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HOPE

N e w s l e t t e r

“I am the resurrection and the life” —
John 11:25

CHRIST IS RISEN, MAKE HASTE!

Easter Message by Pope Francis

PASSAGE OF PASCH

Holy week Highlights

HEARTS OF HOPE

Divine Mercy & Prayer Meeting

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The seasons of Lent, Holy Week and Easter are actually a journey of faith, a pilgrimage on its own. We may be physically still at our homes, workplaces and communities, but our spiritual hearts are called to transform and draw nearer to Jesus.

Through these days, He shows us He understands what we are going through, He has lived our struggles, He loves us regardless. He invites our eyes and our hearts to Him living among us.

This edition of Hope shares our Vicariate community's own journey of faith, small as we are. Yet our smallness of size does not mean our hearts are any less ardent for the Lord, in fact, it highlights our need for His grace and mercy even more.

This Easter, let us offer ourselves anew to Christ, to trust Him, to follow His Way, Truth and Life!

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Today is Easter, the Pasch, a word that means “passage”, for in Jesus the decisive passage of humanity has been made: the passage from death to life, from sin to grace, from fear to confidence, from desolation to communion.

May this Easter be for each of you, dear brothers and sisters, and in particular for the sick and the poor, the elderly and those experiencing moments of trial and weariness, a passage from affliction to consolation.

We are not alone: Jesus, the Living One, is with us, forever. Let the Church and the world rejoice, for today our hopes no longer come up against the wall of death, for the Lord has built us a bridge to life.

Christòs anesti! – “Christ is risen; he is truly risen!” The word “truly” reminds us that our hope is not an illusion, but the truth! At Easter, ... humanity now sees the goal of its journey, the meaning of its destiny, Jesus Christ, and is called to make haste to meet him, who is the hope of the world.

May we too make haste to progress on a journey of reciprocal trust: trust among individuals, peoples and nations. May we allow ourselves to experience amazement at the joyful proclamation of Easter, at the light that illumines the darkness and the gloom in which, all too often, our world finds itself enveloped.

Let us make haste to surmount our conflicts and divisions, and to open our hearts to those in greatest need. Let us hasten to pursue paths of peace and fraternity. Let us rejoice at the concrete signs of hope that reach us from so many countries, beginning with those that offer assistance and welcome to all fleeing from war and poverty.

At the same time, along this journey we also encounter many stumbling blocks, which make it more difficult and demanding to hasten towards the Risen Lord. To him, then, let us make our prayer: Lord, help us to run to meet you! Help us to open our hearts!

Brothers, sisters, may we rediscover the enjoyment of the journey, quicken the heartbeat of hope and experience a foretaste of the beauty of heaven! Today, let us summon the energy to advance in goodness towards Goodness itself, which never disappoints.

We believe in you, Lord Jesus. We believe that, with you, hope is reborn and the journey continues. May you, the Lord of life, encourage us on our journey and repeat to us, as you did to the disciples on the evening of Easter: “Peace be with you!” (*Jn 19:21*). In him, the Lord of time and history, I would like to say to everyone, with heartfelt joy, Happy Easter!

PASSAGE OF PASCH

Sacred Triduum in COOL

After two years of shortened liturgies, due to COVID-19, we celebrated this year Sacred Triduum with all the normal rituals during these three holy days. Prior to the Sacred Triduum, the priests of the Vicariate joined the Chrism Mass at St Joseph's Cathedral in neighbouring Miri. As our Vicariate is still without a bishop after the passing of His Eminence on 29h May 2021, we did not have our own Chrism Mass here in Brunei Darussalam.

The sacred oil that was given to all priests at the Chrism Mass in Miri was formally received into our individual parish on Holy Thursday evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. Everyone was happy to see once again the ritual of the Washing of Feet reminding everyone to imitate our Lord's humble action as servant to others. We also had blessing of bread that was baked by our own volunteers the day before to be shared on Good Friday's soup fellowship. We also resumed the practice of giving the congregation the two Eucharistic species on Holy Thursday. We also resume the practice of adoration till midnight of the Blessed Sacrament on this evening after shortening it during the last two years.

