

## **My calling and Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)**

### **A. Background**

Rev. Fr. Xavier Wong did not come from a fervent Catholic family, although his mother was formerly very religious and went to daily morning Mass.

He was a teacher of Chinese at the La Salle College and was asked to lead a group of students to attend the World Youth Congress in 2000. He was intrigued as to why so many young people were attracted to Christ on his return. He was greatly moved by Rev. Fr. John Kwan's preaching at a Sunday Mass in the Holy Redeemer Church and was baptized a Catholic in 2003. He was assigned to teach the catechumens at the Holy Redeemer Church in 2004.

He was often approached by students as to the possibility of a priestly vocation. He often went on the internet to search for information on the priesthood. Around this time, he was invited by Sister Agnes Au (區詠蔡修女) for her golden jubilee celebration. He noticed that the congregation attending the Thanksgiving Mass consisted of white-haired elderly priests and nuns. This set him thinking: "why not me?"

In 2007, he was appointed to be the Department Head of Chinese studies at the La Salle College. He made an appointment to meet with the Chinese Department at the University of Hong Kong. He was also invited by Sr. Louise Lam of the Diocesan Vocations Commission to attend a group sharing on the same date that he was to meet the University of Hong Kong, Department of Chinese. He decided to meet with Sr. Louise Lam and postponed his meeting with the University of Hong Kong – and this made a difference in his future.

Rev. Fr. Xavier Wong held monthly meeting with Sr. Louise Lam during June, July and August in 2008. By September 2008, Sr. Louise Lam referred him to see the Rector of the Holy Spirit Seminary Rev. Fr. Benedict Lam. At that meeting, he approached Rev. Fr. Benedict Lam for admission to the Seminary, and Rev. Fr. Lam's reply was "Not so soon!" He felt down-cast after the encounter, but Sr. Louise Lam and his parish priest Rev. Fr. John Kwan encouraged him to persist.

While he was teaching Chinese at La Salle College, he held regular meeting with his old high school teacher in Chinese. These meetings usually consisted of an hour long monologue by his former teacher followed by dinner with the family and casual conversation.

After six months of monthly exploration with Sr. Louise Lam and Rev. Fr. John Kwan, he was invited to go to the Holy Spirit Seminary to experience the life style at the Seminary. By the end of 2009 school year, he was accepted by the Holy Spirit Seminary. Up to this time, he had not shared his intention with his parents. When he finally brought up this topic with his parents one evening after dinner – this was followed by total dead silence. Finally his father (who was a non-Catholic) said: "If this is your desire, then you should better do it". When it was time for him to enter the seminary, he bid his parents "good-bye". When his mother embraced him, he had to literally push her away for he knew that her tears would break his resolve to leave home.

## **B. Seminary Life**

In August 2009, he was one of six candidates joining the seminary. Life in a seminary was no honeymoon and it was difficult to adjust to “community life”. On many occasions, he thought of leaving the seminary and returning to a teaching career. During a break from the seminary, he visited his former teacher in Chinese and sought his advice on whether becoming a priest and remaining a teacher. At the end of his usual monologue, he casually said, “A priest can do more good than a teacher”. This encouraged him to remain in the seminary.

After a few months, a close class-mate of his left the seminary. That evening after class, he went back to his room and stared at the empty room next to his. The Rector Rev. Fr. Benedict Lam passed by and held a long talk with him for over 2 hours. At the end of their conversation, the Rector gave him a bookmark with the picture of a priest’s hands with the words “sanctified hands to serve humanity”, saying: “This is very precious to me – but I think you will need it more than I do.”

On one occasion, he applied a study, a Theology course which was very popular and very difficult to join. He was chosen but he had to get the Rector’s permission to do it. He was very disappointed and angry when permission was denied. He was so blinded with anger that he fell head down when letting the dogs out. He injured his limbs and body and had bandages applied on them. The next morning when the Rector saw him, Rev. Fr. Benedict Lam casually said: “Nothing serious, I hope”. He was very angry for 6 months. On looking back, he was sure that he would be filled with pride if he had been granted permission to study this course.

## **C. Road to Priesthood**

On looking back, he felt that God was guiding his every step on the road to priesthood through different human agents:

- casual enquiries from students about priesthood
- Sr. Louise Lam and Rev. Fr. John Kwan
- his parents at home
- his former teacher of Chinese
- Rector Rev. Fr. Benedict Lam
- the Serrans – especially Serran Winnie Yau