

Accompanying Jesus: A Lent Retreat sharing

Sharing by Louisa and Anthony

Dear friends in prayer,

We would miss too much gifts if I merely consider Lent as an obligation to fast. Lent is a precious opportunity to experience the profound love of Jesus. In whatever suffering and darkness, Jesus accompanies us. As we understand how much Jesus loves us in willingly going through his most sorrowful passion, whatever happens in our life can turn into a joyful journey accompanying Jesus. Indeed, it is very sweet to accompany Jesus, and we can accompany Jesus not only during adoration or station of the cross but also in one's daily life.

A retreat we had to experience Jesus throughout the entire Lent season was in the year of Irene's birth. We have received so much love from Jesus that we had learned to love our life experiences to accompany Jesus.

Louisa was coordinating a jointed Lenten retreat for two parishes that year. The retreat did not take place although she had requested that the retreat could move forward as planned when she first regained conscious. Instead, we spent an unplanned retreat with the love and prayer support from many friends. In the mean time, many friends had prayed so intensely throughout the Lent season that they were also having their Lent retreat in their own daily life so that more souls can be touched and healed.

On the Ash Wednesday (2/13), we went to the hospital as Louisa started labor. Irene was born at 3AM the next morning, which happened to be the Eve of Chinese New Year in that year. Yet as we waited afterwards in the recovery room, the doctor came back to find that she had nonstop hemorrhage and had lost her blood clotting capability. She was rushed to the operation room else she would die right away. Yes it certainly did not sound good to have an operation while one had lost blood clotting capability. The doctor frankly told me the chance for past patients to survive was no more than one percent.

It was so sudden and fast that I worried whether Louisa could hold at least till she had the opportunity to receive the sacrament of the sick. So I prayed for this gift and asked for a Catholic priest, and this gift was granted. In addition, the priest said mass at a convent later in the morning and asked the entire convent of 80 religious to pray for her. I must say that it was quite touching because we were basically nobody in the church and yet the priest was asking a whole convent to pray for us.

I understood that I was entering into an important life experience. I asked the priest again so that I could have confession to prepare for that experience. Indeed, it was fitting to start this long retreat by first experiencing the love of Jesus through the sacrament of reconciliation.

Words had later quickly spread to many people whom had responded with plenty of prayers. A friend in the middle of preparing feast for the Chinese New Year at home had interrupted the preparation to first recite the rosary for 10 times. Another Chinese Catholic Community in the middle of a New Year party had also paused to pray.

Meanwhile, plenty of different specialists had been called to attend to Louisa. Each of them explained to me the procedure they were taking, and I must listen carefully and asked the right questions to make sure what they were doing really make good sense while trying whatever was possible within human capacity. Yet they admitted they could only do so much.

I found it difficult to know what to pray at that time. Yet I then began to experience such closeness with God in our prayers that I had never known before. I had prayed for the gift of the sacrament, and I thanked God for having granted her this gift. I knew I would be devastated on Earth without her. Yet if God wanted to take her to enter into the perfect love of God in heaven which we so much desire to enter in future, I asked God to allow me to see her at least one more time. Things had happened so sudden that we did not yet have opportunity to said goodbye. The doctor was very understandable and later gave me special permission to see her any time when the medical staff was not busy with her. I also prayed that Irene would not lose her mother,

and a priest then came to visit us and offered her to our Heavenly Mother.

In the first 24 hours, Louisa continued to bleed while continuing to receive a large amount of blood transfusion. No medication could cure her blood clotting condition. She must recover on her own. Yes, Jesus continues to give us gifts, but if our soul is poisoned we will keep wasting these gifts. Jesus cannot enter into our soul when we shut our doors. We must respond to God's love.

I prayed that she could re-gain the blood clotting ability, and she managed to gradually re-gain this function afterwards. She had received a total of 114 liters, and was going to use up the blood in the hospital. Many friends and many people we did not even know had come to donate blood. We were thankful especially because the chance of survival from past experience was believed to be small even with transfusion. What if the patient couldn't survive after transfusion? The prayer was so real as if Jesus was telling me that he had willingly shed all his blood for me no matter what. So I prayed that I would not let Jesus shed his precious blood in vain for me.

The blood clotting disorder and the large amount of transfusion had triggered a long process as different parts of the body malfunction one after another. So what followed was a 10-day struggling process in the intensive care unit. The malfunctioning in each organ itself was a life-threatening condition. After one body function had managed to recover, the struggle in another body function followed. Through the process for each organ to malfunction, I prayed for gift of that organ for her, and she passed through the critical condition for each of these organs one at a time. At that time, we realized that each body function was so essential, although I seldom knew to thank the gifts of our body functions before. The malfunctioning of any one organ can lead to death. We also realize that problems in our spiritual health can be fatal too so that we need to guard each of our spiritual functions.