As usual, Good Friday is a very busy day for all. Stations of the Cross was done at 12:15 PM. The Good Friday Service starts immediately after the Novena to Divine

Mercy at 3:00 PM. As usual, we use one large wooden cross for the veneration. People are asked to make a simple or profound bow to the cross and not to kiss it as COVID-19 is still very much with us. At the end of the service, a simple soup and bread fellowship was held in the Parish Hall for all. We also did the soup fellowship every Friday of Lent as before.

We are able to have a large fire in the church ground this Easter Vigil before the processing into the church. We have missed doing this part in the last two years. We also restored the full seven readings before the Epistle. Unfortunately, the baptism was still done by pouring the blessed water over the elects instead of getting them immersed into the baptismal font. This year we have 23 elects for baptism and 7 additional adults for confirmation (including 4 from the Anglican church). 4 children was baptised the next day on Easter Sunday

We are all very thankful to God and everyone for participating actively during Holy Week, especially during the Sacred Triduum, enlivening the liturgies and bringing back all the rituals to strengthen our faith. May our new members also greatly stimulate the faith community in the coming years.

Rev Fr Robert Leong





PALM SUNDAY

2 April 2023

Holy Week Highlights

HOLY THURSDAY

6 April 2023





GOOD
FRIDAY
7 April 2023



EASTER
VIGIL
8 April 2023





EASTER SUNDAY

9 April 2023

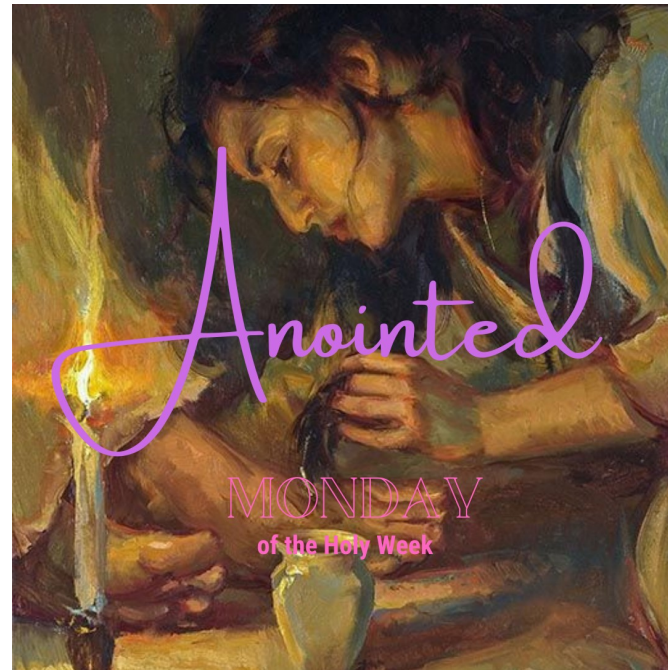




Holy Week begins today, as we recall again the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This is the cornerstone of our faith, in the Savior who died for our sins.

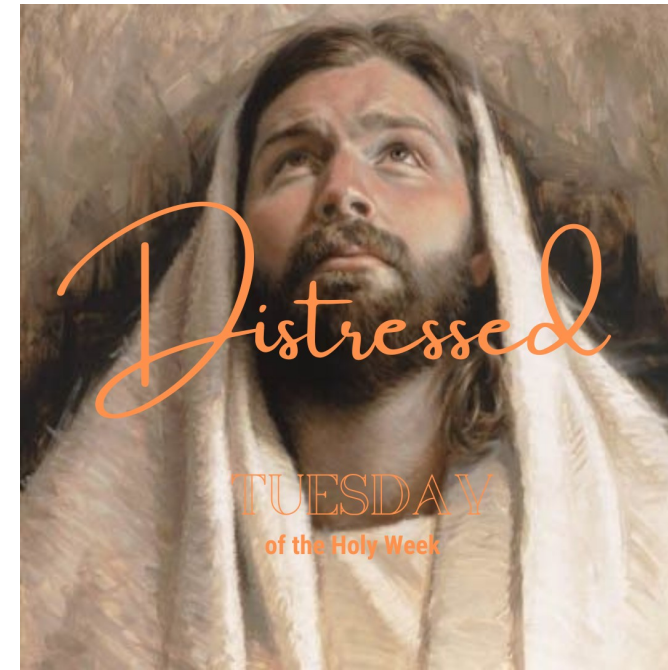
We are challenged today to reflect - do we see ourselves in the people who shouted "Hosanna" today and "Crucify Him" tomorrow? Or in the one who sat by and denied him thrice, paralyzed in the face of fear?



