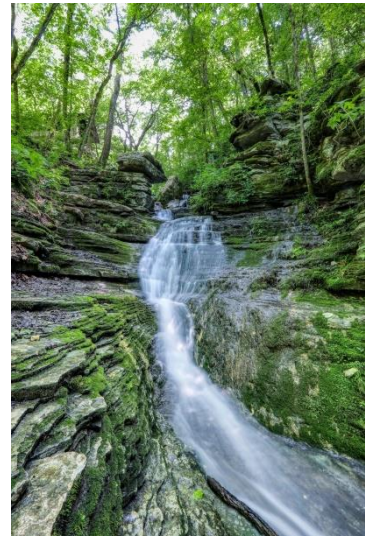


Dear friends,

Welcome to the first newsletter of Centre for Catholic Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong! Since 2019, we and the world community have lived through times of crises, some say *kairos* (both epithets trace back to the Greek words *krinein*, to separate, decide, and *keirein*, to cut). In such times we are called to see things in a new light, to understand better what is happening in and around us, the better to respond in ways that may help everyone heal or flourish.

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In 2019 our Centre also joined the Society of Jesus in Hong Kong as a Companion in Mission, entering upon an intellectual and spiritual journey together. Indeed, we aspire to journey with all, especially the youth and the deprived, towards reconciliation and a future filled with hope and joy. With this newsletter, we hope to signal a *Culture of Dialogue*, and issue an invitation to all—in times of global challenges, it is not enough to go it alone—to work creatively together, think outside disciplinary or institutional boundaries, across communities of various faith traditions and no faith ....

During his general audience on March 16, 2022, three weeks into the terrors of the war in Ukraine, Pope Francis recited the prayer "[Forgive us for the war, Lord](#)" (composed by Archbishop Domenico Battaglia of Naples):

*Forgive us for the war, Lord.*

*Lord Jesus, son of God, have mercy on us sinners.*

*Lord Jesus, born under the bombs of Kyiv, have mercy on us.*

*Lord Jesus, dead in the arms of a mother in Kharkiv, have mercy on us.*

*Lord Jesus, in the 20-year-olds sent to the frontline, have mercy on us.*

*Lord Jesus, who continues to see hands armed with weapons under the shadow of the cross, forgive us, Lord.*

*Forgive us if, not content with the nails with which we pierced your hand, we continue to drink from the blood of the dead torn apart by weapons.*

*Forgive us if these hands that you had created to protect have been turned into*

*instruments of death.*

*Forgive us, Lord, if we continue to kill our brother.*

*Forgive us, Lord, if we continue to kill our brother, if we continue like Cain to take the stones from our field to kill Abel.*

*Forgive us if we go out of our way to justify cruelty, if, in our pain, we legitimize the cruelty of our actions. Forgive us the war, Lord.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, we implore you to stop the hand of Cain, enlighten our conscience, let not our will be done, do not abandon us to our own doing.*

*Stop us, Lord, stop us, and when you have stopped the hand of Cain, take care of him also. He is our brother.*

*O Lord, stop the violence. Stop us, Lord. Amen.*

This profoundly moving prayer was as startling as the prayer of Pope Francis speaking to an empty St Peter's Square on March 27, 2020, after which he gave an extraordinary "Urbi and Orbi" blessing to the city and the world gripped in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both prayers trouble our soul. When we look at our day to day life-work—in the case of Centre for Catholic Studies: scholarship and apostolic mission—do our research and forums help the larger community recognize the dignity of one another, especially those who are poor, unseen or discounted? Do the stories we tell, and the histories we record enable us to be more open to others whose backgrounds and viewpoints differ from ours? Do we become more humble and generous in dialogue? Pope Francis' prayer last March implicates all of us. Instead of fratricide, can our work help build a world based on fraternal care? How may we better put in practice our theological, ethical or historical insights to advance the cause of reconciliation and justice? Yes, our staff and resources are small, but can we be part of a creative and critical conversation for a better world?

It is in the spirit of such questions that we'd like to acquaint you with our recent work, welcome your participation and feedback.

### **New Journal Issue**

In March we published the *Hong Kong Journal of Catholic Studies*, issue no. 12 (2021) online. The theme of this issue is "[Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian Spiritual Direction in Contemporary Times](#)." First among the Society of Jesus' Universal Apostolic Preferences for 2019-2029 is "to show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment." We are privileged to have eight contributors who share about this important Ignatian treasure from the perspectives of theology, cultural politics, history,



philosophy, feminism and spiritual direction respectively. The Spiritual Exercises are more than a “tool.” As one contemplates the dynamics of desire, and frees oneself from the illusions of absolute freedom, false security, narcissism and even self-hate, one embarks on a journey towards authenticity. Our “graced freedom” means we come to recognize our dependence, and inter-dependence with all Creation. Discernment then becomes a choice, an “apostolic moment.” In what ways do we participate in the profound, transformational journey “in” history?



### Book Review

Catholic resources on integral ecology in Chinese are still scarce more than a century after the Church’s teaching and advocacy on integral human development. Pope Francis’ [encyclical, \*Laudato si’\*](#) (2015) builds upon decades of scientific and theological research as well as awakenings in face of global climatic and humanitarian disasters that threaten the survival of multiple species and human generations. As part of our ongoing commitment to promote ecological reconciliation, the Centre published last October the [Chinese translation](#) of *A Primer in Ecotheology: Theology for a Fragile Earth* written by Professor Celia Deane-Drummond of Oxford University. You can read the latest [review in Chinese of the book here](#).

### *Living Well in Troubled Times* online lecture series

In collaboration, Angelicum Thomistic Institute, the Centre for Sino-Christian Studies at the Hong Kong Baptist University and the Centre for Catholic Studies at CUHK bring to you *Living Well in Troubled Times: The 2022 Hong Kong Philosophy Series* (online). On March 26, 2022, we were honored to have Professor Eleonore Stump of Saint Louis University (USA) give the first lecture, “Suffering and Flourishing.” An eminent scholar on Aquinas, suffering and redemption, Professor Stump discusses “human flourishing” which goes beyond conventional notions of thriving in body, mind and wealth. It stems from relationships of love, by which we join in the suffering and glory of the Lord (cf. 2 Corinthians), and thus shares in the redemptive work of Christ.



And don’t miss the second lecture: “[The Virtues of Limits](#)” by David McPherson of Creighton University (USA) on April 23 2022 at 10:00am (Hong Kong time)!

Professor McPherson specializes in ethics, political philosophy and philosophy of religion. He will explore with us the place of limits within a well-lived human life and discuss his original account of *limiting virtues* (humility, reverence, moderation, contentment, neighborliness, and loyalty). He is currently working on a book titled *Spiritual Alienation and the Quest for God*.

For Christians, we are nearing the end of the 40 days of Lent, a period of prayer, fasting and almsgiving—a time of repentance—as we get ready for Holy Week and Easter.



(Photo by Rod Long on Unsplash)

For our Muslim sisters and brothers, Ramadan, the holiest month also falls on April this year. As we look for answers to our own and global challenges, let us pause, listen to God who says "Look, I am doing something new, now it emerges; can you not see it?" (Isaiah 43:19)

**Blessed Easter! and Ramadan Mubarak!**

Centre for Catholic Studies editorial team

Dr. Cynthia Pon

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