After that, she needed to re-learn all the basic human activities step by step, including how to breathe, how to eat, and how to move each part of the body. We were so thankful as she re-gained each of these basic functions. While recovering at home

during Lent, we had to go to see each of the specialists for follow-up diagnosis and treatments. Each of them watched her with amazed eyes. Most of them had believed that even if she could survive, she would at least have permanent disorder but she didn't. Around Easter that year, she was able to walk freely so that we were able to thank our friends at the church and to witness the love of God.

My prayers during that Lent included thanking God for the gift of having Louisa as my best companion with whom we had grown in Faith together. If God allowed her to stay, I prayed that we could continue to serve God together in Earth. We thanked God that we had seen and heard many people praying intensely. We prayed that some hearts had been touched with this miracle of life, and we thanked God that some previously lukewarm souls had then prayed and had indeed rekindled their faith. We thanked God that in healing Louisa, some other souls had also been healed.

God's healing is so powerful that after she had fully recovered, we do not wish the prayers to stop. We wish prayers can continue so that other people may be healed, both physically and spiritually.

Louisa was on respirator at that time so that she could only receive the Eucharist spiritually each day. I recited to her the prayer that Jesus gave us his body and blood. It was just so real especially when she was going to bleed to death. It continued to be so real afterwards in numerous times during mass when Jesus speaks to me through the priest "This is My Body which will be given up for you!" and "This is My Blood which will be shed for you, so that sins may be forgiven."

We especially pray for you the gift to accompany Jesus and that we will not let this precious gift wasted. Thank you for coming to accompany Jesus.

陪伴耶穌：四旬期避靜分享

陳慶鴻、周漸群分享

親愛的祈禱中的朋友

如果我們在四旬期只為遵守規例而齋戒，那可錯失了許多寶貴的恩寵。四旬期其實是一個珍貴的機會，讓我們體會耶穌基督完全的愛。當我們深深的體驗到耶穌為愛我們而甘願經歷祂的至悲慘苦難，也可以體驗到無論我們在任何痛苦和黑暗中，耶穌總是陪伴著我們。那麼我們在生活中發生的任何事情，都將能轉化為陪伴耶穌的喜樂。的確，伴隨耶穌真是一個十分甜美的經驗，而這經驗不僅在明供聖體或拜苦路的時候，也發生在我們每一個人的日常生活中。

我們家經歷過整個四旬期的避靜，這是在我們的女兒巧慧出生的那一年。我們承受來自耶穌基督極大的恩寵，也從始更愛上了四旬期。

那一年由漸群負責安排一個由兩個堂區合辦的四旬期避靜並沒有依計劃舉行，後來漸群在醫院一恢復神志就問及避靜的情況，我們卻在眾多朋友的愛和祈禱支持之下，經歷了另一段不在計劃中的四旬期避靜。同時，許多朋友們在這個四旬期間熱誠地祈禱，彷彿在他們的每日生活中進行著四旬期避靜，也因此有許多的心靈受到感動。

我們於聖灰日週三(2/13)那天到醫院待產，隔天凌晨三點我們的女兒巧慧出生了，那天正好是中國的除夕。當我們在恢復室時，醫師回來發現漸群出血不止，身體失去了凝血功能，她因此被緊急地送入手術室，且隨時都有生命危險。沒錯，為失去凝血功能的病人開刀聽起來的確不

妙，醫生也坦率地告訴我，依據以往的經驗，這種病人生存的機會小於百分之一。

事情實在發生得太突然了，我擔心漸群能不能至少撐到有機會領受病人傅油聖事。我為此祈禱，並且請求能找到一位神父，我的祈禱被應允了。此外神父還告訴我，稍後他在修院將舉行的一台晨間彌撒，整個修道院的八十位修女都會一起為漸群祈禱。這真的讓我非常感動，我們只是教會中的平凡教友，神父卻請了一整個修院的修女為我們祈禱。

我體認到我即將經歷一段很特別的生命經驗，我向神父辦告解，以便為此做好準備。事實上，經由和好聖事來體會耶穌基督的愛是多麼合適的一個起點，讓我開始這段漫長的避靜。

消息很快地傳到眾多呼應祈禱的人那裡。一個在家準備春節大餐的朋友，停下手邊的工作，為我們念了十串玫瑰經。另一個華人天主教團體也暫停了他們的春節慶祝活動來為我們祈禱。