Mary of Bethany (Lazarus' sister) took a pound of spikenard perfume, of great price, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.

When criticized by Judas, Jesus defended her saying, "She has done a beautiful thing to me".

The Messiah, the Anointed One, inspires actions of great love and faith. Will we allow Him to work through us too?



Today's Gospel reading is about how Jesus is troubled by his impending Passion. What's more, he is facing the imminent betrayal from his trusted friends and disciples.

The Lord knows our anguish and anxieties, he has lived it himself. Like Him, we must continue to trust in the Father who would not take the cup away, but will give us the strength to drink it.



To share a dish is a mark of close friendship, isn't it?

Yet for Jesus, the hand of Judas that dips in their shared dish is the same that would embrace him in a treacherous kiss and hand him over to his enemies.

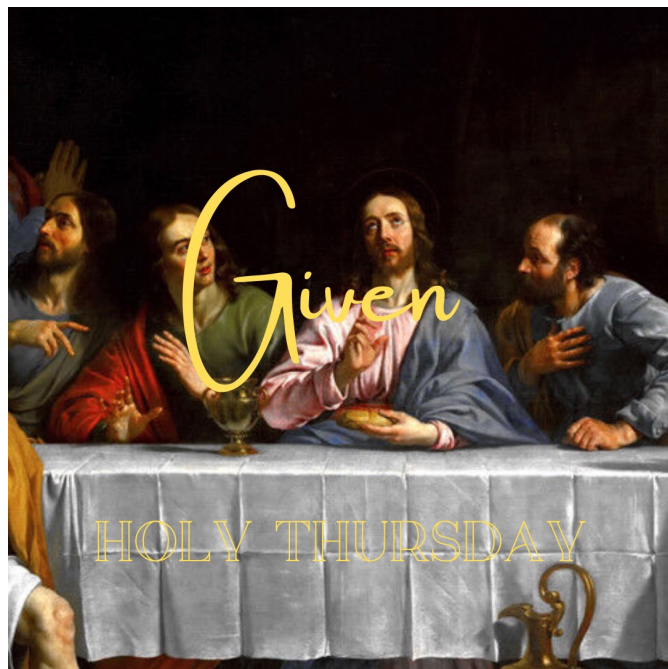
How painful must it have been for the Lord, sold for a mere 30 pieces of silver!

Let us recall too, the experiences of betrayals we had: being let down by a trusted friend, by a family member, by a community member in the parish, etc. Jesus understands our pain and teaches us to have compassionate love rule our hearts instead of hatred and anger.

Jesus, help us have a compassionate and forgiving heart for those who have hurt us. Help us to seek forgiveness from those who we have hurt too.

Above all, forgive us our sins that lead you to the cross!





Love is giving, and Jesus loves so perfectly and unconditionally. Even knowing his disciples' weaknesses, yet He washed his disciples' dusty feet and made the Eucharistic covenant.

Similarly, He loves us, you and me, in all our weaknesses and unworthiness. Can we love Him and others in return?



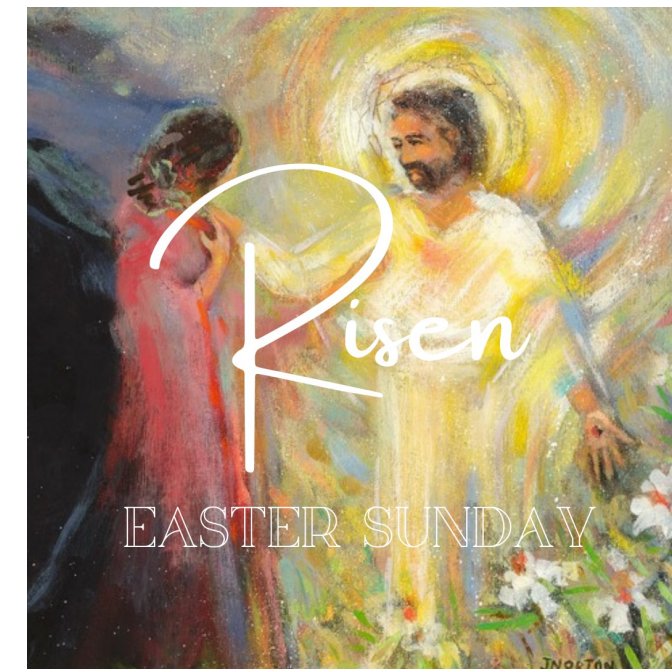
Jesus, God in human form, continues to be crucified today in men, women and children who are belittled, treated as objects and deprived of human dignity and rights. As we contemplate the crucified Jesus, it has to open us to perceive Jesus in the realities of today, in the sufferings of our brothers and sisters.

