

December 8, 2010

Dear Colleagues,

### **Advent --- Moment of Grace**

Advent is a period of preparation for the Lord's coming. I remember while I was Head of school, I had very tight schedule during the time of Advent --- preparing students for winter term exam, taking care of Christmas liturgy and celebration, giving a helping hand to our convent chores...etc. The best part of it though was to place the statue of Baby Jesus in the manger. While holding Baby Jesus, my heart thrilled. And suddenly I realized I was too much preoccupied by everyday activities just like a housewife focusing on the daily necessities found in a supermarket. I asked whether I have put Jesus my first priority in life. Gazing at Mary silently waiting for the Lord's coming in deep faith, I wish I could follow her. In silence I began my Advent, my Christmas.

Mary is the icon of Advent, a down-to earth role model for us. She leads us to life and love. Her saying 'Yes' to God's invitation was costly and risky. She had to give up her own plans, end her marriage with Joseph, and face condemnation from her neighbors. Yet she still responded positively and kept her promise till Jesus' death on the Cross. We should learn from Mary who showed great trust in the Lord.

Faith is a gift from God and there is a need to respond to His grace. Mary set a good example for us. Traveling alone in Palestine in those days was considerably tough. Mary did not allow herself to be preoccupied and immediately left home to visit her elderly cousin Elizabeth, who was three months pregnant. From her encounter with God, Mary was moved to taking an act of practical charity.

God could have chosen 'something majestic' or 'someone extraordinary' to do His work. And yet He chose to reveal Himself through some humble people and their simple acts. It means that He is looking for ordinary people like us, people with little faith, to cooperate with Him in His divine plan. Let us be alert in our daily life to listen to God's call.

May be God is prompting us to say a word of comfort, of encouragement to our colleagues, especially to those whom we don't get along with.

May be God is advising us to pause for a while and pray before we act or speak in order to be His messenger of peace.

Or perhaps God is asking us to see beyond the person, to understand the good motivation within, to be compassionate, instead of being judgmental.

The practice of 'Love' in Advent doesn't have to be complicated or dramatic. Learn from the Handmaiden Mary's spontaneity and simplicity:

**Be less self-righteous, be more loving;  
From 'I'- centered to 'We'- centered.**

The story of Christmas has become so familiar to us that we may risk missing out the blessings God has prepared for us. May each one of us learn to behave more like Mary during this Advent -- Carrying Jesus in our heart as she carried Him in her womb.

Together with my Assistants, I wish you a Blessed Advent and a Holy Christmas. May God grant you abundant Peace, overflowing Joy and a double portion of His Love.

Yours affectionately,

Sr. Cecilia Wong



## 家書之二

親愛的同事：

### 將臨期 — 恩寵的時刻

將臨期是預備主耶穌降臨的時期。當任小學校長時，我的將臨期是非常充實和緊湊的時間——預備學生年中考試、籌備聖誕禮儀和慶祝節目、協助修院的大小事務等等。而我最感興奮的一刻，就是把嬰孩耶穌的像放上馬槽。這往往也是我反思最深的一刻。我的心牽掛著各種各樣的任務，活像一個超級市場充斥著豐富而多姿多彩的物品。但是，我是否將耶穌放在生命的第一位？我喜歡注視著馬槽中的聖母，效法她在信德中靜候主耶穌的來臨。

瑪利亞是將臨的標記。她是可供我們踏實地去效法的模範，引領我們走向愛與生命。她對上主應諾的「是」，代價既高，冒險亦大。她須放棄自己的計劃，取消與若瑟的婚約，面對鄰人的責難。但是，她仍毅然向上主說「是」，並信守這承諾直至耶穌的十字架下。我們應該效法瑪利亞對上主滿懷信賴。

信德是天主的恩賜，用以回應祂的恩寵。瑪利亞的愛德很實在。在當時的巴力斯坦，獨自旅行上路是殊不簡單的困難事。但當獲悉年邁的表姐依撒伯爾已懷孕三個月，她不多考慮便立刻前往山區照料她。瑪利亞與上主相遇後，很自然地衍生了動人的愛德行動。

天主大可以利用一些「更大」的事或揀選一些「更好」的人去完成祂的工作。但是，祂卻偏喜歡透過微不足道的事和人來奇妙地顯示自己。這表示祂可能不嫌我們的不足與少信，而願意委以任務。因此，請多留意我們日常生活中上主給我們的啟示。

可能，天主會感動我們，向同事說出一句安慰和鼓勵的話，尤其是向那些自己不大喜歡的人。

也可能，天主正提示我們，在說話或行動前，先停下來祈禱，務使自己成為和平的使者。

更可能，天主正要求我們深入一個人的內心，務求看到他的良好動機和意願。我們要學習慈悲，不應輕易地判斷他人。

將臨期的愛德行為，既不用很複雜，亦無須誇張。瑪利亞這位「上主的婢女」的愛就是如斯真誠和直接。

少一些自我為是，多一些愛；從以「我」為主到以「我們」為中心。

因為對聖誕故事非常熟悉，我們可能錯過了天主透過此佳節賜下的祝福。願我們每位都在將臨期向瑪利亞學習——像她懷孕小耶穌般，將耶穌常懷在我們心內。

際此將臨與聖誕的良辰佳節，我和各位助理祝願天主豐沛地賜與各位平安、喜樂和祂的愛。

主內的

黃若嫻修女  
二零一零年十二月八日

