliomyelitis, be admitted into the hospital, I would have to make the very difficult decision of either removing the former patient from the respirator or denying the poliomyelitis patient the use of the respirator. In either case it would mean a death sentence to one of them. In fact my mentor, Professor **McFadzean** sent me to a Jesuit whom we highly respected. Father **Cronin**, for counselling. Against all odds the patient gradually recovered and was able to walk out of hospital two weeks later and no body else required the respirator during that period. Poliomyelitis was quite prevalent in the early 1960 and respiratory failure due to poliomyelitis is often reversible.

3) A young couple had a son with severe **thalassaemia** major. The child had been receiving almost monthly blood transfusion since he was a year and a half old. He subsequently developed multiple complications, including heart failure, cirrhosis of liver and diabetes and died around aged 10. He was stunted in growth and was in and out of hospital. His quality of life was exceedingly poor. One could see that he was suffering all the time, The parents were advised against having another child since the chance of having a similarly affected child was 25% or more. This was before the days of prenatal diagnosis. About 15 years later I met the couple at a cocktail party

Prof. Rosie Young

and they introduced their lovely young and healthy daughter to me and said that fortunately they did not heed the doctor's advice.

The above case histories showed that

1) Doctors are not infallible. Our knowledge based on science and experience have their limits. We should admit our ignorance and humility.

2) The practice of medicine is not always black or white. There are frequently grey areas. In case of doubt we should admit our ignorance and humility, and seek the opinion of experts or those who may know more about the subject than we do. We should always remember that the patient's interest and well being are our prime concern.

3) We should always be patient and try to understand the patient's feelings. We should always respect the patient's informed choice.

4) We'll be doing our duty if we try our best to cure the patient's illness or relieve his sufferings. But in the final analysis, the success or failure of our treatment is in God's hands.

The above examples were taken from my experience as a doctor practising in hospital in the 50s and 60s.

Fortunately the rapid advance in medical sciences since has removed many of the moral dilemmas I had to face then.

What is the difference between a doctor and a doctor with the Catholic faith?

About 30 years ago I was attending to a patient with terminal illness. During one of her admissions to hospital we had a heart to heart talk. She confided to me her personal history and her **socio-economical** condition. She knew that she would not live long and was terribly worried about her young daughter, then about age 10. She was worried that nobody could look after her properly and that she would not be able to complete her education owing to lack of financial support. The patient was quite wealthy but she had hardly any friend or relative to lean on. I gave her some common sense advice including setting up a bank trust for her daughter. Years later I met her daughter again. She had grown up and obtained her university degree. She said that the financial arrangement I suggested had given her mother considerable peace of mind in her last days of life. This showed that as a doctor, even more so as a Catholic doctor we should do more than just looking after the patient's physical health. We should not only give due care to our patients but also show our consideration and compassion for them. We should demonstrate our Christian faith and love by our words and deeds.

Any comments, suggestions, or change of addresses?
Pls send all to guildstluke@hkbn.net or fax to 24962110