What can we do to love and for love?



In the Easter Vigil, we are reminded how the Light of Christ has defeated death. Jesus is the Promised Emmanuel and through the Spirit, He stays with us throughout our life's joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, moments and trials.

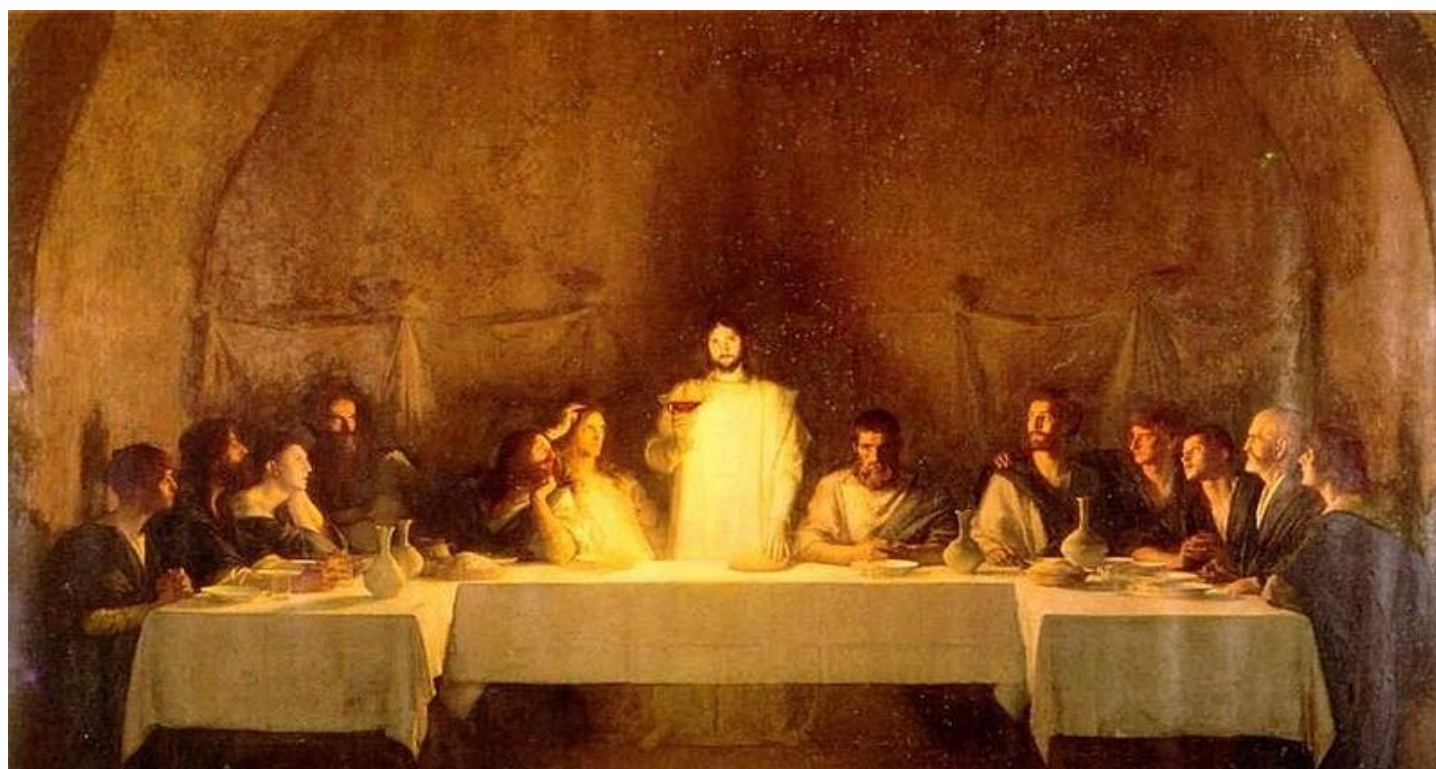
What's more, the Lord shows us that Eternal Life is real, He is the Resurrection and He wants us to be with Him.