在此同時，醫院裡許多不同的專科醫師都來看漸群。他們向我一一解釋他們的醫療過程，我必須仔細地聽和發問，並且確定他們所做的都是盡了人力所及的醫療方法。醫生們也承認他們能做的其實非常有限。

一開始我覺得祈禱好像很難，不知道要祈求什麼，但隨後我卻開始在祈禱中經歷到與天主前所未有的親密。我曾為漸群能領受病人傅油聖事而祈禱，感謝天主應允了。我知道如果這世上沒有了漸群，我也不會好過，但是如果天主提早讓她到天主的國享受天主的愛，我只求天主允許我至少再見她一次。因為事情發生得太突然了，我們還沒有機會說再見呢！醫生非常體諒地特別准許我，只要沒有醫

護人員在為漸群做治療時，我可以隨時去陪她。同時我也祈禱巧慧不要失去母親，之後一位神父來探望我們，並將巧慧託付給我們天上的聖母。

失去凝血功能是有藥物能醫治的，身體必須要能自己恢復功能。在最初的 24 個小時內，漸群不斷地接受大量的輸血，但卻不斷地出血。是的，耶穌總會源源不絕地給我們恩寵，但如果我們的靈魂被毒害，我們就不斷地浪費這些恩寵。耶穌不能進入關閉的心門，我們必須要回應天主的愛。

我祈禱她能恢復凝血功能，之後她開始逐漸恢復了凝血。漸群總共輸血了 114 公升，幾乎用盡了醫院的血庫存量。許多朋友和許多我們甚至不認識的人來捐血，我們真的非常感恩，尤其是即使輸血治療之後的生還機率還是很低，如果病人在大量輸血後還是無法活下，那又情何以堪？祈禱是很真實的，彷彿耶穌告訴我不論如何他都願為我傾盡祂所有的血，而我也祈禱我不要再讓耶穌為我流的聖血徒然。

凝血失常及大量輸血引發了漸群體內各不同器官一連串的失常，接下來是在加護病房 10 天的生命奮鬥。在這段過程當中，我為漸群祈禱每一個身體器官的恩寵。每一個器官的失常都威脅著生命，在一個器官復原之後，接著是另一個器官失常，漸群也一一通過了危險。那時，我們才意識到每一個身體功能都是很重要的，以前幾乎沒有為身體的功能感恩。就像任何一個身體器官的異常都可能致命，我們也體會到每一種靈魂健康的失常也能危及靈魂的生命。

在那以後，漸群需要逐步重新學習所有基本的人體功能，包括如何呼吸，如何吃和如何移動每個身體部位。隨

著她慢慢重新恢復了身體的每一項基本功能，我們的心裡真是充滿著感恩。出院後在家休養的那段期間依然是四旬期間，我們仍要去看不同的專科醫師，做追蹤診斷治療，醫生們對漸群的復原狀況感到驚訝，他們大多認為即使漸群能活下來也會留下後遺症，但她並沒有。那一年的復活節前後，漸群已能自由地行動，我們也能夠親自向教堂的朋友們道謝，並為天主的愛做見證。

在那年的四旬期間，我祈禱感謝天主賜給我漸群這個最好的伴侶，讓我們在信仰中一起成長，如果天主讓她留下來，我祈禱天主能讓我們繼續一起在上服事上主，我們感謝天主讓我們見到也聽到許多人的熱烈祈禱，我們祈求這發生在我們身上的生命奇蹟能觸動一些人的心弦，我們也感謝主讓一些原先對他們的信仰較不認真看待的人也開始祈禱，並且重燃他們心中的熱火。我們更感謝天主在治癒了漸群的肉體之外，也醫治了不少其他人的靈魂。

因為祈禱和天主的醫治是這麼的強而有力，即使在漸群完全康復之後，我們仍希望祈禱能繼續下去，讓我主醫治更多其他人的身體和靈魂。

漸群在使用呼吸器的那段時間，每天只能神領聖體。我對著她恭誦著耶穌給我們聖體聖血的經文，感到非常深刻和真實。自那時起，在日後的彌撒禮儀中當主耶穌藉著神父的口對我說「這是我的身體將為你們而犧牲！」，以及「這是我的血，將為你們及眾人傾流，以赦免罪惡」都總是如此的親切和真實。

我們願特別為你祈求伴隨耶穌的恩寵，願這份豐厚的恩寵不會白白浪費。謝謝您來陪伴主耶穌。