Alleluia Alleluia!

The empty tomb holds a message for us. Christ is risen and by faith, we are people of the resurrection.

Pain, injustice, suffering and even death do not have the final word but life. God's love overcomes all. We have hope, we have a mission!



EASTER SEASON DEVOTIONS AND REFLECTIONS



Divine Mercy

Let us reflect on what Our Lord told St Faustina,

“Oh how painful it is to Me that souls so seldom unite themselves to Me in Holy Communion. I wait for souls and they are indifferent toward Me. I love them tenderly and sincerely and they distrust Me. I want to lavish my graces on them and they do not want to accept them. They treat Me as a dead object where as My heart is full of love and mercy.” (Diary 1447)

Lord, help us thaw our indifferent hearts, help us trust You who loves us so much, let us unite our hearts with Yours in the Eucharist!

Five Loaves and Two Fish

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by big issues, like the disciples facing the 5000? We doubt and fear, "the large crowd". We calculate and worry, "it takes 200 days of wages to feed these people!" We doubt what we have, "what good are these for so many?"

Let us offer what we can, no matter how small, like the little boy who surrenders to Jesus his five loaves and two fish.

Let us be like the disciples, obedient to the Lord and be His instruments. even into the fearful unknown situations.

Let Jesus transform our small gifts and abilities into abundant and overflowing blessings.



Do Not Be Afraid

Life can be turbulent storms like how the disciples experienced in their boat in the Gospel reading today. But Jesus comes walking (on water!) to join and reassure them.

Do we trust that Jesus has a miracle for each one of us in our life storms?



Walk to Emmaus

“Throughout history, God never failed to come to our aid. Do not despair. Let us always keep our spiritual eyes opened to the many ways He will manifest Himself to us.”

Good Shepherd

Jesus is opens the gate for us to green pastures, protects and guides us throughout. Do we know His voice and follow Him?





English—Chinese Prayer Meeting at COOL

On 18.4.2023 Tuesday our 2023's 3rd COOL English/Chinese Prayer Meeting kickstarted at 7pm in the Parish Hall.

Not many gathered but a few more had come after invitations or after reading the church bulletin.

For unknown reason, we were a bit low in spirit at first and we looked at each other in bewilderment! What happened huh?

Then finally we came to Gospel Reading of the night! Bro. Thomas read in English followed by Sis. Helga in Chinese. (Although there was only one English illiterate attendee!) Must say we did our best even for one person!

Public sharing on Bible Reading started and to our surprise such a heavy topic attracted many sharers! Moreover, it motivated sharing one after another! All could not wait for their turn! (Normally, nobody wanted to share!) We noticed the sharing warmed us up like Cleopas at Emmaus and inspired us to a higher level of spirituality!

Yes, Bible, the Word of God, had power to upgrade a person in spirituality and attitude and to open oneself up to glorify God and to share the Good News of how He made many things possible even during the lockdown in the most difficult covid years of 2021 n 2022!

God had turned adversity to prosperity of our knowledge of Him through the livestream Masses and daily Bible sharing through WhatsApp!

Suddenly all of us were very very high and went into Tongues to praise God when words failed us in front of our awesome God! Mighty and powerful to use every opportunity to teach His people to recognise Him in the midst of traumatic fear and to comfort His people when death toll of covid went very high throughout the world! We recalled in this Prayer Meeting what a lot God did for us during those times and were very grateful! Many readers of Gospels and attendees of livestream Masses turned out from passivity into activity to join ministries; the school board in school or as teachers in Sunday school or to finally recover from unknown illnesses!

Yes, every Prayer Meeting is a chance for the Holy Spirit to magnify Himself to His people especially in groups which enables all to boost each other's faith to fan the dying embers of our cold hearts into a hot flame to praise God and o yes, He is already waiting there to endow us with His special gift on each one! This makes me think of a Santa Claus with a divine face!

One brother was sharing how we needed youth to join us and...guess what...a youth instantly walked in!

Bro. Simon brought our attention to him and he introduced himself to us. Dawid is a youth from Poland! All the way from Poland where our former late pope St. John Paul II came from! It was like an instant prayer being answered with the most surprising person we could never dream of! He was travelling round the world on a mission trip!

We were so happy with God and excited to see Dawid that we asked him to have a photo shot and a selfie with us! There you are, you can see him for yourself in the picture! This is not the Arabian Night Stories for kids! It is real!

God works in the most unexpected ways for our good, doesn't He?

Do join whatever Prayer Group you used to be in or are in and savour the sweetness of the Holy Spirit, His power and strength help you to serve in your various ministries!

We draw inner strength, courage, fortitude and knowledge as our 'stamina' from God to work in His field!

Praise and thanks to the Lord for His blessings on this very night and His empowering to help us in our ministries no matter how small a group we are in, with God, all things are possible!

Rom 8:28 "...And we know that all that happens to us is working for our good if we love God and are fitting into his plans."

Adeline Ong

2023 年 4 月 18 日星期二，我們的 2023 年 第三屆 COOL 英文/中文同禱會於晚上 7 點在堂區禮堂開跑了。

聚集的人不多，但有一些人是在收到邀請或閱讀了教會佈告後才來的。

不知道為什麼，一開始我們有些精神不振，面面相覷！ 怎麼回事啊？

然後終於來到了當晚的福音朗誦！余兄弟用英語朗讀，然後是桂蓮姐的中文朗讀。（雖然只有一位懂中文的與會者！）不得不說，即使是一個人，我們也盡力而為！

讀經公開分享開始了，沒想到這麼沉重的話題吸引了很多分享者！而且，還帶動了一個接著一個的分享！都等不及待！（通常沒有人願意分享的！）我們發覺到分享讓我們像以馬忤斯的革流巴一樣心中火熱起來，並激勵我們達到更高的靈性水平！

是的，聖經，上主的話語有能力提升一個人的靈性和態度，並敞開心扉來榮耀上主，並分享祂如何使許多‘不可

能’事情成為‘可能’的好消息，即使是在最困難的2021 年和 2022 年疫情歲月中！

上主通過現場直播的彌撒和每天通過手機 WhatsApp 分享的聖經，將逆境變成了我們對祂的認識的榮耀！

當我們在敬畏的上主面前讚美到詞窮時，突然間，我們所有人的情緒都非常非常高漲，導至化成方言來讚美上主！

祂強大的運用每一個機會來教導祂的子民並在恐懼中認出祂，在全世界死於新冠病毒的人數非常高時，安慰祂的子民！在這次同禱會中，我們回想起那段時間天主為我們做了很多，感恩！許多直播彌撒的參予者與讀聖經者，從被動轉變為積極參與事工、參於學校董事和做主日老師或從不明疾病中康復！

是的，每一次同禱會都是聖神向祂的子民彰顯自己的機會，尤其是在一個團體中，這有助於增強彼此的信心，將我們冰冷的心，即將熄滅的餘燼的心煽動成火熱來讚美上主，而且，祂已經在那

裡期待著為我們每個人賦予祂的特別禮物（恩賜）！讓我想起天主化成的聖誕老人！

一位弟兄正在分享我們如何需要年輕人加入我們時.....你猜發生了什麼事.....一位年輕人立刻走了進來！

黃兄弟立刻把我們的注意力引向他。

年輕人向我們作了自我介紹。大偉是來自波蘭的青年！波蘭是我們的前任教宗聖若望保羅二世的家鄉！大偉正在環遊世界執行任務！

這就像一個即時的祈禱，得到了我們做夢也想不到的最令人驚訝的回應！

我們非常高興感受到天主的大能和見到大偉，所以我們請他與我們合影和自拍！這不是兒童的阿拉伯之夜故事！是真的！你自己看看，可以在照片中看到他本人！

上主以最出乎意料的方式為我們行事，不是嗎？

加入你過去或正在參加的任何同禱會，享受聖神的甜美，祂的能力和力量會幫助你在不同的事工中服務！

我們從上主那裡汲取內在的力量、勇氣、毅力和知識作為我們的“耐力”，以便在祂的領域工作！

讚美並感謝主在這個晚上賜福給我們，無論我們的團體多麼小，在神，凡事都能！

羅馬書 8:28 “...我們知道，如果我們愛上主並符合祂的計劃，那麼發生在我們身上的一切都是為我們好。”

翁月萍 Adeline





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